

**Speaking/Writing With:
Aboriginal and settler interrelations
— interrogating the mechanisms that work to suppress
Indigenous/indigenous voices
in the ‘Australian’ situation.**

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Contents

Introduction	7
Section One	
Searching, locating, situating voice	
1.1 The Research Journey: embodied research	15
1.1.1 Introduction to article: <i>Rites of Passage?</i>	18
1.1.2 Publication: <i>Rites of Passage?</i>	20
1.1.3 Early Protectorate research begins: embodied research	29
Who's saying what? Tuning out the disconnected coloniser's noise	
1.2. Speaking 'mineness'. Introduction to article <i>Customary Appropriations?</i>	32
1.2.1 Publication: <i>Customary Appropriations?</i>	34
1.2.2 The noise of disconnection. Introduction to article: <i>Australian Community: Bound for More of the Same?</i>	48
1.2.3 Publication: <i>Australian Community: Bound for More of the Same?</i>	49
Section Two	
Learning to speak with	
2.1. Indigenous and Poststructural synergies: Tuning in the mother tongue	71
2.1.2 Transforming from 'speaking for' to 'speaking with'	78
2.1.3 Methodology for speaking with: Protectorate Research continues	81
2.1.4 Exploring the material affects of what gets said	83
2.1.5 Speaking through coloniser noise: Authorising voice	90

Speaking from: Tuning in the inner voice

2.2.	Response-ability and emplacement	97
2.2.1	Introduction to article: <i>Laws of Place</i>	103
2.2.2	Publication: <i>Laws of Place</i>	106
2.2.3	Letting the inner voice speak	134
2.2.4	Introduction to article: <i>What Sovereign Rights for Indigenous Australians?</i>	136
2.2.5	Publication: <i>What Sovereign Rights for Indigenous Australians?</i>	139

Section Three

Addressing denial of the inner voice

3.1.	Tuning out the noise of fear	152
3.1.1	Introduction to article: <i>Colonial Sovereignities and the Self-colonising Conundrum</i>	154
3.1.2	Publication: <i>Colonial Sovereignities and the Self-Colonising Conundrum</i>	157

Speaking/writing with

3.1	Introduction to the DVD <i>Speaking/writing with</i>	185
3.2.1	Evoking the unsaid	188
3.2.2	Publication: <i>Speaking/writing with: Aboriginal/Settler interrelations and Identity DVD</i>	192

Conclusion

Allowing the mother tongue	193
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Bibliography	201
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NB. Literature reviews are embedded in the included articles and, as such, references will not be repeated in the bibliography, which will serve to conserve printing resources. If a reference is not evident in the bibliography it will be found in the following article.

Summary

This thesis interrogates the mechanisms that work to suppress Indigenous/indigenous voices in the Australian situation socio- politically, historically and theoretically, to reveal how this suppression is always exceeded. The thesis is cross-disciplinary, engaging critical and cultural studies, critical race and whiteness theory and indigenous relational ontology. ‘First Nations Australians’ are identified as indigenous in most discussions (while it is argued this collective is nevertheless a heterogeneous demography). While discussion circulates in and through ‘Indigenous/indigenous’ and ‘settler’ interrelations, the focus is on the relations between these collective identities — on the formation of subjectivities and ongoing construction of identity. It is argued that conditions that work to suppress Indigenous/indigenous voices in the general discussion are reproduced when colonising relations continue to construct the dominant perspectival paradigm. It is argued that different worldviews are in play, making sharing and negotiation of difference at the boundaries necessary. I also deconstruct the imposition of colonial sovereignty and theorise a co-sovereign existential relation, fundamental to reciprocal sociality. The thesis theorises ways of speaking ‘with’, in place of ‘for’ others, hence resisting and overwhelming the colonising frame.

In exploring the relationship between deconstructionist and resistant disciplines from within the Western rationalist paradigm, and Indigenous relational ontologies, I have found that such disciplines, outside of the characteristic binarised thinking modes of the West, share their capacity for change, innovation, creativity and engagement with futurity. This opens productive ground with which to pose the following thesis research question:

“Is it possible to theorise and engage an in-relation ethos and consciousness that will allow for the transformation of relations of suppression and subordination to those of reciprocity, mutual respect and engagement, thus providing a model for a transformative and reciprocal sociality?”

Statement of Original Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled “Speaking/Writing With: Aboriginal and Settler interrelations – interrogating the mechanisms that work to suppress Indigenous/indigenous voices in the Australian situation” has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by any other person except where due reference is made.

The research presented in this thesis was approved by Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee,

Reference number: HE22JUN2007 on 18th September 2007.

Signature

Fiona McAllan

Date: 30 July 2010

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Introduction

This thesis interrogates the continuing ideological and historic-political structures that suppress the reception of Indigenous/ indigenous¹ voices in the ‘Australian’² situation, and reveals how these mechanisms are resisted and exceeded. Voice is not argued as of itself *achieving* communication, as interpretative exchange is carried on at the limits of subjective interfacing and also engages interrelated inter-entity participants and effects. Yet if the ‘interpretative devices’ of a culture continue to be constituted by a dominant group, and particularly if the dominant group’s conscious engagement in inter-entity communication is myopic or opaque, this reduces ‘access to interpretations through which those on the outside can [engage with] their existence in their own terms’ (Muecke 1992:125). It is argued that conditions that suppress the reception of Indigenous/indigenous voices are reproduced when colonising relations continue to construct the dominant perspectival paradigm. Even so, at the same time, it is also argued that communication continues nevertheless.

The thesis is cross-disciplinary, engaging critical and cultural studies, poststructuralism, critical race and whiteness theory and indigenous relational ontology. ‘First Nations Australians’ are identified as Indigenous in most discussions (while it is argued this collective is nevertheless a heterogeneous demography and all individuals are fundamentally indigenous according to a relational ontology). While discussion circulates in and through ‘Indigenous/indigenous’ and ‘settler’ interrelations, the focus is on the relations between these collective identities — on the formation of subjectivities and ongoing construction of identity. The thesis theorises ways of speaking ‘with’, in place of ‘for’, Indigenous/indigenous peoples, hence resisting and overwhelming the colonising frame. It is argued that different worldviews are in play, making sharing and negotiation of difference at the boundaries necessary. The imposition of colonial sovereignty is deconstructed and a co-sovereign existential relation is theorised, which is argued to be fundamental to reciprocal sociality.

¹ I generally capitalise Indigenous throughout the thesis when specifically referring to people who identify as Aboriginal, to comply with the proper noun convention of respect. When not capitalising my intention is to denote direct emplacement of people in their land (signalling a particular relationship in Country). When the term is relevant in each case Indigenous/indigenous is used.

² Terms in quotation marks signal their formation within constructivist forces.

The research has been undertaken as a ‘thesis by publication’, and consists of a series of 6 research papers, and a DVD teaching resource. The articles will be introduced chronologically in the connecting narrative following the Thesis Introduction. All of the articles and the DVD have either been published or are due to be published:

- 1) ‘Rights of Passage?’ in *Law Text Culture*, Vol 11, Melbourne University Press: Melbourne, pp 272-285, 2007.
- 2) ‘Customary Appropriations’ in *Borderlands ejournal*, Vol 6, Issue 3, 2007.
- 3) ‘Australian Communities: Bound for More of the Same?’ in *Transforming Cultures ejournal*, Vol 2, Issue 1, 2007.
- 4) ‘What Sovereign Rights for Indigenous Australians?’ in *The International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations* Volume 8, Issue 3, Common Ground, Melbourne, pp 49-58, 2008.
- 5) ‘Laws of Place’, in *The Racial Politics of Bodies, Nations and Knowledges*, Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009.
- 6) ‘Colonial Sovereignties and the Self-Colonising Conundrum’ (Due for September publication in *AlterNative: International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*)
- 7) ‘Speaking with the Darug and Kulin: Indigenous/Settler Interrelations and Identity’ 70 min DVD with teachers notes (due to be distributed in August 2010 as a secondary and tertiary teaching resource through *Video Education Australasia*, Bendigo, Victoria.

The DVD was prepared as the outcome of a concurrent research project conducted during the three years of the PhD, consisting of five personal narratives with Indigenous co-participants and a connecting narrative from myself.

This thesis joins the bodies of critique of traditional western metaphysics and by extension the colonising relation. The idea of the ‘present’ ‘I’ has dominated in western metaphysical ontology, along with a presumed lost origin and persistent universalism. The ‘I’ denies its interdependence with the other, thus the colonising relation denies inter-subjective and inter-entity responsibilities. While poststructuralist critique may have its roots within the experience of ‘Europe’ the critique itself is arguably outside Eurocentricism. This critique has constituted within forces of resistance to colonising relations (that continue this Eurocentricism).

Poststructuralist thinkers, for example Derrida and Nancy, deconstructively engage with the metaphysical tradition to negotiate a third space beyond the opposing fixed concepts that this tradition relies upon. Deconstruction concerns a dispersive perspective which reveals the multiplicity of meanings, whereas the metaphysical tradition is always searching for a convergence of meaning. Deconstruction is focussed on revealing the ongoing construction of meaning (Bennington in Bernstein 1999:549-557). Postcolonial thinkers, for example, Bhahba, Spivak and Fanon, question fixed identity within colonised countries and provide subaltern perspectives. Most importantly, my work draws together points of resonance in this poststructuralist/postcolonial thinking with indigenous epistemologies and methodologies.

What provides connections in these thinkers is how, ontologically, they consider interdependence at core, that is, relational ontology. Relational ontology engages a subjective disposition that acknowledges an ethos of ‘one by the other’ rather than ontology of the ‘one’ at the expense of the other. The Indigenous thinkers I refer to, for example, Watson, Tuwihai-Smith, Nakata, Battiste, Martin and LittleBear, extend critique of western metaphysics through the provision of universe-referent perspectives³, and decolonising and indigenous methodologies, expanding the limits of western knowledge through atemporal relations of place and allowing for cyclic, continuous and synergistic relations that exceed the linear narrative of western ‘progress’.

Universe-referent perspectives are argued as perspectives that recognise lived experience takes place within a living universe (Posey 2001:5) — as an interconnected web of individual, family, community, society and universe. Traditional western metaphysics would consider the sun, for example, as a non-living inanimate entity. Universe-referent thinking moves away from a human-centric focus (one that prioritises the human in all communications, discourse, exchanges), to a universe-referent way of being (one that allows for the voices of the so called non-living entities) (Arabena 2008). This web of interdependence is a ‘never-ending source of wonder’ ... ‘not a description of reality but an understanding of the processes of ecological change and ever-changing insights about diverse patterns or styles of flux’ (Battiste 2000:265).

Despite their cultural contexts and backgrounds, the theorists resonate together in their ongoing revealing of the liminality that exceeds the tradition’s limits (or colonising

³ For universe-referent perspectives see next paragraph.

relation), wherever suppression/oppression/repression occurs. In language terms, there is only enunciation, as it is impossible to communicate all that needs saying at any given moment. Nancy states: ‘Bataille communicates to me the pain and pleasure that result from the impossibility of communicating anything at all without touching the limits where all meaning [sans] spills out of itself, like a simple ink stain on a word, on the word, meaning’ (Nancy 1992:319). My research focuses on this. Another fundamental research focus is on how enunciation is forever embodied (Martin 2007, Moreton-Robinson 2004:12, Lingis 1994, Merleau-Ponty 1968, Grosz 1994). Grosz writes ‘A knowledge that could acknowledge its genealogy in corporeality would also necessarily acknowledge its perspectivism, its incapacity to grasp all, or anything in its totality... there is nothing beyond the multiplicity of perspectives, positions, bodily forces; no anchor in the real’ (Grosz 1994:128). Grosz argues embodiment through engaging Nietzsche’s complex notion of nature, which:

precludes associating instincts with their usual biologic and nonhistorical connotations. Nature is not the origin, source or designer of instincts; nature itself is a destination, product, or effect. In man, there is nothing natural, if by nature is understood what is inert, transhistorical, governed by law, conquerable (p.129).

Grosz argues against this form of nature as self-identical, and the moralising binaries that seek to establish ‘natural’ as ‘primitive’, ‘exotic’, ‘native’. Focussing on embodiment fundamentally assists in understanding the subject’s engagement in relational ontology. The theorists I engage with comprehensively interrogate the persistence of the dualist ontological position (that is characteristic of Cartesian thinking for example), that prioritises mind over body and produces practices of objectification. Inherent to embodied thinking is also the necessity of understanding the materiality of energetics (largely overlooked in western thought). Some fields of western research are increasingly engaging in what has always been fundamental to relational ontology, for example: eco-phenomenology, and for example work of Deleuzian theorists like Patton, Grosz, Bennett.⁴ While all wrestle within the limits of language, the two particular research focuses in this thesis are therefore both the necessity to allow for embodied universe-referent perspectives, and the limited access to interpretative terms when public discourse remains in the control of those deriving economic and social benefit from the European colonisation of ‘Australia’.⁵ At the same time, interrogating mechanisms of voice

⁴ See also Ghan in *Contemporary Political Theory* (2009) 8, 90–105. doi:10.1057/cpt.2008.43.

⁵ This will be argued in *Customary Appropriations* particularly.

suppression will continually reveal the deconstructive and affirming resistance that continues, within and beyond colonising relations.

It might appear that I am arguing both for a specific form of indigenous identity in the thesis, at the same time as I am arguing against this. Yet if there is a central tenet of this thesis, it is that our while differences can be materially specific, they are contingent and relational within each context that we present. In the paradoxical structure of lived experience, our incommensurable differences do not allow for fixed categories of one group or another, as we are always on the move, always in a state of flux, always different to each other, no matter what. In the realm of the social, our differences define us, not divide us.⁶ This, I argue, is the constitutive paradox that is fundamental to all lived experience, that is, that while our differences define us, in the incommensurable difference that does this, these differences also join us. As individuals we share our incommensurable difference with each other.⁷ This paradoxical relation would therefore generate every interrelationship within humanity, and all its further interrelationships within the biosphere and beyond. Individually we continue to straddle categories in their relational contexts. It is the context and how we speak of difference that is therefore crucial. Power relations of repression depend on dividing rather than defining, and so rely on particular contexts and particular ways of marking difference.

In the papers *Passages*, *Customary Appropriations* and *Bound for More of the Same* I argue that as difference is constitutive, the idea that difference can be unproblematically assimilated to produce sameness is illusory. In relationships where difference is utilised to divide people, i.e. marking them as ‘other’ and then dealing with them subordinately, this becomes a power relationship entailing the repression of their difference.

Importantly, in this thesis, I argue that each individual is indigenous in the sense of their individual emplacement within lived experience. At the same time, conditions of European colonisation in Australia make it very necessary to define ‘indigenous’ difference in relation to a ‘non-indigenous’ difference and vice versa. For example, in the paper *Laws of Place* I define people who are ‘from here’ (Australia) and their descendents, and people who have ‘come here’, or descended from those that have ‘come here’. This definition therefore becomes a prevailing structural frame to define this particular difference, (that is,

⁶ As Barak Obama has said, pointed out to me in personal correspondence with Manulani J Meyer.

⁷ This is argued in *Passages*, *Bound for More of the Same* and *Contradiction* papers.

‘from here’ or ‘from there’), but the differences will nevertheless need to be understood in each specific case, even as I am forced to generalise. And within the first generation of relations between, this definition is complicated. Nevertheless, the differences between those ‘from here’ and those ‘from there’ are retained, in all their increasingly complex specificities.

To position people in relation to one another is the only possible defining frame when considering ALL individuals as indigenous in the world in terms of originary relatedness.⁸ In this case, and for the purposes of this thesis, another structurally defining frame becomes necessary. That is, that often those who ‘came here’ or those who descended from those who ‘came here’ have largely disconnected from understanding themselves in terms of their indigenous individual emplacement in the world.⁹ But it also can be the case that those ‘from here’ have disconnected also from this relation of indigenous emplacement. This alerts us to the ever-present necessity to attempt to consider each specific case in its particular difference. I argue this in detail in the paper *Laws of Place*.

I continue to repeat throughout the thesis that the focus should remain on why particular difference needs to be defined rather than on assumedly fixed oppositional categories such as ‘indigenous’ and ‘non-indigenous’. At the same time, it is never my intention to distort or dissipate the specificity of Indigenous-specific experience and what this continues to mean in Australia. It is therefore crucially important to consider each context when I seek to mark the difference that defines people as one or the other. Difference needs to be traced in all its manifestations, ethnic, class, gender etc, as these specifics are ever-distinct in the defining of our differences, within their relational contexts. If the focus is not on this relationality, specific power relations will produce generalising assumptions, which then provide opportunity for the violence of appropriation.

The methodological approach in both the papers and the DVD is phenomenological/hermeneutic in a deconstructivist sense (Shank 2002, Creswell1998) and also regarding historical/constructivist analysis, thus ‘analysing the past through multiple lenses and interpretations so past/present can be critically reappraised’ (Carnegie & Napier as quoted in Burton & Steane 2004:165). I also interrogate the forces of social

⁸ An individual’s emplacement is constituted within a relational ontology, that is, an ontological structure that accepts no finite origin, the originary moment is always already relational, preceding and exceeding itself.

⁹ In this sense of originary relatedness, and considering universe-referent perspectives.

constructivism (Lincoln 1990, Denzin & Lincoln 2000), with an overall qualitative approach that incorporates my 'direct engagement in intense, prolonged and direct exposure to the field amidst 'live' situations that form the everyday activities and processes of people organisations and institutions' (Parker 2004, Lincoln 1990 as quoted in Burton & Steane 2004:160).

My analysis engages and includes a personal exploration and self-discovery (while I argue this as impossible) by way of experiencing phenomena and encountering subjectivities and my response to this, in light of my own subjective understandings. This subjective approach is fundamental to an indigenous relational ontology. Thus the thesis argues and demonstrates how universal objective understandings are illusory — the notion of 'public understanding' is therefore a fraught concept that requires vigilant and continuous unpacking. While collective understanding is a phenomenon that is experienced subjectively by all, (and indeed, conducts and conveys meaningful and productive societal constructs and their practices), the risk in presuming this phenomenon as objective or universal (when only ever consisting of multiple subjectivities) is that this opens the way for regulating understandings in totalitarian and abstract modes, and this is referred to frequently in the thesis. I argue in this introductory narrative and my papers that reflexivity is a project that is carried out at the limits of subjectivity, where boundaries are always undone, and meaning is constituted while always also exceeded (Minh-ha 1994). Nancy, in his work on embodied writing (meaning-making) explains: 'Bataille always played at being unable to finish, acted out the excess, stretched to the breaking point of writing ... what simultaneously inscribes and exscribes ... what is important is bearing witness to what strains against meaning making (intellection) but simultaneously makes it possible' (Nancy 1992:334-336).

Yet, while meaning making and affective communication require such careful and relationally sensitive orchestration and opportunity, conditions for such continue to decline in a 'modern' world. International economies based on a disconnect with environment/people continue conditions that work against indigenous ways of being. Socio-political administration, supported through media systems, work to suppress relational sociality necessary to symbiotic reciprocity. As colonising relations continue where indigenous sovereignty remains unaddressed, postcolonialism is not a term that can be accurately applied in national narratives, particularly as Globalism continues Imperialism while championing a premise of multicultural tolerance and recognition of

diversity (See critiques from Tuhiwai-Smith 1999, Nakata 2007, Battiste 2002). The ideologies of nationalism go hand in hand with indigenous voice suppression. Continuing colonial notions of temporality and space serve to manipulate all within the western schema, and dehumanize, objectify and invalidate indigenous peoples (eg. Tuhiwai-Smith 1999, Muecke 2005).

While the articles in the thesis explore the themes outlined here, the concurrent DVD project gradually emerged to serve as a practical example of a theory/praxis outcome over the course of the research journey. Here a chance encounter with an Aboriginal Protector's diary from the 1840s sparked a research exploration that revealed the re-emergence Indigenous/indigenous voices. These voices provide a powerful witness to how suppressions surface, re-emerge and break free as atemporality and non-space reveal themselves beyond the limits of the colonial narrative. Tuhiwai-Smith's book on decolonising methodologies argues that decolonising and transformation are processes that connect, inform and clarify tensions that can be incorporated into methodology (Tuhiwai-Smith 1999:116) connecting individuals with each other and their environment (p.148). She writes: 'To create something new through [the] process of sharing is to recreate the old, to reconnect relationships and to recreate our humanness' (p.105).

My journey to connect with the descendents of the families from the 1840s protectorate eventuates in these descendents speaking back to the silencing of their forebears in the most profound ways, to reveal not only the survival but the extraordinary reinvigoration of Indigenous/indigenous voices emerging from this cultural suppression. Therefore, while also a publication joining the other written publications of the thesis, this creative component serves to further illustrate the theoretical arguments developed in the thesis, such as enunciation, trans-immanence and return of the repressed.

In what follows I will detail this academic journey, as a connecting narrative to join, while introducing my thesis by publication papers and the concurrent project that involved the preparation of the DVD. When I introduce these papers, it is my intention that each paper is then read before proceeding further with the connecting narrative. This will then provide a cohesive narrative that includes the theoretical explanations and supporting literature embedded in these papers. By doing this I hope to demonstrate the ongoing development of my research analysis.

Searching, locating, situating voice

The research journey: embodied research

My initial PhD research explored the material effects of voice suppression arising from how subjectivity and sovereignty are interpreted in the Australian national imaginary. While continuing to read up on poststructural theorists in the context of exploring sovereignty, law, land relations and how inequality for Indigenous peoples (as a collective group within the wider community) emerged, I also addressed the work of Indigenous decolonising theorists, (for example: Dodson, Watson, Moreton-Robinson, Tuhiwai Smith, Rigney, Nakata), postcolonial (for example: Bhahba, Spivak, Said, Chambers) and political theorists (for example: Patton, Connolly, Maaka & Fleras, Simpson, Barchum) considering the geopolitical situation for Indigenous peoples of Australia. During this time I was able to apply this research in the preparation of a paper for a law conference on *Passages, the medium of authority*. Research and paper preparation continued as an ongoing methodological practice — as I conducted my research. I chose to prepare and attempt to publish papers that would also allow me to research particular areas of my research question. This allowed for an organic and synergistic methodology to unfold, and enabled me to fully engage with current events in the ‘Australian’ political and historical situation, as they transpired.

At the time I was preparing the *Passages* law paper, I was given a colonial diary written by the son of one of the protectors of Aborigines in ‘Victoria’. Albert Le Souef wrote this diary in 1901 and it reflected back on his early years after he came from England with his mother at 12 years old, to join his father William Le Souef, who was an ‘Aboriginal Protector’ at Murchison during the early 1840s. It was given to me by the great granddaughter of the diarist (an acquaintance of my mother). She had enquired about my research and thought that I would find this helpful. My encounter with this diary set up the concurrent research project that began an exploration into the historicity of Indigenous language groups mentioned in the diary and their descendants today.

In previous research I had explored the denial of ethics in Australian sovereign law, considering land relations in Native Title cases. When it comes to Indigenous land relations, as embodied relationships immersed in reciprocal exchange, the exclusion of Indigenous difference becomes evident when faced with the concept of land ownership.

Australian sovereignty relies on a doctrine of tenure that legislatively positions ‘citizens’ within a conceptual frame that originated with colonial occupancy. The *Rites of Passage?* paper continued this interrogation of the ongoing presumption of sovereignty. Underlying all discussion is the argument that all individuals are inherently subject (and responsible to) their fundamental structure of emplacement. This aporetic structure of emplacement (or the co-sovereign relation) will be argued for in the first paper, but I signal it here as it is theoretically implicit in all papers. In the *Passages* paper the argument begins on p272. In the thesis, when I attempt to align this structure of emplacement with an indigenous perspective I am meaning to align a universe-referent perspective, (as outlined in footnote 3). As mentioned, focus remains on the ongoing construction of identity and the politicising and racialising discourses that continue to suppress indigenous voices in the ‘Australian’ community, and how these discourses, (narratives, signs) directly impact on the lived experience of those that identify as Indigenous in these relations and how they resist these suppressions.

I argue the problem of the suppression of Indigenous/indigenous voice in the wider ‘Australian’ community situates in epistemological structures¹⁰ that continue to form the ‘national’ imaginary at the expense of cultural difference (specifically indigenous in the above sense). Bhabha has said that being obliged to forget is the identifying mark in nationhood (Bhabha 1994 [1]:160). This ‘forgetting’ has largely been incorporated through political and historical constructs of race ideology. To follow Bhabha, the ‘nation’ practices discriminatory authority, psychic and discursive through particular ways of recognising difference as other, yet knowable and visible (Bhabha 1992). I see this ‘forgetting’ as the denial of our existential interrelatedness. If we think of subjective identities in enunciative terms, that is, being constituted in a relation, I am interested in Bhabha’s notion of collective experience as contagion or inter-subjective affect (Bhabha 1994 [1]:187). This intersubjective affect, or contagion, Bhabha argues, is a way to grasp collective experience beyond an understanding based in the idea of universality, rather, it is a shared experience of shared energy (a contingent borderline experience, a mysterious token, a shared experience of indeterminacy, liminality). As difference is iterative, contagion is always a place of disruption, with utterances linking to chains of related utterances. This is arguably a more effective manner of thinking of the constitutive relation of difference — difference as the constitutive structure of ‘being’.

¹⁰ In this sense, it is a question of how social institutions in Australia are predominantly constructed within the logic of the knowledge systems of ‘the West’ as argued above regarding the metaphysical tradition.

Considering the historical circumstances of the forming of ‘Australia’ and unsettling questions of Indigenous relatedness, the strong legacies of assimilation that have been constitutive of the nation have manifested themselves largely through encounters with ‘Indigenous difference’. A national narrative has been shaped largely through a pre-eminence of continuing ‘stories’ of western progress (stories that had long set aside originary relatedness and its material effects). My published papers explore the colonial encounter in a land still occupied by peoples engaged in universe-referent¹¹ cultural practices, and the subsequent positioning of ‘citizens’ to participate in a nation constituted largely within the ‘forgetting’ of these practices.

The Australian national imaginary has continued to constitutively recognise ‘Indigenous’ difference as one or more of the following:

- the threatening other, or exotic, primitive, romantic etc, used in binary opposition
- the same; erasing the political and historical positioning of people identifying as ‘Indigenous’, erasing continuing legacies of oppression facing them, erasing their specific cultural needs, missing the unequal relations of privilege afforded to ‘non-Indigenous’ peoples, and how ‘non-Indigenous’ privilege relies on ‘Indigenous’ identity as subordinate other.
- ‘Australian’ firstly and thus considered ‘equal’, with specific difference responded to with policies of assimilation, with the result that this difference is engaged with only derivatively.

Here I would like to flag that ‘privilege’ as mentioned becomes a misnomer in that privilege directly relates to a ‘forgetting’ of inter-subjectivity and a binary opposition of self over other. Privilege is therefore illusory when considering embedded relationships with others and responsibility to inter-entity relatedness. The question of the suppression of Indigenous/indigenous voice (speaking collectively) continues two methodological aspects in the thesis: one is the interrogation of the suppression of the structure of emplacement for all individuals. The other is the interrogation in terms of the impact on the lived experience of people identifying, and identified as, Indigenous peoples due to the problems of Indigenous representation and how this is connected intimately with the ‘forgetting’ of relations of emplacement and Indigenous peoples’ relations in Country.¹²

¹¹ See footnote 3.

¹² This will be argued in each paper.

Introduction to article: *Rites of Passage*

As problems of exclusion and oppression in Indigenous voices point to difficulties related to recognition, the question of who takes the position of ‘recogniser’ and who is positioned as ‘recognisee’ immediately presents. My research found that most ‘recognition studies’ remain entrenched in the liberal humanist frame, with debates circling around identity and rights and distributive justice from this fundamentally paternalist and predominantly Eurocentric base. This included the liberal theories of Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth, and Nancy Fraser, and was also the case with liberal political theorists, including John Rawls, Will Kymlicka, and Iris Young. The ‘recogniser’, despite discussion that attempts to engage in subject-object interrelation, remains assumed as the imaged ‘state’ and theory remains enmeshed in ego-based individualist patterns of consumption, pre-determined political frames and market forces, along with apriori value definitions of equality, justice, liberty and good. In this paper I engage theoretical arguments of Kelly Oliver (along with other postcolonial and Indigenous thinkers), where recognition is better understood as a witnessing beyond recognition, allowing for the limits of recognition as per current understandings of the inter-dependence of inter-subjective communicatory processes (see *Rites of Passage?* pp. 280, 281).

For the ‘Australian’ community to be able to restructure within a frame that no longer inheres within colonising principles that suppress Indigenous/indigenous voice, there remains the fundamental problem of acknowledging pre-existent and continuing Indigenous sovereignty. Yet the concept of Australian ‘sovereignty’ is highly contested and requires careful elaboration regarding processes of identity formation and relations in land. Sovereignty in the West has been formulated within the histories of the nation-building that constituted in the colonialist occupation of the pre-existing Indigenous peoples’ lands. Sovereignty remains conceptually dependent on the hierarchical structuration of liberal humanist principles of assimilation i.e. utilitarian notions of the greater good and regulatory ideals concerning equilibrium and aggregation of individual interests. These utilitarian interests continue to rely on economic theory reaching from Adam Smith to Milton Friedman, entrenched positivism from Comte to Stuart Mill, resistant idealist analytical philosophy, all incorporated into theories still dependent on rationalist science and narratives of progress.

This is not to say that interventions into this conceptual stronghold are not continually being made. Socio-legal theory in the Australian situation is increasingly engaging with poststructural, postcolonial and Indigenous theorists to better question the legal foundations of Australia's colonially-founded claim to sovereignty. Engaging with such theorists: Terry Threadgold, Peter Fitzpatrick, Stewart Motha, Irene Watson, Trish Luker, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Judith Grbich, Alex Thomson, Wendy Brown as well as other poststructural, postcolonial and Indigenous writers,¹³ my paper, *Rites of Passage* (published 2006 ejournal and 2007 hardcopy) argues for sovereignty as a shared existential relation, engaged substantively within a realm of inter-entity exchange.

It is very much a theoretical/philosophical paper that writes distinctly to the tradition of the western academy of law, yet I am arguing the notion of sovereignty of state, developed within the western schema, needs a radical rethink. It argues for recognition of the pre- and continuing existence of Indigenous/indigenous land relations grounded in indigenous ontologies and epistemologies, and thus renewed emphasis on processes of life, systems of construction, systems that engage responsive interrelationship with land, systems that move away from a static sense of nationhood to recognise multiple lineages and constitutive circumstances, situated historicity and ongoing power relations and the need to locate specificity in its ongoing trajectories. A sovereign relation to land therefore is a relational disposition that considers the aporetic space of the inner witness, beyond recognition (Oliver 2001) and the dangers of universalising. *The following article 'Rights of Passage?' was published in *Law Text Culture*, Vol 11, Melbourne University Press: Melbourne, pp 272-285, 2007. This journal has an A ranking on the Excellence in Research in Australia list by the Australian Research Council.

¹³ See article for further reference details.

Pages 20-28 of this thesis have been removed as they contain published material. Please refer to the following citation for details of the article contained in these pages.

McAllan, F. (2006). Rites of passage? In A. T. Kenyon, P. D. Rush, & A. Young (Eds.), *Passages: law, aesthetics, politics* (pp. 1-9). (Law text culture; Vol. 11). Melbourne: Law and Literature Association University of Melbourne.

The early Protectorate Research begins: embodied research

At the same time as the preparation of this research paper, I also concurrently began my research into the language groups mentioned in the diary of Albert Le Souef (1901), in particular, the Taungarong descendents of the Kulin collective. This research involved ethnographic studies like Clarke, Tindale, Barwick, and historical research like that of Massola, Presland, Broome, Jackomos, Wienke, Briscoe, as well as colonial diaries and reports of Curr, Dredge, Brough Smyth, Thomas, Aboriginal Protection Board and Colonial office reports, and further writings of Le Souef and his son. Crucial to this research was living history accounts of Kulin Elders today (for example: Mission Voices [Australian Broadcasting Corporation], and continuing community consultation). This provided multiple perspectives from which to apply critical analysis.

When I presented the *Passages* paper at a Law conference at Melbourne University, I undertook a research trip travelling the route the son of the Protector/diarist had mapped; and I began familiarising with the current situation in relation to these read histories, to ‘reconstitute the past through [my] accruing experiences ...’ (Parker 2004:165). I’d previously corresponded via phone conversations with a Taungarong Elder who I’d been referred to from the Victorian Aboriginal Language Corporation and Taungarong Custodians (when I’d explained my intention to meet with descendants connected with the early protectorate). The Taungarong clan lands are from the top of the Black Spur near Cathedral Mountain (above township of Healesville) in the south, to Mansfield, Alexandria in the north, and across towns of Murchison, Yea, Kinglake, Broadford, and Strath Creek.

This Elder took me to the Coranderrk cemetery – the only land legislated to the Kulin peoples. The Kulin collective is comprised of the Taungarong and four further language groups from the region, Woiwurrung, Wathawurrung, Boonerwurrung and Djadjawurrung. The Taungarong Elder explained his genealogical trajectory through descent from a child who had been separated from his family and raised by settlers in the Yea area during the time of the Protectorate and the dispossession of the Taungarong people. This was told to me as he stood among his ancestors and gave me a poem that he’d composed concerning responsibility to ancestral memory. Also explained was how his Indigenous lineage had only become known to him fifteen years ago, and how this had clarified for him his personal identificatory processes throughout his life experience.

We'd met at a previously agreed time and place, which turned out to be under a rainbow. The appearance of rainbows when meeting people I was to have a significant relationship with was to be a common occurrence over the next three years.¹⁴ These relationships have expanded my own perceptions concerning universe-referent practices and responsibilities. For example, on travelling to a sacred site of the Taungarong that afternoon, my husband and I both experienced heightened aural perception concerned with ceremonial music that cannot be explained in rational or positivist terms. While (apart from the occurrence of rainbows) I won't focus on further incidents or their frequency, I wish only to signal experiences that have appeared accessible through conscious engagement in universe-referent thinking. My experience has been that the majority of people identifying as Indigenous have conversed with me on such topics. I would argue that incorporating levels of conscious engagement of beyond human-centric thinking belongs to the realm of what Bhabha has termed 'inter-subjective affect' (Bhabha 1990:247, 1994[1]: 203).¹⁵

This research trip also allowed me to meet with other Kulin Elders who worked in academia, to access archives at the Koorie Heritage Trust library, Kulin exhibitions at the Melbourne Museum, and to take walking tours through the city with an Aboriginal guide. Travelling the route of the protector's diary account and engaging in the situation for Kulin descendants today, while reflecting on historical writings, allowed me a productive engagement with identity formation that is closely defined through a sense of place, with responsibilities to the interrelated historicities of place (Miller 2006:26).¹⁶ I then contrasted this awareness with how this particular diarist, typical of colonialists in Australia, applied certain habits of vision, seeing landscape with particular eyes that prevented him from engaging with what was in front of him, thus reinforcing how the colonialist imaginary was particularly clouded by significant themes of romanticism and melancholy.

¹⁴ "The rainbow serpent is the central spiritual presence enervating Aboriginal cultures and their laws throughout Australia – a feared and revered being that usually manifests in vital resource of water and its states and reflections — quartz crystals, storms, lightening, rainbows, rainbow lorikeets, nautilus shells and wherever light is refracted." Zirkler, Frances. *Reparation of a Landscape of Cultural Fragmentation* – Research project completed for USQ EDU 1141 Australian Indigenous Studies, May 2005, accessed November 2010 at http://studentweb.usq.edu.au/home/W0024481/namba_fella/html/research%20paper.html

¹⁵ I.e. a shared experience of shared energy (a contingent borderline experience, mysterious token, shared experience of indeterminacy, liminality).

¹⁶ I considered this in light of my non-Indigenous socialisation, considering also researchers with a similar experience. Miller writes on Aboriginal belonging and the 'intrinsic place that grounding in country has for Aboriginal life, identity, and well being'. (Miller 2009: 26) Myers has argued that in his research with Pintupi people he has tried to work '... towards explication of their actions as they understand them' (2006:253). Barwick's (1998) exploration of Kulin/settler interrelations sensitively documents the cross-cultural miscommunications of this period due to protracted settler inability to engage with indigenous lore and perspectives. Broome (2005) also writes on this period with the aim to include indigenous perspectives, though I find his account continues valuations filtered through a persistent liberal humanist paternalism.

Beilharz finds that while cultural forms are always hybrid, the strong reliance on assimilation in colonialist imperialism constructed landscape and peoples as exotic or grotesque, to produce an idealised Aboriginal culture while paradoxically exterminating at the same time. The exoticism he argues results from the guilt of cultural domination compelling a confessing of truth while living a lie. Beilharz also argues that representation as 'primitive' is a very powerful way to occupy culture, projecting archaism into the very centre of the nationalist narrative (Beilharz 1997).

This perspective was clearly evident in the language that the diarist Le Souef employs to describe his observations of Indigenous peoples and their practices during the Protectorate period, for example: 'the wild state of the blacks', 'ferocity', 'jabbering', 'wailing', 'incantations' 'witchcraft' 'barbarous' 'truculent turbulent black' 'murdering propensities' 'savage' (Le Souef 1900:5-18) . These terms are contrasted with ennobling terms such as the 'kindliness' and 'innocence' of the 'blacks', along with a continual foregrounding of titles and achievements of the diarist's peers within the colonial realm of progress, and his own reified adventures, upheld as the merited life of the squatter. The juxtapositioning of stark differences in Indigenous and colonialist perceptions enabled for well-grounded insights into these read histories.

Following the constructivist perspective that identity formation takes place as mutual co-construction in ever differing socio-political forces, I also was mindful to focus on the inter-relations of Indigenous and settler peoples within genealogic¹⁷ trajectories, elaborating how these identities were mutually constituted within ever-modifying relations of power. I was also awake to the blurred lines between the fixity of definitions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity, (as these identities continue to become defined in the 'national' imaginary), and how this plays out in the historicity of suppression of frontier mixed-'race' relations, and concurrent assimilation policies.

¹⁷ Foucault (1984), writing on Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, explains origins as dispersals not unities. 'History reveals origins in a production of errors – a genealogy will never confuse itself but will cultivate the details and accidents that accompany every beginning.' (p.79)

Who's saying what? Tuning out the disconnected coloniser's noise

Speaking 'mineness'. Introduction to the article: *Customary Appropriations*?

After reading the protector's diary account and other colonial accounts mentioned above, I was interested to explore the ongoing effects of the deep colonial investment in the concept of primitivism, along with the ideologies of nationhood in relation to their role in the suppressing of Indigenous/indigenous voice in the 'Australian' situation. This was stimulated also by concurrent federal government and media rhetoric concerning Indigenous peoples in the Northern Territory and a debate that had begun circulating about customary laws, violence and child abuse, along with government discussions on economic responsibility and leasing of communal lands. The preparation of two papers, '*Customary Appropriations*' and '*Australian Community: Bound for More of the Same*' (both published late 2007), enabled me to explore these contemporary politico-historical situations, considering Indigenous representation and its impact on peoples identifying, and identified as, Indigenous and the mechanisms connected with their voice suppression in light of the problems concerned with the continuing colonising attempt to define and maintain a homogenous nation and ground its laws.

This was a period of increasing neo-conservative government policy in 'Australia', despite, or perhaps in response to, the increasingly diverse populous. International debate on the 'War on terror' weighed in, along with a revival of debate on contested history/culture. Under these conditions, already overtly-politicised, contested and externally-defined Indigenous identities were subjected to insistently ahistorical assumptions and draconian policies.

Customary appropriations attempts to connect the racialised and politicised discourses with situations as they impacted lives on the ground, and suggested a re-examination of 'risky inter-subjectivity inherent in perspectivism with a possibility to learn oursness in place of mineness' (Mummery 2007). A racialised discourse on paedophilia had been directed at Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, at the time when the Howard federal government was aiming to ensure Indigenous peoples agreed to sign up to 99 year leases of their lands. There was considerable resistance to these leases; the Alice Springs town camps had long resisted major monetary offers for the purchase of their lands. This situation developed into an emergency intervention by the government, one year after this

initial mediated campaign. The intervention legalised the compulsory acquisition of these lands, with the premise that these communities were rife with child abuse.¹⁸

The paper engages with Indigenous, poststructural, and critical whiteness theorists¹⁹ to connect the misrepresentation and suppression of Indigenous voices with ontologically possessive relations with land and people, and seeks to open space for critical reflection on the co-existence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations, considering the finite/infinite parameters of a relational ontology and how relational communication can be better negotiated. I attempt to highlight the constitutive aporicity of identity as an embodied relation (which more adequately articulates indigenous conceptions of law that *lives* relationally).²⁰ I argue this relation (the structure of individual emplacement) as trans-immanent, (its doubling structure, its situated and situating ground, exceeds and confounds the mind/body opposition and transcendental idealism).

This further theorises ways to transform society from the material affects of objectivism. In contradistinction to the coloniser's dominant yet obtuse perspective and the unnecessary and oppressive noise created from this, speaking 'oursness' allows for the perspectives of the other, and for the greater world to have voice. *The following publication *Customary Appropriations?* was published in *Borderlands ejournal*, Vol 6. Issue 3, 2007. This journal has a B ranking on the ERA ranked journal list.

¹⁸ Though the claims of child abuse were unjustified, the current Rudd government offered Indigenous communities over twice the amount offered during this Howard government period (so amounting to \$125m.) for leases on their lands, and a deadline before compulsory acquisition would take place (if the town camps would not sign). The Rudd package offered an exchange of basic infrastructure that was standard provision to areas outside the camps across Australia (Coyne 2009:1&11). Compulsory acquisitions went ahead in 2009.

¹⁹ Critical whiteness theorists argue that whiteness cannot escape its own racialised positioning. Whiteness presumes neutrality while invisibly maintaining control in power relations. Whiteness, as an unmarked marker of others' differentness, operates as a norm (Frankenburg 1993).

²⁰ Watson argues: 'Law is lived, sung, danced ... law lives in all things ...' (Watson 2006: 16, 17). Bayet-Charlton writes of dreaming relations: 'Aboriginal land and the meaning behind it passes on information about the environment to each generation' (2003: 173).

Pages 34-47 of this thesis have been removed as they contain published material. Please refer to the following citation for details of the article contained in these pages.

McAllan, F. J. (2007). Customary Appropriations. *Borderlands ejournal*, 6(3), 1-32.

The noise of disconnection. Introduction to the article: *Australian Community: Bound for More of the Same?*

Bound for More of the Same? argues against the national narrative that uses fixed Indigenous representations of identity which deny socio-interchange, and reveals the resulting material consequences for those excluded from the 'national conversation'. It identifies the limitations of the homogenising involved in producing the national narrative which creates the stifling of specificity and cultural difference. The article therefore posits community as interrelation, a processional passage that unbinds, not to be seen as non-communication, but as expressions of difference (see article p. 39). In allowing for difference communication is able to take place on inter-entity levels and different world views are brought together to be negotiated. Beyond a presumed homogenous and unified nation that can only produce what is excluded as a contradiction to this wholeness, the place of community is theoretically argued as the 'aporetic relation between recognition and resistance and the doubled relation of subjectivity that exceeds this opposition', (pp. 38-40) engaging with theories of Moreton-Robinson and Watson, Nancy, Derrida, and Secomb.

The article argues that all identities become compromised by ideological assimilatory structures of *sameness* (Levinas 1969)²¹ that produces disengagement from specifically-lived experience and relationality. The suppression of indigenous voices is caused by abstraction from the world around, from a hyper-control of one's world, filled with self interest at the expense of the other and therefore denying the voice of the other. Certain abstract and objectified perceptions become stuck in consciousness, making the coloniser's tongue increasingly disconnected and dangerous. Problematising fixed subject positions of 'Englishness' and 'Indigeneity' I argue that subjects rather retain their specific socio-cultural constitution within their genealogical trajectories. I juxtapose settler tenure relations with indigenous custodial relations (as 'people and land centric' Watson 2006) to explore further the contradictions western ontological strictures pose in light of inter-subjectivity. * The following Publication *Australian Community: Bound for More of the Same?* was published in *Transforming Cultures ejournal*, Vol 2 No 1. UTS ePress Journals: Sydney, 2007. This journal is listed C on the ERA ranked journal list.

²¹ Levinas argues that western ontology (traditional metaphysics) enacts a relation with being which reduces the other to the same.

Pages 49-70 of this thesis have been removed as they contain published material. Please refer to the following citation for details of the article contained in these pages.

McAllan, F. (2007). The 'Australian' community: bound for more of the same? *Transforming cultures ejournal*, 2(1), 35-56.

Learning to speak with

Indigenous and Poststructural synergies: Tuning in the mother tongue

As relations with land and indigenous conceptions of identity are tightly interwoven (Mowaljarli 1993, Martin 2007, Myers 2006, Miller 2006) I continued to read up on indigenous-defined lore, increasing my reading of Indigenous writers on lore/law. At the same time I continued my historical research in relation to the Victorian protectorates, which included Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers Ellemor, Rose, Read, oral histories, Birch, R Maynard, Tatz, Taylor, Schmitt and Roy, Haebich, McGrath, Goodall and others. The more I read about indigenous conceptions of relational ontology, considering my non-Indigenous socialisation, the more I found points of resonance in my knowledge of posthumanist thinking, providing further insight into inter-subjective communication and the effects of suppression of indigenous voice, which was then conceptually engaged in my papers. Lyotard (1993) points to the location of subjects within a complex cosmography when writing of the nature of the social bond considering the postmodern perspective. He writes ‘...breaking up of the grand narratives’ has brought new ways of articulating socialisation, which:

some authors analyse in terms of dissolution of social bond and the disintegration of social aggregates into a mass of individual atoms thrown into the absurdity of Brownian motion. Nothing of the kind is happening: this point of view, it seems to me, is haunted by the paradisiac representation of a lost ‘organic’ society. A self does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before. Young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, a person is always located at ‘nodal points’ of specific communication circuits; however tiny these may be (Lyotard 1993: Chpt 5).

Resonating with this, yet extending to include the living environment is Leroy Little Bear’s explanation of a Native American place perspective:

... constituting through tasks conducted as dwelling in a particular place within a region of places, each place part of a relational network within three dimensional territory, with sources of nourishment, feeding us with knowledge, spiritual and physical, elements, land and animals relied on (1998:15).

Explanations of Australian indigenous relational ontology have often been conveyed through terminology of the ‘dreaming’ within the context of western usage, which is an

attempt at a transcultural conceptualisation to begin to explain indigenous ontological relations. For example, the following is paraphrased from Miller (2006:19-27), in relation to Aboriginal ontologies within Australia:

Ontology emerges through Dreaming Beings traversing the earth, defining enduring cosmic shapes, places and connections of the physical world (thus embodying the spatial and conceptual framework within which indigenous being is understood). Dreaming Beings thus define space and time, transforming from subjects to objects as they institute the physical world. By imprinting at particular locations deposits of the life essence contained in their bodies, these deposits continue to exist in the earth, as infinite and eternal funds of power, which serve as guarantors for the continued animation of life. The relationship between Dreaming narratives and landscape has a double movement, that is, ‘on the one hand, landscapes are formed by a process of separation from the originating subjects’ (Dreaming Beings’ cosmogonic narratives), at same time, ‘landscapes are constituted by a binding of Dreaming Beings and these narratives to landscape in atemporal and enduring identification. Thus, in the same relation as subject and object, from out of Dreaming narratives comes landscapes and vice versa’ (Miller 2006:24).

Miller sketches here how Dreaming beings are beyond the boundedness of anthropomorphism and linear teleology.²²

Noonuccal academic Martin explains indigenous relational ontology in regard to her country: ‘We believe that country is not only the Land and People, but is also the Entities of Waterways, Animals, Plants, Climate, Skies and Spirits. Within this, one Entity should not be raised above another, as these live in close relationship with one another’ (Martin 2007:23). Indigenous ontologies and poststructural thinking resonate in their deconstruction of human-centric models of western traditional metaphysics and the foregrounding of non-anthropocentrism. Non-anthropocentrism considers the inter-relational positioning of the human within the complexities of its emplacement.

I find this non-anthropocentric ontological relation in Derrida’s aporetic existential structure, particularly where he engages with Plato’s Khora as ‘place’, ‘space’, ‘site’,

²² Although I have incorporated Miller’s sketch of Dreaming ontology here I do not concur with Miller’s thesis findings concerning ontological belonging (which I find insufficient regarding responsibilities of individual emplacement, particularly with regard to indigenous laws of place). In relation to this see section on Responsibility and Emplacement beginning on p.95 with attention to disembodied idealism.

‘location’ ‘receptacle of becoming’ to reveal this as unrepresentable, the disrupter that the binary division of mind over body denies (Derrida 1995). Derrida deconstructs the presumed self-grounding foundationalism of western ontology, and writes rather of a non-anthropocentric relationality: ‘this difficult ambivalent relation to place, as though the place in question in hospitality were a place originally belonging to neither host nor guest but to the gesture by which one of them welcomes the other ...’ (Derrida 2000:60-62). And post-colonial theorist Spivak (1990:53) iterating with Derrida, argues affirmative deconstruction as a critique of anthropomorphism.

Further iterations are evident when Bhabha explains ‘it is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in the contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to inherent originality or purity are untenable’ (1990: 37). To be unhomely is not to be homeless, it the desire for recognition for somewhere else and for something else (9). The third space of enunciation is unrepresentable (37) and only makes sense as subjects come to be constituted in relations, always in tension (25).

This constitutive relation thus incorporates subjectivity in its interrelatedness with all other cosmic ingredients. Non-anthropocentrism presents the human within the interconnections of its emplacement. Theories of embodiment, like Merleau Ponty’s concept of ‘flesh’ (1968), have also attempted to engage with the biosphere ‘as it is experienced and lived from within and by the intelligent body, by the attentive human animal who is entirely part of the world of experience’ (Abram 1996:65). In terms of the metaphysical tradition of presence, such theories reject any direction towards premises that depend on a ‘pretheoretical substrate of experience’ (for example apriori Kantian) which are ‘inadequate to its own terms of understanding’, and thus merely self-referential (Critchley 2001:115).

In continually challenging linear conceptualising of time and space, Indigenous theorists writing on indigenous ontology and deconstructivist philosophers again resonate strongly. I see Derrida’s concept of *differance* as an attempt to theorise the complexity of relations of space, time and meaning. Bernstein writes of Derrida:

Difference, (radicalised by Derrida’s neologism *differance* to bring out both spatial and temporal resonances, identity being an effect of differences from other elements *and* between events of repetition), is the *milieu* in which identities are

sketched but never quite achieved (any element being defined only in terms of all the others and all its repetitions, the *trace* of which remains as a constitutive contamination) but never quite lost (differ^{ance} can be thought of as a dispersion but never an *absolute* dispersion (Berstein 1999:553).

Calarco (2009) has pointed to how Derrida has insisted that the trace is not simply human. The trace remains within and beyond any presumedly finite realm of existence. And Grosz has also argued that time needs to be reconceptualised to allow for cosmographic inventiveness:

Science ... has been unable to adequately address that which frames the practical, the interconnections between units and systems, the ways that systems are cut out from a cloth that unites and intermingles them with all other systems and processes in fundamental and unbroken continuity with them ... their integration is not additive but transformative ... time is not only the regulative force of life ... it is the very motor of existence ... in principle outside, before, and beyond matter, a precondition of matter's emergence, and the force that, surprisingly, without predictability, rends life from its more unstable interactions ... life protracts the temporal delay latent in physical processes into a productive freedom, an indeterminacy, into the creation of the new, into invention itself ... cultural and natural networks remain open-ended and exhibit emergent properties as they increase in complexity over time ... [in] nonequilibrium processes or dissipative structures ... time can be understood as always doubled ... the present and past coexist. They function simultaneously ... the past grows and augments itself with every present ... the past is always already contained in the present, not as its cause or its pattern but as its latency, its virtuality, its potential for being otherwise ... the past is our resource for overcoming the present ... the more we will avail ourselves of its resources, the more enriched are the current possibilities of transformation ... the future erupts through a kind of leap ... of the untimely or the nick ... an unexpected shift ... which reorients the past ... whose reanimation reorganises its present ... in a continuity that is also a discontinuity, a becoming ... only if the present [is] fractured by the interventions of the past and the promise of the future, can the new be invented, welcomed, and affirmed (Grosz 2004: 245-261).

This doubled relation of past/present within time and its inherent transformative qualities are what Stanner's account of dreaming also points to:

In the Dreaming, from any particular point in time, the past may be future and the future may be present. Time does not extend back through a series of pasts, but

rather is ‘a vertical line in which the past underlies and is within the present’; past and present are mutually compenetrative (Hume 2002: 38 citing Stanner 1976:18).²³

Further dreaming versions are: Strehlow attempts to articulate the Arunta version of *altjira* (dreaming) as ‘eternal, uncreated, sprung out of itself’ (Strehlow 1970:614). And Reverend Kempe from Hermannsburg Mission, through his relationships with Indigenous teachers describes dreaming as ‘old, very old, something that has no origin, mysterious, something that has always been so, also, always’ (p. 596). But importantly Mudrooroo makes the distinction when describing conceptions such as ‘dreaming’ or ‘time’ considering the context of translation and western usage: ‘We are not dealing with a simple word to word translation such as *yonga* equals ‘kangaroo’, but with a complex metaphysical and spiritual concept for which there is simply no adequate English rendering’ (Mudrooroo 1995:41).

David Mowaljarli points to the atemporality of these ‘dreaming’ relations: ‘when the mind is tuned in you are in an ancient state of mind; time stands still, because your mind is in a state where time does not count. It’s not like dreaming seeing things in your sleep. Ancient time is no time’ (1993:67).

Derrida has articulated the doubling relation of linear time and ‘no time’ and how this relates to the constitution of subjectivity, explaining the movement of *differance* as two orders of temporality operating at the same time, one now and the other an irreducible teleology, so that presence cannot be retained but is irreducibly opened to what precedes and exceeds it (Derrida 1998). There is only the constitution of absolute differentiation and a paradoxically deferring connectedness. Bhabha refers to this teleological disjunction or timelag (1990:183) as the ‘zone of occult instability’, the enunciation of cultural difference problematising the binary of past and present, producing the enunciative split between the teleological myth and the displacing time of negotiation, which deconstructs any logic of synchrony and evolution (Bhabha 1990:35-39, 181-195). He writes ‘people emerge in the uncanny moment of ghostly simultaneous repetitive time of the alienating anterior rather than origin, which is a sudden timelessness of all at once, not synchronous ... a temporal

²³ Hume citing Rose (1987:268): ‘The notion of compenetrative time permits an understanding of how, when Dreaming events are ritually performed, these events are not merely re-enacted in ritual but are concurrently enacted. Aboriginal spirituality leads people toward ‘an immanent experience of unity in the here and now’. It is a ‘unity of time, life and place in which human beings are responsible conduits for life and at the same time are pivotal actors in cosmic processes.’ (Hume 2002: 38-39)

break ...' (159). Where Bhabha sketches this relational state as 'contagion', Derrida sketches it as the place of inter-subjective 'communication' (Derrida 1998: 115).

So what I'd understood as the doubling relation of teleology, evident in poststructural accounts of relational ontology, resonated strongly with Indigenous accounts of relational ontology, where 'Dreaming Beings' endure atemporally and interact with individuals as they participate in reciprocal relations (Hume 2002: 78), according to their subjective emplacement. Locating the places of resonance in these different areas of research has further expanded my explorations of the interstices between cultural difference and shared subjectivity.

Yet while posthumanists have critically questioned, decentered and disrupted anthropocentric thinking, I agree with Calarco (2009) that there remains a lack of conceptual effort in western thinking to adequately rethink the ethico-political status of the rest of the living and non-living entities that constitute the biosphere. This is likely indicative of how thinkers within western frameworks have so long been disconnected from awareness of their indigenous emplacement. Indigenous theorists consider, far more comprehensively, the world in this extended interconnected and processional relationality, and consider responsibilities of individual emplacement in relation to the network of 'dreaming' narratives that traverse the earth (Mowaljarli 1993, Edwards 2008).

Mudrooroo reveals this comprehensive awareness of interconnectedness and relatedness in its holistic sense: 'Our spirituality is a oneness and an interconnectedness with all that lives and breathes, even with all that does not live and breathe. It is not a matter of this or that religion, of traditional beliefs or non-traditional. It is a feeling of oneness, of belonging ...' (Mudrooroo 1995:43). Hume, reflecting on this interconnectedness in regard to the limits of western metaphysical tradition finds: 'As Aboriginal philosophy merges self, Ancestors, and other species as one and the same thing, there is more a merging with the Dreaming rather than transcendence of self' (Hume 2000:167).

As I researched further and my access to indigenous-specific experience increased, these resonations between Indigenous and poststructural/postcolonial theorists contributed to my clearer awareness of the largely misunderstood atemporal and generative openness necessary to the 'oneness' of indigenous relational ontology. My increasing interest in how these theorists resonate thus reveals my ongoing desire to extend thinking and ethos to

consider the beyond of human-centric thinking and how this beyond is articulated within collective indigenous voices,²⁴ and what this implies regarding the mechanisms connected to their suppression. This is particularly important when considering how Indigenous peoples (and their knowledges within their extended relations in country) are so often ‘required to act through or in the face of the dominant representation by others’ (Myers citing Fanon 2006:253). This has been the case historically in Australia, as elsewhere in the world. So this focus continued to develop within my research experience trajectory, increasing also my self-exploration²⁵ within relationships with Indigenous subjects and Indigenous/indigenous knowledges.

²⁴ In the sense of individual emplacement

²⁵ While always impossible.

Transformation from ‘speaking for’ to ‘speaking with’

I was concerned to find a research practice that engaged the research regarding the Kulin descendents beyond an anthropological analysis that writes on, and on behalf of, Indigenous peoples as the ‘object’ of analysis (Guba and Lincoln 1989, Denzin and Lincoln 2000, Minh-ha 1994, Bhabha & Burgin 1994).²⁶ I attended an Indigenous symposium and masterclass on the history debates in light of Indigenous epistemologies, where I was able to have individual guidance concerning my research project in Victoria, as well as be steered in particular research methods from Indigenous/indigenous perspectives. Karen Martin provided crucial insights in research methods through her recently completed framework for indigenist research ethics, responsibilities and protocols (Martin 2007).²⁷ For example, working within a framework of relatedness decentres theories where non-Indigenous agency has been central in race relation constructions, (which remain inadequate to interpretations of Indigenous/indigenous experience and agency). Crucial to this methodology is the practice of continually contextualising research materials in their complexity, with close attention to historical details and their absences within historical sources, (Brady 2007) as well as understanding interrelations as relationally dynamic rather than active/passive. It was also clearly necessary to include my own self-evaluations and continue to locate myself in my research, staying aware of the limits of my ‘knowing’ and my responsibilities of self-regulation in a research community, therefore respecting and protecting relatedness (Martin 2007).²⁸

To write ‘with’, rather than ‘for’, considers that ‘As we listen to each others stories, there is no passivity, the other’s story is actively recreating our own story, and we share our participation in the act of telling, listening, creating, interpreting subjectively’ (Attwood 1994:217). In preparing an academic response, along with descendent groups in Victoria, my interest was on the co-constructing of subjects (MacDougall 1994), attending to the joint production of meaning and historicity.

Along this research path it had become clear that critical whiteness theory provides crucially effective tools for ‘non-Indigenous’ researchers when writing on identity and

²⁶ Bhabha, critiquing Burgin’s book *Between*, where Burgin writes about the between of theory and practice in relation to film theory, writes ‘One of the characteristics of this place ‘in between’ is that there is always that moment of surprise, that moment of interrupting something. (p. 454)’

²⁷ With indebtedness to Lester Irabinna-Rigney and others.

²⁸ Notes from Martin’s seminar at the Masterclass.

suppression of voice. When considering representation of identity boundaries within the western frame, Moreton Robinson (2003[1]) brought attention to how non-Indigenous women can negotiate with patriarchal power while keeping Indigenous women positioned always in relation to them, therefore continuing patriarchal oppressions towards Indigenous women.

The challenge was for 'non-Indigenous' scholars to continually make themselves subject to critical historical enquiry (Ravenscroft 2006, Spivak 1990), in order to assist them in recognising their privilege in power relations and then relinquishing it (Probyn 2007). At the same time there are those that suggest this creates an Indigenous authority (Cowlshaw 2005), or risks creating an anti-racist subject position that assumes a universalism whiteness studies hopes to decentre (Wiegman 2003). This points to the difficulty that critical whiteness both focuses on and risks in its elaboration. This is the difficulty of rebinarising that can form in further debate, as well as the inherent risk involved in reinscribing the binary of 'white' and 'black' in public debate.

As particular identificatory practices are inherent to systems of power utilised in nation building and its administrative management, Indigenous/indigenous peoples have been positioned to engage in particularly problematic identificatory systems in order to have access to any entitlements western systems control. I became more aware of how, prior to 'settlement', identity, for the purpose of rights and ownership etc was not an issue that concerned (in the same way) the many and varied language groups in which Indigenous peoples lived. This increased my understanding of lived experience organised around shared kinship responsibilities and individual responsibilities in relation with each other and the land, where responsibilities understood in these cultural terms therefore designate one's entitlement to speak (Edwards 2007, Myers 2006, Morphy 1992). Prior to the exposure to colonial powers, identities had not been bounded within abstract hierarchical structures, so that identificatory processes had not been geared to generate social patterns of individual and collective subordination. Yet, when faced with colonising relations, the issue of authority regarding entitlement to speak requires particularly reflexive investigation. And this need for reflexivity increases with the uncertainty unfolding that becomes a division between 'white' and 'black' in 'Australia'.

I therefore became increasingly aware of the difference in indigenous and nationhood identificatory systems and how they operate in Australia, which increased my reflexivity

considering my own positioning within unmarked systems that normalise and mask power. Not being exposed to the same living conditions as someone whose identity was either marked, or claimed to be, 'Indigenous', I was awake to considering my own unseen relations of 'privilege' that a 'non-Indigenous' socialisation had afforded me (Schlunke 2006). I attempted further explorations into 'self analysis' (while always impossible), exploring how to unpack the continuing influences of this socialisation that enable me to normalise my own unchecked positions of advantage.

At this point in my research (at this masterclass) I commenced a friendship with an Indigenous academic whose thesis had also been exploring settler/Indigenous relations. I was encouraged to begin searching my own family history, and was pointed towards the unexamined mixed ancestry of many Australians. Our initial conversation together, when this academic first questioned whether I had Indigenous heritage, was moments prior to a shared experience of looking up to discover a rainbow overhead.

I also began a series of workshops on indigenous knowledges with a Darkinjung Elder, teacher and philosopher, who provided me with individualised and group instruction (practical and theoretical) concerning indigenous foods and medicines, art, dance, song/ceremony and lore. I continued to attend these workshops on a regular basis, extending my experience in particular presumed 'traditional' knowledges and the learning processes involved. These workshops on indigenous knowledge continuity, as practiced today in current applications, enabled me further reflexivity about the loaded associations with primitivism and nostalgia this term can carry in the paradigm of 'Indigenous' representation. The workshops have involved re-invigorated and re-negotiated cultural practices at the critical edge of thinking/being, as they are engaged in the present (see also Myers 2006, Kavelin 2008). Extensive discussions of indigenous conceptions of time had been conducted during these workshops, which were also under discussion at the masterclass, and this continues to assist with thinking that emerges for me in the interstices with posthumanist thinking. The indigenous conceptions of time that I have encountered dispel all essentialist claims through the doubling relation of subjectivity.

Methodology for speaking with: Protectorate Research continues

I realised that I would need to spend an extended period of time in Victoria to familiarise myself with present communities and relations there in order to be able to make any situated and substantive research response (Shank 2002). I travelled to the region and sought to establish relationships with descendants who would be interested to 'write with me' (Nancy 2000)²⁹ regarding exploring the mechanisms of suppression in relation to Indigenous/indigenous voices connected to this historicity. My partner and I arranged to spend three months near Healesville from January till April of 2007. Healesville is the township that established alongside, and eventually within, land allocated for the Coranderrk mission, where families associated with the Murchison Protectorate, and others, were provided 'protection' by the Victorian Aboriginal Protection Board from the 1860s until 1920s.

My first points of contact, apart from the Elder I had been communicating with since my first visit, were with Indigenous peoples working in the education system, (Swinburne University, and the local high school and primary school Indigenous support teachers, cultural liaison), the Indigenous Health Service, and through referral, once I had begun talking with community members. I had also previously established email contact with some of these people, contacting Elders in the communities of the Yarra Yarra and Wurrundjeri, Taungarong, Boonerong and Yorta Yorta (Bangerang). Some contact was very informal and quickly established and other meetings were more formal and protracted.

I took opportunities to experience different community groups, for example, a local church group advertised a 'get to know your community day', and I went along to explore present

²⁹ The theory of Nancy (particularly his book *Being Singular Plural* and his philosophical premise of 'Being With') has been influential to my understanding of this concept. He deals with the question of how it is possible to speak of 'we' and argues there is no being without 'being-with' ... 'I' does not come before 'we' ... existence is essentially co-existence. Nancy states: 'We co-appear and this appearing is meaning.' (1992:92) An exposing of the world and its proper being-with-all-beings in the world in their betweenness. (2000:84) So we, in the relatedness of our bodies, present this world, in a presence that is always unrepresentable, impossible except as co-presence. Meaning at the edge of meaning or thinking at the limit of thinking. Language, as incorporeal, is excessively embodied and meaning is excessive of language's terms. As such meaning is ineffable, unutterable, 'existence constitutes itself only in exceeding itself and exposing itself to itself as the movement of this excess' (Beistegui 1997:165) The project that I was attempting with the descendants was to therefore reflect this 'we' rather than a researcher's 'objective' analysis which can only be based on the researcher's subjective interpretation.

theological connections with Indigenous families considering the past mission life of Coranderrk. When enquiring about Indigenous-identifying membership I found that this particular group appeared to have no understanding beyond a conventional Anglo/Celt church view of outreach work with people in the Northern Territory, or Papua New Guinea, with no apparent knowledge of the Indigenous descendent populations in their midst.

I also took every opportunity to talk to people in my day to day experiences, interacting with shop owners, the historical society group, owners and workers at tourist outlets, local journalists, taking every opportunity to develop conversations (Parker 2004:173). I was in touch with local reconciliation networks, council workers or others working with Indigenous peoples, attended the local Indigenous community arts centre to find out about local activities, went to cultural events and openings, the Survival Day festival in Melbourne, the Long walk reconciliation day and other activism, and cultural ceremonies. I became aware of community members who were working consistently to strengthen Indigenous/indigenous culture. For example, one member, by no means atypical, was working as an Indigenous support teacher, while also coordinating the governance program (providing skills necessary for applying for government funding, community management etc), leading cultural workshops with reconciliation groups, holding stalls at community functions, and was significantly involved in long term community efforts to regain a cultural centre and transfer the council administrated Indigenous Health Service to an Indigenous Controlled Health Service.

In exploring and establishing my points of contact and directions for the research I was not intending to engage prescribed ethnographic methods but follow my gut responses, as well as follow up on my initial experiences that had begun to lead me along a path that I trusted would only widen up as it should, if I remained open to what presented, increasing reflexivity through this process. Coming to the research with pre-established frameworks with which to evaluate my circumstances would risk limiting a more intuitive, exploratory approach to my learning. So, as I followed leads as they presented, I focussed on becoming aware of how I was being directed in my evaluation from within these experiences.

From what I have since learnt about indigenous methodologies and pedagogy I have become aware of how these research approaches were following the paths of an indigenous relational ontology.

Exploring the material affects of what gets said

I became aware quite quickly of constitutive circumstances that had produced both divisions and alliances within the wider community of Healesville, between ‘Indigenous’ and ‘non-Indigenous’ identifying peoples, and also between ‘Indigenous’ identifying individuals and groups. As entrenched political conditions that suppressed Indigenous voices were so evident in the historical research, it was important to explore how and which particular legacies of suppression have been continued, and what have been the material affects.

Divisive situations were often readily revealed in casual conversation. For example, a non-Indigenous identifying woman who ran a tearoom explained to us that she had worked with a local Indigenous Elder when they were younger, ‘before all the fuss about being Aboriginal had come about’. I was made aware of this perception in others identifying as non-Indigenous also, that is, that a closer, ‘non-racist’ community had existed in a former time, when political movements had not begun to agitate, and when people who had appeared to be happy to identify atypically, were now identifying as ‘Indigenous’. This threw light on what ‘non-racist’ community meant in these cases i.e. where racism was rendered invisible through Indigenous identity being turned into sameness so that ‘Indigenous’ identity held no threatening difference (McKay 1999:4-5).

The 1909 NSW Protection Act definition of Aboriginality, its amendments in 1915, and the 1983 definition that remains current³⁰, demonstrate different determinations regarding the public recognition and administration of Aboriginality. These changes in definition reflect the political conditions and public attitudes over these years, with increased awareness within the white community over time, stemming from Aboriginal activism³¹ and wider political resistance. The premise that former times were less racist and more

³⁰ The 1909 NSW Protection Act stated ‘Aborigine means any full blooded or half-caste Aborigine who is a native of Australia and who is temporarily or permanently residing in NSW’. Aborigines were ‘managed’ on reserves, and the Protection Board could take ‘any neglected child with apparent admixture of blood to be apprenticed to any master’, and they would remain under supervision of the board, <http://www.caught-in-the-act.kathystavrou.net/1909-ab.-prot.-act.html> The definition of an Aboriginal person by the Federal Government, (for example, as defined by the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983), is a person who 1. is of Aboriginal descent 2. identifies as an Aboriginal person 3. is accepted by the Aboriginal community in which they live http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/adb/ll_adb.nsf/pages/adb_who accessed November 2010.

³¹ For example: Cummeragunga walkoff in Victoria, which led to William Ferguson and William Cooper heading the Day of Mourning protest in 1938, and the Australian Aborigines League beginning more organised resistance in Sydney, Pastor Nichols bringing awareness of Maralinga in the 1950s and the Wave Hill Walk off initiated by Vincent Lingiari in the 1960s, along with Charles Perkin’s Freedom rides that connected Aboriginal resistance to the broader political activism of this period.

congenial within Australian communities finds no support in such historical circumstances, but these historical conditions do reveal how Aboriginal voices have been striving to be heard.

I was made aware also, of even more overtly racist views in the Healesville communities. For example, one person who held a prominent community position, when telling me of a grant that was made to descendent families from Coranderrk, made the comment ‘they let the place run down in no time’, made in a ‘knowing’ manner towards me, as if I, appearing as ‘white’, would quickly identify with this particular perception (Applebaum 2006³²). Comments like this were enlightening regarding the long-held prejudice concerning land usurpation and the earlier narratives of primitivism shared by the settler community and Aboriginal Protection Board, evident in my historical research on community interactions of the past (Barwick 1998, Broome 2005, APB reports³³).

There’d been exceptions to these attitudes in the past, but this view appeared to have prevailed in some parts of the non-Indigenous identifying community. There was an obvious omission in much contemporary conversation (from those identifying as non-Indigenous) about the actualities of oppression, and longstanding non-recognition and exclusion of ‘Indigenous’ peoples throughout this shared history.

Some people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous identifying, expressed that the Healesville community was very integrated and mutually supportive considering its mission history. This perhaps reflected conditions where children had grown up together in similar social circumstances due to strong assimilation incentives. We were invited to one Elder’s house on numerous occasions to play bridge with old friends (who appeared to be identifying as non-Indigenous) and conversation often went to the ‘good old days’ of a close community. Yet I also knew that this same Elder worked tirelessly on increasing community awareness of ‘Indigenous’ culture and of the societal pressures that motivated her to integrate unproblematically into the ‘non-Indigenous’ community throughout her earlier years. There were many contradictions in her lived-experience within the community, yet she regardless continued to gesture beyond reactivity and bitterness. Her modulations in conversation revealed much continuity concerning passed on knowledges,

³² Applebaum writes of the perpetuation of racism through relations of complicity.

³³ For example: Historical Records of Victoria Volume 2A *The Aborigines of Port Phillip* 1835-1839 & 2B *Aborigines and Protectorates*, (ed) Michael Cannon, Government Printing office, 1983.

including Dreaming stories prepared with educators, yet discretion and understatement were her forte and usually her conversation was geared to pass on ‘traditional’ principles adapted for current circumstances.

Experiences like this taught me much about the continuity of culture in the contemporary urban situation. By learning the historical circumstances and peoples’ responses to troubling conditions, I was reminded of Barwick’s frequent observations in her research of the Kulin peoples’ adeptness at incorporating new circumstances into their own cultural understandings and how they remained steadfast despite the patent lack of understanding about their culture in the western parameters of the wider community. Barwick writes:

The residents of Coranderrk were not Europeans, nor yet ‘Aborigines’. They were members of specific clans, influenced by inherited rights and obligations, by the beliefs and conventions of their own society, and by their individual experience of the consequences of European intrusion ... Survivors of the Kulin clans had abandoned the old patterns of residence and land use long before they assembled at this farming village, yet indigenous concepts of political authority and responsibility for land still functioned in this new setting. Europeans saw only a superficial transformation of Kulin life and were oblivious to the continuity: this error was the real cause of the crisis at Coranderrk (1998:6).

Barwick’s work, which relied on much consultation as well as critical assessment of historical records/official documents, is an attempt to carefully contextualise the continuity of Kulin perspectives and practices throughout this mission historicity.

Other people identifying as Indigenous suggested that circumstances had never been similar for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the community and that disadvantage remained entrenched from long-term exclusion. A local Anglicare worker outlined a perceived problem concerning Indigenous people working in community assistance positions who were from other areas, which reflected the impact from relocations and urban drift due to successive assimilation policies across the country, and more particularly those connected to the break up and relocation of Coranderrk families from policies like the Victorian Half-caste Acts of 1863 and 1895 and decisions like the shift to Lake Tyers Mission and closing of Coranderrk Mission in 1927. A senior Elder³⁴

³⁴ A descendent of Barak, inheriting the position of *ngurungaeta*, sometimes referred to as ‘clever’ in other groups. Barak described this as ‘head man’ to Howitt. ‘If a man was sensible and spoke straight and did no wrong to anyone the people would call him *ngurungaeta*’ (Howitt MS: 5, 33, 34.)

spoke to me of long term effects from these relocations, and problems still remaining in local communities due to the gathering together of clans during the Coranderrk years and consequent problems with appropriate transference of knowledges and external interpretations, complicated further by relations within western modes of power and economic capital. This Elder also spoke about the lack of consultation from non-Indigenous community bodies and authorities despite contemporary reconciliation overtures that advocated increased collaboration and recognition. As all other Elders I met, he was very involved in sharing and supporting his culture, working within a tourist operation that had been established on his ancestral lands. He continued to craft boomerangs as his predecessors had done during the mission years, and revealed that ceremonial practices and detailed oral historicity continued unabated despite conditions of settlement.

Fred Myers' relationship with the Pintupi peoples revealed to him how conditions of modernity (particularly in relation to the international art paradigm) had not prevented or even displaced the continuity of their cultural practices. He writes about how he realised that by 'recognising the perspectives of the cultural producers themselves', he was able to 'participate in the processes by which Indigenous cultural producers seek to engage with the world around them', where country 'produced and organised these Indigenous contexts'. This made him 'realise the heritage of these practices and understandings in relation to the new identities and contexts established through the intrusion of Euro-Australian settlement' (Myers 2006:255-264).

As I developed relationships with those identifying as Indigenous community members in the regions around Healesville, my experience came to resonate with Myers', as it applied in the urban situation of this 'ex-mission' community, considering the co-existence of different frameworks of evaluation within the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities (Myers 2006: 255) and how these 'urban' Indigenous peoples were often similarly exposed to circumstances due to 'western' expectations and dominance that would limit access to interpretative mechanisms on their own terms and often compel them 'to live through the representation of others' (p. 252). Nevertheless the continuity of their cultural practices and lore remained largely unrecognised by the 'non-Indigenous community'.

A frequently expressed view from Indigenous community members' concerned ongoing difficulties connected to the policy that had prevented education beyond primary grade

three for Indigenous peoples in Victoria.³⁵ It was evident to me from the historical circumstances and what people expressed to me personally, that some descendants from mission families remained very conscious of the impact on their familial lived-experience from the contradictory historical situation, where competency in the imposed western educational system was fundamentally required yet withheld from regulated Indigenous peoples. It was also clear that continued prejudice in the wider community was likely to be connected with results of this exclusion, for example, value judgements about social outcomes such as increased poverty, or continued misrecognition of affects from disavowal of Indigenous cultural recognition.

Prejudices appeared to survive by somehow by-passing the regional historicity of Indigenous out-marriages/relations (whether policy-implemented or otherwise) to be reinscribed in relation to certain peoples identified or identifying as 'Indigenous' and certain political or administrative situations. For example one self-described 'proud blonde Indigenous woman' working in education explained to me four pressing problems in her perception. The first being that non-Indigenous people remained problematically concerned with percentages of Aboriginality in individuals, which continued a normalised racism, impacting both those that *looked* Aboriginal and those fairer-skinned that *looked* non-Aboriginal. Secondly, there was a lack of assistance available to locals to skill up for the 'Indigenous-specific' positions that were periodically funded (pointing to long term disadvantage to Indigenous families despite a presumption of well-resourced urban circumstances). Thirdly, there was a lack of accountability on the part of government about funding allocation and outcomes, and fourthly, there was entrenched lack of understanding in the wider community of the cultural needs of Indigenous students. These latter problems, as she expressed them, appeared to mirror problems in remote communities, despite a common community perception that there is little disadvantage in urban communities for Indigenous peoples.

Division within the Indigenous-identifying communities was more often revealed through discreet channels. For example, after a period of getting to know a respected community

³⁵ The Aboriginal Protection Act 1862 in Victoria began removals of children from families and commenced institutionalised industrial and reformatory education. A further regulation ensured removal of children (from age 14) from Aboriginal stations to dormitories (away from their parents). The 1886 Act enabled the removal of mixed descent people under age 34 from reserves and children from age 13 were to be put to work as farmhands or domestic servants or sent to industrial or reformatory school. The schools did not educate beyond level 3 (primary). <http://k6.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/go/hsie/background-sheets/tracing> (accessed May 28, 2009). Policies of removal that continued into the 1980s in Victoria, and other socio-structural factors continued significant patterns of intergenerational disadvantage. See Lee Tan report for example.

leader I was given reading materials (she was working in an official capacity) that provided some detail on internal divisions and their external causes within recent decades. I became aware of problems within Indigenous families and groups due to certain positions of facilitated access being produced in certain circumstances. This type of government-liaison reading material also provided statistical data on levels of racism and disadvantage facing people identifying as Indigenous³⁶, and this resonated with a commonly expressed view about lack of government funding, facilitation and recognition for local Indigenous peoples/communities.

As the cultural practice of not speaking out of turn was evident, I was attentive to the importance of silence in conversation, which I observed was generally an expression of the inappropriateness of speaking on a topic. Speaking on the continuity of Indigenous/indigenous cultural practices, I noted, was multi-levelled and specific to contexts, therefore, specifically modelled to perceived levels of understanding. My conversations in this area usually reached deeper levels after increasingly meaningful exchanges or in well-developed relationships, as I would have expected concerning how I had come to understand levels of learning in the particular Indigenous/indigenous knowledges I'd encountered.³⁷

My experience with the reconciliation groups was twofold. It was clear that there was still a dearth of cultural understanding within these groups, and an amount of self-aggrandising and misguided assistance was evident. For example a reconciliation group leader approached an Elder and myself suddenly and without asking took our photograph. This person appeared to have no awareness of the invasion to privacy without any previous request or arrangement. I also witnessed overt paternalism when a reconciliation co-ordinator was organising payments for an Indigenous cultural officer. Foley has noted continued patronising and paternalistic attitudes within the reconciliation 'movement' due to a persistent failure to properly understand the importance of 'Aboriginal control of Aboriginal views' (1999:1).

Yet I was also impressed with levels of commitment to promoting cross cultural awareness/conversation concerning local Indigenous knowledges by some in these reconciliation groups — those consulting with, and working under instruction from,

³⁶ For example: Indigenous Health, A Needs Assessment: A Study of the Outer Eastern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne, Detailed Report, Lee Tan 1998, & Aboriginal Services Plan 2006-2009 Wellbeing Together for the Future (Victorian Government)

³⁷ For example in my practical workshops with the Darkinjung Elder.

Indigenous people. In these cases joint-participation and close inter-personal contact and meaningful conversational exchange was clearly operative. This clearly demonstrated how cooperative inter-subjective co-production is possible when Indigenous and non-Indigenous people engage in actual dialogue (Langton1993:33) and together jointly test models of interpretation.

I was made aware of the importance of this principle when my partner and I invited an Elder to travel with us to a prominent historian's lecture in Melbourne on Coranderrk mission. This widely-respected community Elder had personal memories associated with the mission. It was brought to the attention of the historian that the Elder was in attendance and yet this historian, while acknowledging her at the start of the talk, had never met her and did not come to speak to her after the lecture. The historian appeared to be uncomfortable and averted his gaze. This Elder explained to me, without commenting negatively about this person, that it was preferable that people get to know one another in order to speak about a history. As we drove back to Healesville together a huge rainbow spanned the sky for a lengthy period of the journey, which confirmed to me an already evident significant personal relationship.³⁸

³⁸ See footnote 13 on page 30 re rainbows in indigenous ontologies.

Speaking through coloniser noise: Authorising voice

When I measured all these perspectives against my knowledge of policies of assimilation, government relocation of Indigenous peoples and subsequent urban drift, present government policies and political changes over the last few decades, along with the historicity of the region, long standing non-Indigenous community expectations of assimilation, and the resilience and resistance of cultural expression and practices, it allowed for a multi-perspectival view of the situation today for descendent families (those that were able to, or chose to, identify as such) and the heterogeneous mix of local Indigenous communities today. There were various conditions that had created opportunities for clear reception of Indigenous voices, along with many sustained conditions that continued to constitute as significant voice suppression. Yet what was becoming more evident to me was how Indigenous-identifying people chose to communicate, how they sustained their cultural integrity and lives beyond and despite public discourse and national narratives.

The ways people who identified as Indigenous were affected by mechanisms of voice suppression were diverse, and the identification often remained subject to externally-defined representation, for example, perceptions of non-Indigenous peoples concerning what constitutes Indigenous ‘authenticity’, and the ‘authenticity’ of practices etc (Dodson 1996³⁹ & 2003, Myers 2006). This continues to influence what is publically perceived as valid to be said by Indigenous peoples. As darker-skinned peoples have continued to be subjected to the ongoing stereotyping of racist and exoticism paradigms, those people considered more ‘Aboriginal-looking’ are often expected to speak in narrowly defined authenticity-sanctioned voices (as externally assessed by non-Indigenous peoples), and those lighter skinned are invalidated under the same westernised evaluations and parameters.

So what remained central in my observations was how Indigenous representation and Indigenous identification remained so problematically aligned, and how non-Indigenous

³⁹ Dodson writes ‘Our values have been filtered through the values of others. What has been considered worthy of protection has usually been on the basis of its scientific, historic, aesthetic or sheer curiosity value. Current laws and policy are still largely shaped by this distortion and fail to extend protection in terms which are defined by our perspective. (1996:78)’ In relation to ‘authentic traditional’ Aboriginal identity: ‘We do not need to re-find the past, because our subjectivities, our being in the world are inseparable from the past.’ (2003:40)

identity was so un-problematically lived by contrast. This made it further apparent to me why some people choose not to identify as Indigenous in the community, (as related to me by Indigenous-identifying people). At the same time, through frequently encountering individuals who had uncovered their Indigenous heritage, I became aware that there were many in the non-Indigenous community who remained unaware of their Indigenous heritage due to societal conditions that had caused previous generations to either decide to, or be forced to, suppress their Indigenous heritage.⁴⁰

I was also very conscious of the manner in which Indigenous/indigenous people (where primary identification is indigenous in the sense of originary relatedness) chose to self-identify through land and cultural practices and the consistency in their perspectives and how they were expressed. My increasing awareness of the lived-conditions for Indigenous/indigenous people in these communities made it evident why certain topics were often not openly expressed, considering the limited opportunity to express these perspectives when exposed to so many in the community who were ignorant of these indigenous perspectives and cultural practices and their inter-relational continuity in present circumstances. I was therefore also alert to the material affects of deliberate silence, as well as the material affects of localised non-verbal, indigenous and inter-entity communications that continue behind, around and beyond abstract or exogenous narratives in public discourses (For example see Lingis1994, Mundy 1991/3).

Accordingly, concerning these particular practices of interaction and dialogue, my approach in discussing the possibility of a joint research project was to tell my own story about being given the diary, about what I had learnt since, and how I had come to the area to become familiar with the current situation. This was the only authority to my voice, that is, my own lived experience and my intent. I explained to the Elders that I would like to ask people connected with the protectorate (and later mission) if they would be prepared to respond with me, concerning these histories.

And coming from the location of an 'outsider's' position, this often dictated that I learnt by mistakes. At first I interpreted that very obvious silence or no response to emails, calls etc meant to leave it there. But I also gradually discovered that often it could be a case of community members being over-committed, having to meet many demands in family,

⁴⁰ For example forced child removals continued in Victoria until the mid 1980s, which highlights how recent policies have been that continued the administrative sanctioning of these punitive and racist practices.

community, and liaising with cross-cultural commitments and government agendas. I also saw that sometimes I was being challenged to prove my earnestness. This introduced extra incentive on my part to be particularly proactive in communication while particularly sensitive to prevailing conditions. Considering historical legacies that have created challenging communication conditions, my approach was to be frank, at the same time respectful, and never taking offense. I was aware that at times I'd been assessed as not being culturally-aware and people had withdrawn. I continued to weigh situations in light of the fraught nomenclature of Indigenous identity and lived experience.

I took care to observe my very limited authority to speak on particular areas of knowledge or experience, and it was clear sometimes I was being scrutinised through stages of revealing my commitment to attempting to comprehend particular Indigenous/indigenous experiences. The importance of speaking from experience was distinct in my conversations with people identifying as Indigenous. In contrast I became more aware of a pronounced non-Indigenous encultured a-reflexivity in this regard in a general sense, which indicates a different pattern of socialisation developed within the conditions of modernity over centuries, (i.e. the tendency to speak with abstract knowledge or to use schematic overviews (Muecke 2005:164-6). This pattern appears directly connected with positions of privilege this form of socialisation constructs. As my thesis articles have argued, those with much to deny (in terms of meeting intersubjective responsibilities) can become increasingly subject to abstract disconnection, in regard to their privileges. And, as I have also argued in the articles⁴¹ this predicament is not just applicable to non-Indigenous peoples, but to all who become disconnected from their originary interrelatedness.

This provided insight into how the cultural practice of speaking directly from experience and deferring to those more qualified, was a socialisation geared to appropriate behaviour in interdependent and communally-lived circumstances.⁴² It helped me to understand how and why people observe these protocols in their communities, as empirical knowledge and ensuring the most appropriate authority is able to speak strengthens a shared ethos within community relationships. In some situations I observed Indigenous peoples interacting guardedly with non-Indigenous people (who were displaying cultural insensitivity in certain situations, for example speaking erroneously and homogeneously about Indigenous

⁴¹ See articles *Customary Appropriations*, *Laws of Place* and *Colonising Sovereignties* for example.

⁴² Barwick's documenting of the Coranderrk Inquiry 1881 provides insights into the difference in cultural modes of expression between the non-Indigenous forms of questioning and the Kulin people's observance of protocols about speaking on behalf of others.

culture and peoples during local cultural education workshops). I also observed high levels of tolerance towards this ignorance on these occasions. This provided increasing reflexivity about my own assumptions or unrealised privileges.

What was also particularly interesting for me in this situation was how, while many will argue that much of Indigenous/indigenous cultural knowledges and practices have been lost, particularly in heavily urbanised communities and conditions where white socialisation has been blanketly imposed, my interactions with the Kulin communities revealed how much of Barwick's documentation of Kulin cultural modes at the outset of colonial contact were still in evidence in diverse community members from the five Kulin language groups. This was my observation whether such people were restaurateurs (as with one Boonerwurrung Elder; businessmen, as with one Wurrundjeri man, or Indigenous cultural officers, as with one Dja Dja wurrung man), though these people had not necessarily accessed historian's accounts (such as Barwick's). I was more often counselled on the damage that ignorance in historical accounts had caused. What this evidenced to me therefore, is that while the focus has been on loss, much cultural integrity and transcription has survived the cultural incursions and appropriations of the colonising west, which has been less observed and documented, particularly within urbanised conditions.

Identification with Indigenous/indigenous peoples on many points of commonality continued my own self-modification. It was not an independent research position, objectively determining hard facts and measurable 'realities' for myself or others. I was learning through immediate and participatory experience, immersed in an active engagement, a joint meaning-making process (Charmaz 2000), which increased my awareness of indigenous perspectives and provided opportunity for self-reflection. As the Kulin peoples assessed my behaviour, attitudes and levels of comprehension of their ways of knowing, I was further guided and enlightened in these indigenous ways of knowing, protocols and reciprocities.

These interactions, as I have documented them here, provided me with insights into how Indigenous/indigenous people continue to struggle with problems of exclusion and subsequent suppression of their voices due to the impact of behaviours and policies that have steered Indigenous/non-Indigenous inter-relationships and positioned people to adopt particular attitudes and behaviours. The historical situation of colonial dominance has also produced negotiating strategies from within Indigenous-centred knowledges (Sheehan

2001) often remaining misrecognised or misunderstood within western interpretative structures. When exposed to ongoing effects of practices and policies on descendants lives in relation to the protectorate, I was challenged with an opportunity to bring people and their contexts into sharp focus so that both past and present could be critically reappraised (Parker 2004:165).

Macdougall, in relation to his work in constructing film, notes we are always on the edge of the surreal, traversing cultural difference, this paradox generating new meaning, enabling the viewer to confront intersecting worlds (1994:28). I was made very aware of community conditions that prevented the open sharing of cultural practices not readily understood in the wider community in and around the Healesville area. While these cultural practices remained central and were continuing in Indigenous/indigenous families, effects from relentless assimilation and suppression of knowledges were evident also.

Yet, as iterated above, while many point to how colonising conditions have prevented the transmission of knowledges in urbanised communities to the point of irretrievability, what appears far less understood is how much transmission has continued within Indigenous/indigenous communities. Perhaps this reveals why tracing historical accounts of contact conditions are useful when one is fully prepared to listen and learn from Indigenous/indigenous peoples in these communities. It becomes evident that the commonly accepted understanding that white accounts have made possible the retrieval of Indigenous/indigenous knowledges and practices, is more likely a case of non-Indigenous people finally being able to hear what Indigenous/indigenous knowledges have always been saying. Indigenous ways of knowing can now begin to be heard because of changing situations and attitudes in non-Indigenous peoples. What this means is that colonial accounts have actually been offering verification for the Indigenous/indigenous voices that have always been speaking, when listened to with newly attuned ears. This should dispel the presumption that the authority for speaking on indigenous knowledges rests with the anthropologist, historian or ethnographer as expert. The challenge concerning constructing a response with descendants to this colonial history in relation to the Kulin communities, was to try to evoke in my connecting narrative some of the complexity of current lived-experience in such terms, while revealing the mechanisms that continue suppression.

There was a consensus concerning responding to the protector's diary. One Elder advised that 'for as many people as you meet in the community, you will find as many different

points of view.’ While at first glance this may appear to be too pedestrian to take much notice of and, as such, not all that revelatory, what this aphorism really speaks to is the fundamentals of an indigenous relational ontology, where respect for this difference always remains central to communal understandings. This is the fundamental structuring principle that upholds my thesis argument. And, it follows that I found that this was an accurate summation of my own experience with people during this period, and the varied conditions they were subject to. It was brought home to me just why this principle is so well acknowledged in indigenous thinking. I came to recognise how, in Indigenous/indigenous communities, the differences in peoples’ situations and positions were not worked into hierarchies that would serve to evaluate some as more worthy than others. It was clearly more about the responsibilities that people acknowledged in their circumstances, how effectively these responsibilities were met, and who was to be called upon in each particular circumstance.

There was agreement that the most authorised Indigenous descendents in relation to this history in regard to the colonialist diary would speak on these histories from their specific situation. Film was the preferred medium and I was steered to the most appropriate people to speak on these matters. This was not to be a passive participation on the part of those agreeing to provide their stories on film. The appropriate speakers and the sharing of their stories was an activation of their ownership and a passing on to descendents of cultural information, a way of affirming cultural heritage and its vitality (Macdougall 1994:35, Morphy 1992). This offered a structure for a joint-conversation rather than an ethnographic interpretation on my part. The attempt was to allow for a process of witnessing (Oliver 2000) on this historicity, which could never be conclusive, but perhaps reveal some of the complexity of the co-construction of peoples from the time of the Protectorate up until today, and to interrupt the dominant representations that persist from this past to allow more adequately for cultural differences and their expression. The process of witnessing evokes the beyond of what is able to be represented in these experiences, with an uncovering (in the revisiting of this history) of some of what has been repressed.⁴³

⁴³ Derrida has also written much on the return of the repressed, for example, see ‘*Freud and the Scene of Writing*’ *Writing and Difference* 196-231, where he argues that irreducible surplus of meaning is evident over conscious intentionality and relates to the return of the repressed in the metaphor of writing, ‘The repression of the writing as the repression of that which threatens presence and the mastering of absence ...’ (WD 197). *Archive Fever* (1996) looks at the repressed within transgenerational memory and its subsequent communication. *Spectres of Marx* (1994) looks at repression of the nature of the uncanny (the unsaid, the repressed and the more than can be said etc) and the need to be confronted with the ideologically constituted nature of our identities as an uncanny and defamiliarising moment.

In preparing an ethics application for the DVD research project, the structuring principle I attempted was 'respect for individual difference', so that whoever chose to speak in response to these histories could be provided a speaking space that was self-directed and, in this way, not subject to my interpretation or comment. The main point of commonality for story inclusion was the individual's personal relationship to these histories. I was aware that my narrative would contribute its own constructing force as well, so I attempted to locate myself as a participant in the storytelling, through my connection as a researcher to the protector diary and my desire to learn of the descendants of the Indigenous peoples mentioned in the diary, whose voices had not yet been heard. Positioned as a connecting conduit I would also speak the historical context, attempting to provide multiple perspectives, with a reflexive constructivist methodology.⁴⁴

From the experience of having to locate my voice in relation to the Kulin interviewees, I'd become increasingly interested in my research to explore further relations of place, and especially considering the problematic of a generalised non-Indigenous non-recognition of their inter-responsibilities with people and land. This thinking on place challenged me to consider my own emplaced responsibilities, particularly as I argue for the evoking of indigenous voice, so that I needed to explore further and locate from where it was that I was able to speak.

⁴⁴ Sontag, in relation to the constructive power of photography writes: 'It means putting yourself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge ... Yet 'despite the presumption of veracity', the filmic representation is always caught in the medium between art and truth, as much an interpretation as any other construct. At the same time Sontag also acknowledges that 'a trace is always stenciled off the real' (Sontag 1977:5-6) as Barthes also argues, a photograph is 'literally an emanation of the referent' (Barthes 1981:80).

Speaking from: Tuning in the inner voice

Response-ability and Emplacement

The place of my speaking, of course, could never be a settled position, and I had to attempt to sketch the risky and precarious unhomely mobility of my emplacement, at the same time as negotiating my ongoing relations in particular places (Bhabha 1990:13). Relations of place mark a controversial area in academia due to the problematic of settler dispossession and 'white' assertions of belonging in colonised countries (Moreton Robinson 2003, Read 2000). As I had been encouraged to, I continued to research my family history, which became a very demanding yet necessary concurrent research project that would better critically inform my research.

I explored research on place and 'emplacement' including Indigenous and non-Indigenous identified writers: Gelder and Jacobs, Muecke, Hume, Mowaljarli, Colin Johnson, Henderson and Battiste, Worby and Rigney, Martin, Moreton-Robinson, Riggs, Leanne and Audra Simpson, Pulani Louis, Tuwihai-Smith, Little Bear, Ingold, Guba and Lincoln and others. I weighed this literature within the methodological question of the suppression of Indigenous voices and the complexities of embodied relations in place.

To write about place in an arguably still-colonised country (and I argue this), from the perspective of a settler descendent is a challenge. The discussion always needs to include the false and illegal legislative foundations of Australian sovereignty, as argued in my preceding papers. This premise has underlain all my discussions on relations of emplacement in the historicity of this country. At the same time, I've been arguing the heterogeneity of all emplacements, in their constitutive genealogical trajectories. This would necessarily involve the hybridity of descendent populations and the difficulties this poses regarding constitutive belonging.

There is much literature concerning the problematic of non-Indigenous belonging in Australia. I will refer to some examples in relation to my own explorations in this area. Moreton-Robinson (2003) finds that Read's argument on non-Indigenous belonging privileges personal attachment as the justification for belonging, which denies the racialised power relations that make this possible and ignores how mutual relationships with Indigenous peoples cannot be such until illegal dispossession is adequately addressed

(p. 27). She also argues that indigenous ontological belonging, as constituted through the continuity of ancestral dreaming, is ontologically different from migrant relations that were and are constituted through illegal possessive relations.

I agree with her, and I find it is also necessary to situate, in addition to her analysis here, the constitutive relation of all peoples in their individual emplacement, considering the difficulty of either separating or including to one or the other designation, those who share the mixed ancestry of Indigenous/non-Indigenous peoples. In her argument that the ontological relation to land separates the Indigenous from 'the postcolonial subject whose sense of belonging in this place is tied to migrancy' (p. 31) Moreton-Robinson is pointing to a sense of belonging based on an abstract relation to land. This abstract relation is connected to the possessive relations that co-constitute emplacements in hierarchies of power relations. I agree with her, and also with Muecke who relates that no sense of belonging can entail an abstract relation to country (Muecke 2004:53, 60, 132-138).

Moreton-Robinson and Huggan (2001:119) who she quotes at length, point to a homologising of the experience of dislocation, and to the continuation of an imperial legacy attached through possessing relations. I have noted this extension of Cartesian thinking in writings on diasporas and question the ability to traverse new locations without consideration of atemporal and culturally embodied 'laws of place'.⁴⁵

In terms of relational ontology, law is lived in bodies in their temporal/atemporal connection to place (Watson 2007:35). This is an affirmative connection when considering 'the entire continent is mapped by the intricate web of dreaming stories' (Hume 2002:70). This mapping is elaborated in Indigenous/indigenous knowledges from other lands also (e.g. Chidester & Linenthal 1995:112).

It is interesting to note similarities in Nancy's poststructural account of place relations, argued from within contemporary Europe, which acknowledges the structure of individuals' emplacement as it operates across the planet, despite colonial conquests and their cultural histories, imposed laws and generations of possessive relations in places.

⁴⁵ Laws of place are argued (in my paper of the same name) after Watson's consideration of Aboriginal ontology (as she considers ongoing constitutive relations of Nunga peoples South Australia), and Moreton-Robinson and Martin also argue regarding Quandamooka peoples Queensland (2003). See also Hume (2002) on eidic Dreaming relations re Stanner, Mowaljarli, Strenlow, Fazeldean, Mudrooroo, Yanyuura, and also Muecke (2005).

There is no real except for the earth, with all its corners and recesses [*coins et recoins*], all its lands and their peasants. In this sense, the country represents the order of meaning that is posited selfsame with the earth, equally separated from the order of language and from that of nature. It is an order of the body, of embodied extension, disposed and exposed: the earth such that it has nothing other than itself outside itself ... the pagan lives in the continuous presence of the gods, or he is someone for whom the gods are presence in itself ... (Nancy 2005: 56-57).⁴⁶

In the troubled historicity of possessive tenure relations in Australia, non-Indigenous belonging is often argued and defended within Cartesian parameters. But it is more troubling again when this logic is applied as if coming from Indigenous/indigenous peoples themselves as Jeremy Beckett (1996) does with Myles Lalor's oral history. As Lalor gives account of his life spent travelling across the country, Beckett argues that Lalor's 'apparent' (as interpreted by Beckett) lack of attachment to place and his 'apparent' embrace of a 'cosmopolitanism' provides an argument against essentialist nostalgia. Yet I would argue Beckett's argument remains essentialist itself in that there is no awareness of the atemporal engagement in place as an extension of individuals' always embodied relations.

While acknowledging Lalor's oral mapping that has been anchored in place, Beckett misses the embodied nature of this mapping and its relation to inherent laws of place. Beckett interprets Lalor's stories and memories of places in the western diasporic mode, articulated in terms of consciousness, that is, the conscious attempt to overcome painful memories, which Beckett then assumes is a wilful and disinterested detachment from place and emplacement in Lalor. Beckett states 'Myles, then, having put Old Struggletown behind him, is not going to put his trust in any particular place; he would rather seek permanence in his memories' (1996:11). Beckett thus argues that Lalor has overcome a nostalgic attachment to place, a nostalgia that Beckett argues can disadvantage displaced Indigenous people who long with an 'Edenic innocence' for 'place, rather than places' (p. 1). It is here that Beckett is attaching a classic form of essentialism to Indigenous/indigenous experience.

Moreton-Robinson particularly addresses this persistent representation of the ontological relationship of Indigenous belonging as essentialist. She argues that from an Indigenous

⁴⁶ See full argument in chapter on *Uncanny Landscape* pp. 51-62.

epistemology, western knowledge about anti-essentialism errs when it determines the definitive measures of what it is to be human and what does and does not constitute knowledge. In Beckett's argument against nostalgia knowledge ultimately becomes defined in classic idealist terms: Myles Lalor becomes the autonomous hero, mentally in charge of his 'freedom to roam'.⁴⁷ I agree with Moreton-Robinson that anti-essentialism becomes based on a contradiction within a western model of essentialism, applied as a universal despite the epistemological recognition of difference (Moreton Robinson 2003:32).

When arguing relational ontology as an embodied relation that straddles the sentient and non-sentient world, the argument ironically attracts the criticism that this is an essentialist claim. The accompanying horrors of romanticism, primitivism, archaism quickly join the critique. Immediately what is envisioned is a 'returning to nature' narrative, a claim to origin, an essential ideal in a primitive past. Idealism/essentialism has been deconstructed vigorously in postmodernity in the interests of preventing the objectifying binaries that essentialism sets up. Anti-essentialist thinking argues that there is no fixed point for universalism, no origin. Yet, as I have argued regarding the doubling relation of subjectivity that straddles the temporal/atemporal (resonating in both Indigenous theorists like Watson, Moreton-Robinson and Martin and poststructuralists like Derrida, Grosz and Nancy), the liminality of the originary moment continues in every singularity, revealing that an individual's authenticity and primacy is shared generatively.

This doubling relation troubles the opposition between essentialism and anti-essentialism, primitivism and modernism. It challenges any possibility of a concept of the 'primitive'. Time, rather, is argued as poly-chronic i.e. past, present, future simultaneous/contemporaneous (Muecke2005:10), so that the structuring principle of the originary relation is liminal, carrying origin in every moment. At the same time the relation's incommensurable difference generates meaning. In this ongoing originary relation, each individual's subjective experience can only be incommensurable. In the aporia (doubling relation) between the particular and the universal, oppositions are impossible as they are always already both. To universalise either side of this binary e.g. to argue a fixed primitivism, can only be an abstraction.

⁴⁷ As Watson has described abstract desire (2007).

Another irony is that when it comes to identification within this relational ontology, subjects who make a unified claim concerning their collective experience come under the critique of attempting to take on identity constants that cannot stand up in the argument of anti-essentialism, as no 'truth' of identity is possible. Yet as collective experience and shared identifying modes of being come under attack, this very critique falls into an impossible zone when considering individual incommensurable difference within generative relations. This incommensurable difference, shared by every individual, reveals there can be no essentialism.

As incommensurable difference is located in each individual, it cannot become ahistorical, as it is, in each case, specifically-lived. Yet this gets conveniently forgotten in the claim of essentialist nostalgia, and this belies how criticism of essentialism is connected with strategies of power and the interplay between what are, in every case, merely relational positions. If there are only constructs, it is the constructa that must be focused on, which then reveals the relations of power. To claim Indigenous/indigenous identity or relations as essentialist is one of the most utilised tools of misrepresentation to mask particular power relations.⁴⁸

The same applies when it comes to the characteristic attack on authentic Indigeneity or the loss of it. Myers (2006) calls this 'the mind-forged manacle of Indigenous studies – the captivity of 'tradition' through which Indigenous cultural expression is judged against external standards of 'authenticity'.'⁴⁹ To explain Myers states 'Culture is always in the making and remaking. Somehow it is imagined that adoption of (western media) necessarily collapses the alterity that made Indigenous peoples anthropologically valuable' (Myers 2006: 255). In arguing Pintupi shared relations of identity Myers writes that he came to understand a particular logic of sociality in which relationships to place and people are embedded. This logic was:

imbricated in the practical experience of everyday life which emphasises sustaining extensive dyadic relatedness among individuals ... their sociality and personhood is organised in processes of exchange that produced social persons who were identified and distinguished from each other in a broader system of social life that had a significant resemblance to what Levi Strauss understood by totemism built out of local

⁴⁸ Kavelin has pointed to how a 'fear of essentialising' compromises a clear understanding of material energetic relations, and how this further entrenches western epistemic ignorance and violence (2008 seminar at Macquarie University). See also Spivak re epistemic violence and appropriation (1990).

⁴⁹ See also (Russell 2001: Chpt 1) re relations and 'authenticity' and (Lehman 2003:182) re engaging indigenous ontology.

concern with the management of human autonomy through the life cycle. Lévi-Strauss (and others) imagined that these 'structures' were mental frameworks of classification, and that their denial of history would lead to their collapse with contact ... My experience of Pintupi sociality was of practice, of people engaging others through a model of activity that incorporated them into the logic. Co-residents were 'one countrymen' (literally, 'people from one camp') who had obligations to share with each other. To some readers, an account of this structure (or any structure) has an apparent closure to it, and this would seem to be the implication of critiques of 'Aboriginalism' – the focus on traditional Aboriginal culture – by scholars like Cowlishaw (1986). However, the extension of these constructs into everyday life and my very learning of them in practice offer a different view. The political relations that go into the production of these constructs make them more than simply artifacts of exoticism (p. 248).

Myers argues the Pintupi construct their shared identity, not in abstraction, but through concrete practices of exchange, with land as the very medium through which social relationships are articulated (p. 247). As individual emplacement (temporally/atemporally) takes place within a relational ontology, this challenges each individual to consider how to respond in their concrete practices, conducted at the level of reciprocal interaction, within the realm of inter-entity responsibility.

Introduction to the article *Laws of Place*

In the article *Laws of Place* I explore the concepts of continuity, essentialism and authenticity that come up in regard to non-Indigenous claims of belonging and particularly discuss the denial of responsibilities regarding individual emplacement in the face of continuity of indigenous relational ontologies.

Persistent abstraction or denial in non-Indigenous forms of belonging can be seen in what Gelder and Jacobs (1998) describe as the arbitrariness of the relationship between signifier (language) and signified (place) in modernity. Gelder and Jacobs note that Muecke argues for a more direct relational inscription of language onto place, and argues against the abstraction of the signifier from the signified (as do Indigenous writers on relational ontologies as I read them). Yet Gelder and Jacobs find that this direct connection with land emphasises modernity as loss, or an equating of dispossession with disempowerment.

While Gelder and Jacobs emphasise the partisan positioning of this binary of tradition and modernity, revealing non-Indigenous anxieties about the relationship between dispossession and increased sacredness for Indigenous people; the problematic positioning between ‘modern’ or young Indigenous people and older ‘traditional’ authority; or ‘remote’ authentic and ‘urban’ inauthenticity, I feel they ultimately miss the point of what Muecke and Indigenous writers stress regarding relations of place. In fact I would argue that they risk falling into the trap of binarising in the manner that I have alerted to regarding the critique of essentialism.

In my paper on laws of place I follow Watson, Muecke and others in arguing that this direct relation between signifier and signified (regarding the relational inscription of language onto place) is neither fixed nor polarising, but both situated and situating. The directness in the relation is always atemporally excessive. What I feel these thinkers gesture towards is the affirming response-ability (Oliver 2001:105) that the situatedness of our unique relations (always trans-immanent) call for. When theorists focus simply on the mobility of aporetic relations and inter-relatedness I find a disarticulation can be brought into effect. Overemphasis on the arbitrariness of relations can compromise context, locatedness, embodiedness, risking the abstraction that inheres in both fixity and relations of oppression. What gets compromised is access to the alterity and inter-entity

communication that overwhelms every relationship in place. The complexity of material energetics in these relations is overlooked.

I find indigenous understandings of emplacement overwhelm ‘human’ abstractions that disconnect and binarise against ‘nature’. And in responding to laws of place the separation of ‘Indigenous’ and ‘non-Indigenous’ thinkers into fixed opposites can deny the defining difference that is the affirmative thinking of emplacement.⁵⁰ Response-ability to laws of place is what presents as a defining criterion. Some non-Indigenous theorists are gradually moving towards a more comprehensive engagement with what indigenous ontological relations indicate regarding mainstream Australia’s response-ability. Diprose is one who argues belonging as corporeally-lived, engendering and transforming socio-political meaning, and she posits that Indigenous/indigenous peoples are not satisfied to simply rewrite history. She argues that Indigenous/indigenous peoples employ the practice of ‘speaking the land’ in the reinterpretation of the encounter. She sees this as a process of revitalisation, which shifts writing ‘from heroic to totemic, transforming it by design into functional dreaming’ (Diprose 2008:28-58).

I attempt, in the paper *Laws of Place*, an introspective tracing through this problematic field of knowledges, considering the over-wrought politicising of representation regarding Australian sovereign law and its territorial overlay; the illusory affects of abstraction considering our situated interrelatedness; and ‘non-Indigenous’ connections and response-ability considering embodied relations ‘in the world’. I try to engage with anxieties of Indigenous/indigenous peoples regarding ‘consumption’ from assimilatory forces of the westernised paradigm (that includes non-Indigenous myopia)⁵¹, as Watson argues with the concept of cannibalism, and also the anxieties of reactive guilt in non-Indigenous response when facing the fuller revelation of their embodiment in the world.

Explorations and discoveries in my family history research enabled me to live the theoretical complexities of these issues and write from the place of my own experience, which I considered crucial to this process. My experiences of a sense of home and subsequent relationships in place and community, including the learning process in the workshops with the Darkinjung elder, familiarising myself with local indigenous

⁵⁰ In saying this I do not mean to diminish in any way primary Indigenous/indigenous knowledges and stories of place, and the necessity for people who ‘came here’ to acknowledge and defer to this.

⁵¹ As a consequence of the illusory affects of abstraction.

languages, foods, plants, people and animals etc and developing these relationships within my own community and the wider Darug/Cadi/Guringai communities, all played into my paper's explorations. *The book chapter 'Laws of Place', was published in *The Racial Politics of Bodies, Nations and Knowledges*, Cambridge Scholars Press, pp. 245-266, 2009. The book makes a contribution to the growing field of critical race and whiteness studies and is described as giving 'crucial attention to ongoing histories of colonisation, social exclusion, and racialised inequities in access to respect, social capital and citizenship and material resources'.⁵²

⁵² Barbara Baird writes on p. 8 of this publication.

Pages 106-133 of this thesis have been removed as they contain published material. Please refer to the following citation for details of the article contained in these pages.

McAllan, F. (2009). Laws of place. In B. Baird, & D. W. Riggs (Eds.), *The Racial politics of bodies, nations, and knowledges* (pp. 245-266). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Letting the inner voice speak

Remaining cognisant of Spivak's notion that it is more problematic to remain stultified by the risk of appropriating the other, than to risk speaking out, I've attempted to be attentive to my own position and the inherently monolithic systems of cultural representation that my research necessarily engages with, (and how the moment a position is privileged and draws focus, the risk of homogenising and universalising presents). I have continued to reflect on the need to locate specificity within the heterogeneity of the area of research, awake to my own risk of complicity in what is being critiqued (Spivak 1990:57-60).

Crucial to the construction of the Protectorate descendants research project was my own journey of self-discovery through my concurrent academic and experiential research, including explorations into the mixed ancestry of my own genealogical historicity. This had the effect of continually decentring my own stance, to focus my appreciation upon context (contingency and situatedness).

At this point in my research, while tutoring in Macquarie University's Indigenous division's Aboriginal Studies course, I attended a particular lecture from a Darkinjung Custodial Elder. The lecture was on discovering Indigenous heritage, and as this Elder was telling her story she mentioned a name that I was familiar with from my own family history research. After the class I asked her about this name and when she asked me who I was looking for and when they were born and I gave her the name and dates, this Elder threw her arms about me and exclaimed 'cousin'. This experience has further connected me to my research in ways that I had been unable to anticipate when starting the PhD.

This Elder had experienced some of the worst from the impact of policy outcomes on Indigenous peoples, and her extraordinary courage and deep pragmatism and patience astounded me. We have compared what family history details we have, finding patterns in the selection of first names in previous generations, which she'd learned had been a strategy to try to keep track of children. We've also been struck by family resemblances. Without complete records it has been difficult to progress further at this point, but it appears possible that my great grandfather, if he is indeed related, avoided the mission system by about 10 years. As there is so much that remains unanswered at this point, I have been instructed to be patient, as this cousin's search for more family has continued over thirty years, since first discovering a box of photographs and information after her mother had died. I am aware (from a letter by a great aunt), of such a box that was in the

care of my mother's uncle. It may also offer some explanation as to why a family member has been listed alongside Aboriginal names connected to the development of the Ulladulla fishing industry, and perhaps why this man's father attempted to identify as 'from New Zealand' though he had emigrated from England.⁵³

My research could not avoid being profoundly affected by these new knowledges in terms of searching my selfhood, with my own defining between Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity becoming yet more ambiguous. It provided fertile exploratory ground for unexplained impulses, motivations and ways of viewing my world, yet I have not yet, and may never, obtain concrete facts, despite this. My family members were all introduced to the past in new ways and most particularly my mother, who remembers her grandfather (who died when she was eight) and was at first significantly defamiliarised by the information that her grandparents may have knowingly repressed Indigenous heritage. Over a series of conversations her acceptance of the likelihood of Indigenous heritage became evident, particularly as she was convinced by her own identification of a striking family resemblance between her uncle and this cousin's uncle.

What became clearer to me during this period was a powerful sense of yearning that I knew was drawing me beyond myself as I traced ancestral paths and energetically connected with those who'd walked before me in former centuries. I experienced things that cannot be explained in reductive rationalist terms. For example, when searching for the graves of my great grandparents I was inexorably drawn to a particularly neglected plot in a long neglected part of the graveyard, where I found myself heedlessly pulling back large inhospitable thorned branches of a tree that covered the headstone. As my mind caught up with my actions I read the names of my great, great, grandparents, who I had not known to be buried there.

As I explored concurrently my family history and academic research I became increasingly conscious of the levels of inter-entity connectivity that were building in me the confidence to relax and trust this process, a process that, it was becoming more evident to me, was both deeply within and beyond my conscious self.

⁵³ This has been related to me as a common situation in cases of mixed marriage, as people of Maori descent were more accepted socially than people of Aboriginal descent during this period (1840s to 1870s).

Introduction to the article *What Sovereign Rights for Indigenous Australians?*

My aim in this paper was to sketch the issues I was exploring with regard to emplacement in the article *Laws of Place* into an international frame and beyond. What had also become an increasing research focus for me were the levels of denial within people identifying as non-Indigenous in the Australian situation and, not just how this has impacted the co-construction of lived-experience, but what the suppression of this denial means in terms of inter-entity embodiedness. I was attempting to address this denial and suppression of voice within an animate universe, in the attempt to associate the application of this thinking with its material affects.

As I continued to research the current situation for Indigenous/indigenous peoples in Australia, the early Protectorate and Indigenous descendent relations in Victoria, as well as my own family history in the Sydney region, I increasingly unearthed policies and administrative practices of silencing and the subsequent impact of non-Indigenous levels of denial within settler/indigenous relations. At the same time, national and international conditions of economic and environmental crises connected to globalisation were featuring loudly in public discourse.

The paper incorporates data from the recent United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous/indigenous Issues and contemporary examples within Australian communities. The indigenous perspectives that I engage with in this paper resonate with Arabena's work (2008), which is positioned in the open framework of a non-hierarchical relationship within nature and its living systems. Arabena writes:

In a Universe described by Aboriginal persons in Australia, the many components of nature become an extension not just of the geographic world but also of the human society. The Universe is similarly placed in international Indigenous literature. In honouring the integrity of their Universe as a whole interconnected life system, Indigenous peoples have learned over many generations to be in the world in reciprocal relationships with all things in their Universe, through cooperation, complementarities and interdependence. (p.1)

Arabena argues that colonisation introduced the situation where universe-referent speaking was not utilised and:

hierarchical relationships between Aboriginal persons and others in society impacted not only on their health and wellbeing, but on the health and well-being of other

living beings, living systems and of ecosystems for which Aboriginal peoples saw themselves as responsible ... the culture of colonisation is now affecting the living and non-living processes that give us life. The mal-development practices underpinning colonisation are disrupting the geological functioning of the planet to a level not previously known in the epic of the journey of the Universe (p. 2).

The engagement that Arabena and other Indigenous/indigenous peoples, (and perhaps the discipline of eco-phenomenology [e.g. Brown 2003] encourage), is to consider what gets excluded in discourse when human-centric thinking predominates and, as Lingis has argued, blocks out the ‘murmur of the world’ (Lingis 1994:69-105). This is not to attempt to script a successful universal communication system, but to attempt to allow for the ‘sonorous elements with which words are formed —the sighs, gasps, waverings, droning, hissings, sobs, giggles, whimperings, sniveling, screams, snortings, purrings, mutterings, and moanings ...’ (p. 91). These communications would include the non-message, the unequivocal, ‘the hum of the heavenly bodies ...’ (p. 99), in a generative and ongoing enunciative process.

Communication, in this sense, would be interrelated with an intrinsically non-hierarchical place perspective. Thus perspectives that would consider propriety in place in relation to the circumstances of that place (Chambers 2008) as each place, within a region of places, is part of a relational network (Little Bear 1998) allowing people to find out what is appropriate for each place. And place perspectives require the education to watch and listen to animals, birds, plants, water, wind, astronomical beings as well as humans (Little Bear 2004). These knowledges are generated and constituted in ‘practices of locality’ (Ingold 2000, 2004). This then is the inscription of language within our corporeal doubled relations in Country, a vibrantly interactive conversation, where law is sung (Watson 2002), and where people ‘speak the land’ (Diprose 2008).

Indigenous/indigenous peoples (at the UN Forum on Indigenous Issues) were witnessing the manifestations of repercussions in their respective countries connected to coloniser disconnected noise and the suppression of indigenous language and communication within continuing colonising hierarchies. As consequences connected with the suppression of open engagement in the ecospheres in which we live mount, crises become shared unilaterally (Posey 2002), and these crises draw attention to how always located indigenous knowledges and practices offer opportunities to choose otherwise (ie.

universe-referent practices). Arabena argues that indigenous knowledges, in their locatedness, acknowledge the aliveness of the universe (Posey 2001:5).⁵⁴

The driving imperative in the western frame to adopt human-centric economies in the place of earth-centric practices (Arabena 2008:11) contributes to a reductive materialism which requires deconstructing in order to enable the foregrounding of human interdependence in life cycles within this living universe. Deconstructing this disconnection/denial offers opportunities for increasing affirmative engagements in Country.

... even though the rituals that maintain sacred geography may shift and change, or political imperatives take precedence over ceremonial concerns, the end result for all the Indigenous writers is that the nature of relationships in the Universe are an existence tethered to specific sacred locations which can be retrieved, remembered, reshaped and reclaimed, even after lengthy periods of amnesia, taboo and neglect (Arabena 2008:9).

The paper 'What Sovereign Rights for Indigenous Australians?' appeared as a virtual presentation at the 8th International Conference on Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations. *The article was published in *The International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations* Volume 8, Issue 3, Common Ground, Melbourne, pp 49-58, 2008. This journal has a C ranking on the ERA ranked journal list.

⁵⁴ Where western science/metaphysics separates living from non-living inanimate objects.

Pages 139-151 of this thesis have been removed as they contain published material. Please refer to the following citation for details of the article contained in these pages.

McAllan, F. J. (2008). What sovereign rights for Indigenous Australians? *The International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations*, 8(3), 44-58.

Addressing denial of the inner voice

Tuning out the noise of fear

My further thinking and research experience regarding situatedness and emplacement, and the Indigenous/indigenous stories and ceremonies connected with place, led me to explore what this connectedness to place may suggest with regard to the existential fear that is associated with western rationalist thinking (e.g. Massumi's fear blurr of capitalist space (1993), Freud's theory of *fort da* (1950)). Massumi argues that within the dynamics of capitalistic forces, the aporetic openness in decision-making becomes saturated and over-determined with fear-blurr, closing off opportunity to engage with alterity. Freud's theory explores the drive to mastery through language, suppressing the dual fears of death and loss of the pre-Oedipal relation. Luce Irigaray argues Freud interprets here the constitution of the male subject, through the objectification of the mother and activation of the fantasy of wholeness by fully appropriating the mother/child dyad relation. Irigaray argues further that the male subject denies his birth from the living mother and claims his origin from God the father. Irigaray understands pre-Oedipal relation as not gendered (Mulder 2006:27-37).

I was interested to connect this existential fear with the argument of self-colonisation developed in *Laws of Place* where systems of denial oppress through engaging an abstracted mode of existence antithetical to inter-subjectivity/inter-entity communication. I was interested to explore further the levels of denial and suppressed guilt operating in Australia within systems of inter-subjective suppression and depersonalised systems of representation, systems that were interfering with forms of identifying via embedded relations of emplacement.

Peoples' engagement with practices of locatedness and reciprocity (regarding their emplacement) offers forms of belonging unavailable in much of the western modes of modern lived experience. Forms of belonging that offer such levels of inter-personal relations can be heavily compromised in systems geared for national development and entrepreneurial individualism.⁵⁵ It became evident to me in my research that engaging inter-entity or universe-referent perspectives offered possibilities for a comparatively less

⁵⁵ As I have argued in my papers.

fearful countenance considering the openness to alterity that is part of everyday experience (Elder 2003:284-296, Lechte 2005).⁵⁶ The orientation of forms of belonging regarding inter-subjective emplacement in Country, are geared to an entrusting relation in the lived world, celebrated through affirming relations of song, ceremony, ancestral connections (Muecke 2005) as Watson argues:

Laws were birthed as were the ancestors - out of the land ... Our laws are lived as a way of life ... the knowledge of the law comes through the living of it. Law is lived, sung, danced, painted, eaten, walked upon, and loved; law lives in all things (Watson 2002: 16, 17) ... [Aboriginal] laws go before and beyond a sovereignty which is held by a physical force of arms (p.40).

This entrustment is also evident in the practicalities of everyday relations which have been geared to autonomous (while also communally) self-sustaining activities that engage an awareness of the living ecosystem and its behaviour.

⁵⁶ While Elder argues for recognition of the qualitative existentiality re indigenous peoples in Australia, Lechte sketches qualitative existentiality (after Bataille and Caillois's interest in a qualitative life based in the sacred) that exceeds a quantitative mode in Capitalist societies.

Introduction to the article: *Colonial Sovereignties and the Self-Colonising Conundrum*

My argument in *Colonial Sovereignties and the Self-colonising Conundrum* explores the similarities and resonances in Watson's papers on Aboriginal laws of place and Derrida's argument in *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (2005), where fear-driven self-referent thinking of 'strong reason' in Derrida, and denial connected with the sovereign colonising relation in Watson, compels and drives a contradictorily self-threatening (autoimmune) relationship. The more the strong reason/colonising relation attempts to ensure existential security of its own sovereignty, the more it prevents awareness of actual inter-subjective belonging. Laws in country, I argue following Watson (2002) and iterating with Derrida, are engaged by acknowledging the excessiveness of sovereignty, as sovereignty can only be inter-subjectively shared (Watson 2002, Motha 2006, Nancy 2000).

In Mansfield's critique of *Rogues* he follows Derrida's sketch of unconditionality that both conditions and enables sovereignty. He finds Derrida engages with: 'how sovereignty attempts to deny and foreclose the very unconditionality it depends on'. Yet, to my thinking, while Mansfield acknowledges it is unconditionality and heteronomy that exceeds sovereignty, his theorising tends to be ultimately limited by a westernised historical development of 'democracy' and 'sovereign power', which narrows Mansfield's conceptual scope. His concluding paragraph argues that we face a future where:

the risks of violent and increasingly authoritarian government acting in the name of democracy will make the problem of armed democracy all too real. Yet this problem will not be dealt with by pretending that there is a pure or virginal democracy somewhere uncontaminated by this complexity. All our democracies will risk being violent, and it is this democracy, not an unrealizable and rhetorical one, that we must take charge of and shape ... It will require a renewal of our thinking of what democracy is, and the possibilities of sovereign power that go with it. (Mansfield 2008: 375)

I agree with Mansfield that this renewal of thinking is very necessary. Yet Mansfield appears to align the necessary relation between sovereignty and unconditionality with 'unconditional super-reason' (what I consider Derrida is sketching in *Rogues* as 'strong reason') i.e. 'It engenders like a generative principle of life, like a father'. Where I understand that Derrida argues this 'strong reason' and its self-referentially presumed origin as illusory (as I would argue that Derrida acknowledges originary relatedness as pro-

generative⁵⁷), Mansfield is focused on how this paternity yet remains necessary to sovereignty. I wouldn't deny this and yet it is clearly the paternal-alignment of power that generates exclusion of the *feminine*. Mansfield is searching for a 'good' power:

that which counters sovereignty — by excess, subversion or disruption — must itself be sovereign. It is not possible to shelter in a kind of political Manicheanism, in which power is to be anathematized as always and everywhere a disgrace and a degradation, something to be critiqued but not assumed. Power can only be critiqued from power, and this power is never not being exercised. In other words, power must be recognized in its differences. It is only possible to practice politics by recognizing, at some level, power as a good.

Relational ontologies, as I have argued regarding the structure of emplacement in the thesis, participate in modes of power very different to paternal-aligned conceptions of power in the West. As I have argued with Derrida, Watson and others, these conceptions of power are illusory and contradictorily self-threatening i.e. self-colonising.

'As people embody country, territorialism is suicide' (Muecke 2005:17). Mowaljarli points to a complex interactionism when he argues 'power resides in land', indicating the affirming law relation in land that I have argued in the thesis. 'It's all round the nature power. Power all belong nature. We all get power from land. That's why it's important' (Mowaljarli cited in Hume 2002:145). Muecke, when referring to ceremonial relations and sacred sites states: 'The power that created the world resides in these physical locations. When an Aboriginal man or woman travels to one of these sacred places they put their bodies in the locus of creation and continuity, and thus the power that resides there not only recognises them but also inspires them to act' (Muecke 2005: 22). Referring to philosophy of the West Muecke writes: 'the early modernists were in thrall to the infinite and space was composed of geometric abstractions relatable only to the mind ... that place has some power was forgotten ... ignored in favour of masterful cognition' (p.50). These perspectives offer different conceptions of power altogether.

Yet paternalism, imperialism, colonialism etc miss this in the fear-fuelled drive to mastery and possession of land, woman, native etc. In the paper I point to how Derrida argues that Reason, in its progress, spontaneously produces its crises, this amnesic evil objectivism,

⁵⁷ For example in the previously mentioned argument on Khora in *On the Name* (1995) but also in Rogues when he argues that the auto infection of the autos or threat in chance (i.e. individual emplacement) 'happens before the separation of physis from its others' (2005:109) see page 4 of paper.

‘as if by an internal secretion’ (Derrida 2005:125). The more this strong reasoning is executed, the greater the crises.

Considering the repercussions of excluding indigenous voices in a globalised system (that ignores or doesn’t fully engage the interrelatedness of living systems), I explore further in this paper the compulsions that are driven within this self-colonising conundrum. I connect this with the notion of thinking the impossible. Mansfield argues ‘a certain regulative idea of the world as a unity, one that feeds the development of the thinking of globalisation ... must come into question and doubt’ (2008:374). I agree. Mondialisation, as Derrida sketches this, is fuelled by this idea of unity, yet Derrida’s ‘return of the repressed’ or hauntology⁵⁸ is a referring to this world as passage, ‘it is only in the gaping and chaotic, howling and famished opening, it is out of the bottomless bottom of this open mouth, from the cry of the *Khaein* that the call of justice resonates’ (McCarthy cited in Thomson 2005:200). Thomson, arguing deconstruction as a democratic gesture,⁵⁹ writes: ‘what is at stake is the invention of the impossible, we must act as if there might be ways of thinking or acting which would give the impossible more a chance than other ways of thinking or acting’(p. 201).

By drawing together the points of resonance between Watson’s articles on colonisation and Derrida’s book on rogue states, I was hoping to also extend their exhortations to encourage thinking/speaking the impossible in the context of living systems beyond the human-centric focus of western ontological systems and the distracting, fear-fuelled noise of denial and disconnection. * The article ‘Colonial Sovereignties and the Self-Colonising Conundrum’ is to be published in *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Scholarship*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2010. The journal has a C ranking on the ARC research excellence list. This publication positions my theory in the area of international Indigenous scholarly research. The reviewer comments included “*This is a philosophically elegant and potent argument outlining and arguing the unreasonableness and violence of colonization.*”

⁵⁸ Hauntology, the neologism that Derrida introduces is not simply the measure of absence to presence in a metaphysics of presence, regarding the return of the repressed, it is the very structural openness of ontology, the origin is always spectral, always repetition’s first and last time, the trace *differance* cannot be articulated but remains part of everything (the act of return is originary ‘*it begins by coming back*’ (Derrida 1994: 11). The spectre of what has been repressed is hauntingly ever-present.

⁵⁹ This is albeit a grossly inadequate gloss on how Thomson sketches this argument, but for brevity’s sake here...

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**COLONIAL SOVEREIGNTIES AND THE SELF-COLONISING
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Colonial sovereignties and the self-colonising conundrum

Abstract

Relational epistemologies and ontologies of indigenous populations call into question the legitimacy of colonial sovereign foundations. Referring to Derrida's sketch of the impossible, Watson writes: "My suggestion is that the moment of 'impossibility' in recognising the sovereignty of Aboriginal laws, is the moment which provides Australians with the opportunity to 'take responsibility in order to have a future'. (2006: p. 26) Nevertheless the colonial law that presumes settled foundations continues to deny any need to address its own legitimacy. Derrida argues that progressive reason consigns to forgetting its historical and subjective origins, likening this to a spider, spinning a cocoon of autoimmunity to preserve its right to reason determinately rather than boldly traversing its web. Is it possible for reason to speculate reasonably with itself? (2005: 127-140)

Keywords

self-colonising, auto-immunity, impossibility, interdependency

Introduction

In *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, Derrida interrogates the historical trajectory including Plato to Schmitt and the force of law with regard to strong reason in Western philosophy, and he asks, is justice reducible to law? He also asks, who has the right to make law? This paper explores Derrida's sketch of autoimmunity concerning this strong reason of Western philosophy, in relation to Watson's writings' on laws of place, where I find she connects the denial of indigenous relational ontology with the conundrum of self-colonisation.¹

Self-colonisation, as argued in this paper, is not just the immobilising affect the coloniser has upon the colonised, as argued by Fanon (1967), but includes, (specifically when comparing with autoimmunity per strong reason after Derrida), the affect upon the coloniser as a result of enacting the colonising relation upon the other. As colonising cultures have long been disconnected from their indigenous ontological relation with their environment and each other, self-colonising continues to take place within the enactment of colonising relations, with guilt and fear reinforcing within these appropriations and furthering disconnection from the self, the land and the other (McAllan 2009).

As the denial of relational ontology can be engaged by any individual, from Watson's argument I read the questioning of colonial sovereign legitimacy as a moment of confrontation for all 'Australians', (indeed all peoples). As I read both Derrida and Watson's work, I find that they engage with an ongoing structure of 'emplacement' (while

¹ While I develop this idea of self-colonisation further than Watson articulates in her articles cited, I believe the central tenet of my argument is primarily extending Watson's own argument.

always singularly articulated), where there is opportunity, when considering legitimacy, to confront the inter-relatedness of inter-subjectivity and the inter-entity affects of autoimmunising or, to use another register, self-colonising within colonising logic. Speaking paradigmatically therefore², as colonisation and sovereignties began with the usurpation and occupation of others' lands it is the colonising relation that structures this emplacement for both, where the individual is challenged to deconstruct relations of self-interested appropriation at the expense of the other. Watson's writings on impossible sovereignty reveal the crucial relationship between law and land.

Land possession, which remains central to the colonising relation, is at odds with the indigenous ontological relation. As Watson argues, indigenous laws are lived inscriptively in the bodies, minds and spirits of individuals who hold to laws as they are inscribed in the land. Laws of place are inscribed lawfully within the lived relationships of individuals as they engage in their responsibilities with all other entities in their co-dependent interrelatedness. As Langton has argued, settler cultures have a pronounced separation between consciousness and landscape, (Langton 1996) and yet the colonial world view has been imposed epistemologically in Australia largely as if the indigenous ontological relation does not exist. Watson writes:

... we the Aborigines are in relationship with land in different ways. The white way of knowing is forged by ownership, possession and control. The Aboriginal way of knowing comes through spirituality, identity, traditions of historical connectedness (Watson 2007: p 26).

² Throughout Derrida's oeuvre he speaks paradigmatically in relation to decision, law, justice, responsibility see *Disseminations*, *Negotiations*, *Spectres of Marx*, *Gift of Death*, *Politics of Friendship*, *Deconstruction Engaged*. Watson speaks paradigmatically considering Muldarbi (which she likens to colonising spirit) and the cannibal (the coloniser in the state of consuming the colonised as well as self).

The conceptual understanding of *terra nullius* (empty or uncultivated land) was used legislatively to structure Australia's sovereign land tenure, as the country was presumed free for occupation by the colonialists because they did not recognise the indigenous ontological systems that had been practiced for thousands of generations. To recognise the indigenous ontological relation with land would "[address] the issue of colonial occupation fundamentally, structuring every subsequent interrelation. Imposed non-indigenous systems are exposed in their illegitimacy"(McAllan 2009: p 250).

Strong Reason: autoimmunity

To first examine the autoimmunity of strong reason, Derrida, throughout *Rogues*, interrogates philosophers who have, one by one, (Derrida 2005:12) couched their reasoning in the language of superpower (p. 138). For example, in the regulative ideal from Kant, where practical reason takes priority over speculative reason for the 'good' of all (p. 134), or in Husserl's crisis, where neutralising the event horizon entails a forgetting of subjective and historical origins and a calculated running aground (p. 122) – a saving of the honour of reason 'by overcoming naturalism once and for all' (p. 130). For Schmitt, in this logic, the Sovereign is free to decide, using strong reason to make exception for itself, cutting ahistorically across the hierarchies it imposes (p. 138) to authorise its' security in advance, and Derrida argues this sovereignty requires repressing how it is indivisible or not at all (p. 101). To divide sovereignty is to compromise it, and Derrida states "Abuse [becomes the constitutive logic of] a sovereignty that can reign only by not sharing" (102).

What Derrida is highlighting therefore in this version of autoimmunity is the repression of denial that the colonial sovereign engages in as it violently appropriates the other/others in this relation (utilising strong reason). This is denial therefore of the actual ontology of this relation, and its interdependency with the other, as I will argue further below. Elsewhere Derrida has sketched this denial as the naïve conscience of Reason where the coloniser is caught naïvely within its own self-referential determinations (Derrida 1998: pp 106-107). Derrida here offers the sketch of the rogue as ever-marginal to this logic – troubling rogues are thus the targets of this strong reasoning’s renunciation.

With the imposition of a centralising colonial foundation upon the heterogeneity of Indigenous countries in ‘Australia’, we see this constitutive abuse (Derrida 2005: p. 102) when the fixed relations of the sovereign doctrine of tenure began possessive relations in land, ignoring the indigenous ontological relation and violently excluding indigenous peoples. Maintaining this foundation requires a forgetting of indigenous first laws of place – laws that Watson argues *live* in land, and so within the bodies, minds and spirits of those who remain compelled to engage this originary relation. Indigenous sovereignty is shared affirmatively, while in the iterability of these relations, their singular incommensurability shares nothing (Nancy 2000). As laws of place live in land, within individual’s bodies, and within all other entities, indigenous sovereignty is impossible to sovereignty of the State, always in excess – before and beyond it.

Autoimmune threat as chance

Derrida points to the impossible relation between indivisible sovereignty and the urgent necessity to critique the conditions for its grounds when he asks “is it not a matter of distinguishing between the aut positioning of sovereign mastery and postulation of unconditionality (Derrida 2005: p. 143)?” This aporia would then offer the conditional grounds of impossible responsibility (p. 49). This necessary structural relation is what Derrida sketches as the auto-infection of the autos, the autoimmune threat as chance, or threat in the promise (pp. 82-83), where, as soon as the autos needs heteronomy, event, time, the other, the impossible relation between calculation and the incalculable presents. This is therefore the necessary constitutive ground of emplacement for the self as sovereign. It is the paradigmatic structure of sovereign impossibility.

Watson argues this impossibility as the opportunity for the coloniser to stop ignoring indigenous ontological relations with land in order to have a future (Watson 2007: p 26). It is the necessary acknowledgement that all must make in respect of their constitutive emplacement in the world. Derrida argues the relation becomes an impossible zeroing out in the paradoxical revolution of ‘the self’s return to itself and against itself, in the encounter with itself and countering of itself’. He understands this relation as both unconditional and originary, taking place, ‘before the separation of physis from its others’ (p. 109). In this Derrida resonates with Watson’s description of originary law. She writes:

Laws were birthed as were the ancestors - out of the land and the songs and stories recording our beginnings and birth connections to homelands and territories now known as Australia ... Law is in all things. It has no inner or outer, for one is all, all is one. Law is what holds this world together. (Watson 2002: 16)

The originary relation/relatedness of emplacement has no closure or finitude to it as it is an impossibly open and negotiating situatedness that carries the origin within it, while remaining open incommensurably to the future. As such the relation is teleologically both now and always. For Derrida this is his paradigmatic structure of iterability, or différance (differing while deferring). In *Negotiations* he sketches this as the shuttle, or the perpetual motion of negotiating with the Other/others. In this Derrida resonates also with Nancy (2000) who attests to this structuration with his conceptualisation of *partage* which is both a partition and a partaking, or a dividing while dividing out, thus the structuration remains both finite and infinite teleologically.

Watson reveals that both laws of place, and the individual's emplacement within them, are an ongoing originary ontological relation, continuing as a questioning of sovereign legitimacy. She writes:

Our laws are lived as a way of life; they are not written down as the knowledge of the law comes through the living of it. Law is lived, sung, danced, painted, eaten, walked upon, and loved; law lives in all things. Aboriginal Law holds the position of the European idea of sovereignty [but] is different in that it is not imposed by force of arms and is not exclusive in its embrace. All peoples come into the laws of place as they come into ruwi, even krinkris, but the greater majority has no sense or recognition of laws of place as they are controlled by the idea of sovereignties of state and other growing global identities. Laws of ruwi and the first peoples are its carriers as they are the caretakers of both ruwi and law ... (Watson 2002: 16-17).

Watson's and Derrida's theory resonates (while they differ in their constitutive circumstances, just as all constitutive circumstances necessarily differ) in the revealing of the structure of emplacement in the world as impossibly originary, while at the same time remaining eternal. As indigenous laws of place are engaged individually in impossible interrelatedness with all other entities, there is no separation from these entities and yet there is also the incommensurable distinction and diversity of ever-emergent difference.

Strong reasoned Autoimmunity as Denial of Inter-dependence

In keeping with the sense of responsibility this relation thus entails, as the self-confessed rogue that he is, Derrida painstakingly deconstructs a certain autoimmunity, which he illustrates with the example of the United States' self-maintenance as a superpower, through its reliance on the rhetoric of policing global democracy. This autoimmunity can also be seen to be operative in Australia's self-colonisation in the act of determining its role as sovereign savior to the Pacific regions.

With perceived vital interests at stake, Derrida argues that 'ensuring uninhibited access to key markets, energy supplies and strategic resources' (2005: p, 104), became strong reason for the US to attack any state running contrary to it. Acting unilaterally in order to protect itself both within and without, the US itself became rogue in the act of declaring its enemies as rogue states, and in relation to 9/11³, presented the increasingly suicidal autoimmune situation, where enemies had now been secreted, both within and without the body of the US. This then increased the difficulty of declaring its enemies to either expel from within, or name on the horizon. Recursively stuck so to speak, the more the US defends itself, the more it threatens itself. Derrida then points to the crisis of globalisation or mondialisation, where, with increasingly indiscriminate boundaries, and without the useful denunciation of rogue states therefore (p. 103), a paranoid terror connected with strong reason disperses multilaterally (p. 107).

Derrida here refers to Husserl's argument in *Crisis* (Husserl 1970), where objectivist naivety, 'is no mere accident' (Derrida 2005: p. 127). Reason, in its progress,

³ The bombing of the World Trade Centre buildings in New York, September 11, 2001.

spontaneously produces its crises, this amnesic evil objectivism, ‘as if by an internal secretion (p. 125)’. The more this strong reasoning is executed, the greater the crises. This situation of amnesic repression is likened to a spider, cocooning itself in its own secretions. In ensuring self-protection, the spider becomes entangled and ensnared within its own web (p. 131).

Where Husserl argues that the subordination of speculative to practical reason apriorily works to save reason’s interests (Derrida 2005: p. 134), Derrida argues that autoimmunity is not an absolute evil. As ipseity/sovereignty has no indemnity – it must touch its vulnerability in its finitude and in a non-horizontal fashion (p. 152) – autoimmunity presents the necessary poisoned medicine, *pharmakon*. Immunity and indivisibility of sovereignty must be continually called into question as an ongoing deconstructive vigilance (pp. 152-159).

As Watson has argued, it is the impossible moment of recognising the sovereignty of Aboriginal laws that provides Australians with the opportunity to begin take responsibility in order to have a future. Watson also argues the necessity of this responsibility:

Aboriginal Australia is a complex and layered landscape, a place of not only Aboriginal sovereignty but a diversity of those sovereignties which underlie this country’s past, haunting its present and calling it to justice as we enter the future. ... the law lives in this land — a fact, a belief, a way of knowing the world that is still alive and waiting that ‘impossible’ moment of recognition and activation (2006: p 28).

For Derrida, this necessary evil or *pharmakon* of autoimmunity is the responsibility to be vigilant in calling the indivisibility of colonising sovereignty into question. This would then have the spider boldly traversing its web, not fearfully spinning a protective cocoon. As Derrida argues: “the use of state power is originally excessive and abusive” (Derrida 2005: p. 156) and “to claim the contrary involves always a denegation, a denial, a rationalisation” (p. 157). As Watson also shows, rather than denying Aboriginal law through progressive reason, it is in “embracing of one’s own Nunganess” and thus taking responsibility regarding the originary relation that initiates within laws of place that provides opportunity for a future. She writes “we need to put in place different realities. Different ways of knowing from the ways of the west” (Watson 2002: 7) and argues:

The non-indigenous relationship to land is to take more than is needed, depleting ruwi and depleting self. A way with the land that is separate and alien, unable to understand how it is we communicate with the natural world. We are talking to relations and our family, for we are one. We seek permission from the spirit world for our actions; nothing is assumed. When food is taken from ruwi thanks are given, in hope that food will again be provided in the future. Our ways, considered backward and not a part of the steps of the ‘evolving spirit,’ are however ways which guarantee a sustainable model not only for Nungas but for all in the wake of their own embrace of Nunganess. (2002:19)

Yet denial of this interdependence is central to the self-colonising conundrum. As argued above, self-colonisation is both the incapacitation of the colonised, (through trauma and oppression from the coloniser), as well as the coloniser’s own self-colonising (through the unprocessed guilt and denial that accumulates when enacting the colonising relation against the colonised). Self-colonising logic here follows Derrida’s argument concerning

the autoimmunity of strong reason, as well as Watson's argument regarding the necessary acknowledgement of laws of place. In the structure of colonisation, the more the colonising relation is enacted, the more self-colonisation takes hold as inter-entity responsibility is ignored. With increasing denial about the inter-entity affects from operating with this subordinating relation upon the other, the less opportunity for awareness of inter-entity interrelatedness, and subsequently increasingly less engagement with responsibility regarding the impossible structure of individual emplacement.

Similarly to how Derrida argued the self-colonising or autoimmune crisis in the US, Perera has also argued how the rhetoric of strong reason is employed in the ongoing colonising logic of the Australian nation state. She writes "Globally, in the racialised geopolitical hierarchies produced by the war on terror, the Australian state has come to position itself, both in its self-figurations and through [alliance with] the United States, as the antipodean heavyweight and action hero of the Asia Pacific" (Perera 2007: p. 124). Using crises as opportunities "to assert itself on multiple fronts" (p. 126) and to extend a more secure claim on greater sovereignty in the region, Perera argues that the Australian state rearticulates its boundaries with urgency, from the crisis that ensured the Pacific solution⁴, turning away hordes of refugees from the threatening east, to putting out spotfires in surrounding islands like the Solomons, Timor and Papua New Guinea.⁵ Autoimmunity was

⁴ The 'Pacific Solution' was the decision to process asylum seekers applications to Australia in the Pacific (at Manus Island 350 km off Papua New Guinea, and the island state Nauru), therefore keeping refugees out of Australian territories. The 'camps' were intended to resolve the presumed problem of keeping out hordes of illegal immigrants or 'boat people' from Indonesia, as determined by the Howard government.

⁵ These spotfires were crises from colonial occupation causing internal conflicts in these countries, which the Australian state then used as opportunity to appear to be coming to the rescue as a paternalistic savior.

further fuelled by anxiety and fear when the Bali bombings⁶ increased amorphous threat within and without these boundaries.

Meanwhile, in the troubled heartlands of the Australian state, the ever-threatening horizon concerning the exposure of illegitimate colonial sovereignty through Aboriginal homelands and the desire to secure state economic interests⁷ continues as “the ongoing internal project of maintaining colonial sovereignty over indigenous bodies and populations and lands” (p. 126), recently deemed to require militarised action, installing the ‘Northern Territory Intervention.’ The intervention in Aboriginal communities was initially installed as a military operation where, under the guise of protecting children from unsubstantiated claims of rampant levels of communal child abuse, the Federal government compulsorily acquired Aboriginal land, took control of personal finances and installed white managers. Watson noted: “The Europeans reappear as the crusaders: the rescuers of the recontextualised, primitive, violent maladministrators—the hungry and backward black savages” (Watson 2006: p. 31) and pointed to centuries of plunder and impoverishment from the hands of the colonisers asking “What context is given to these conversations about us?”

The strong reasoning of colonising logic is evident in the repression and ongoing denial of indigenous sovereignty. The colonial sovereign takes on an imperial responsibility narrative of ensuring democracy, human rights and capitalism to the Pacific (Perera 2007 p. 135) as the ground on which the state continues to exercise its sovereign authority to

⁶ The bombing of the Sari nightclub in Bali, October 12, 2002. The Sari Club was heavily patronised by Australian tourists, which therefore had Australia’s counterterrorism forces on edge as the attack on Australian’s overseas was read as an imminent threat of Islamic fundamentalist terrorists strikes within Australia.

⁷ The internal state of the Northern Territory of Australia has a large proportion of Aboriginal owned land, as well as rich uranium deposits as well as areas deemed suitable for uranium waste.

impose these values within Australia, while all the while repressing its non-recognition of the indigenous populations (p. 134). Derrida's analogy of the cocooning spider is evident in the statement: "the logic of a colonising teleology ... projects an imaginative geography that has already taken in the horizon, that knows the territory to be exploited anterior to its arrival, and that has already arrived in anticipation of its own arrival" (p. 144).

Autoimmune crisis logic, as Derrida argued in the US self-colonising crisis, is also apparent in the fear-fuelled operation of controlling Australia's assumed territories, and where state sovereignty extends the colonising paradigm of possessive tenure relations imposed over indigenous lands.

Watson has described the Australian state's self-colonising as the coloniser being divided against itself and made sick in the establishing of its own territories. She argues "in their play for the one nation state they annihilate all about us, which is different, revealing a deep psychosis of some form or other. Sickness is what then emerges, an equally natural sickness, an evil naturally affecting nature. It is divided, separated from itself" (Watson 2002:50-51). This condition has been self-generated within the autoimmune denial that accumulates in fear-fuelled control over assumed sovereign borders. There is therefore no reflexivity of the intersubjective responsibilities that are fundamentally necessary to its own survival. In regard to the self-colonising and self-consuming domination of the state Watson writes:

The concept of nation state and sovereignty from an indigenous perspective is different to the idea of a modern state, which is backed up by nuclear weapons and armies on stand-by. These ideas of state sovereign power are in contrast to the idea of the wholeness of a people coming from Kaldowinyeri - the dreaming – the

creative processes which created the natural world and which seeks to continue the cycles of life (Watson 2002:47).

Self-colonising imaginary

The autoimmune conundrum is thus evident in the abstract disconnectedness within the Australian state. Fundamentally, as Watson argues, if Australian sovereignty's legitimacy was to be questioned, this would offer the ground for possibilities, where Australians could begin to take responsibility. Yet the imposition of Australian sovereignty continues to crucially shape the autoimmune coincidental structure of fear and controlling that keeps the spider firmly trapped within its own web. Watson has argued this as the demon spirit of *muldarbi*, which is the term she uses to describe the coloniser and "all forms of exploitation and power that are dispossessing and destructive of indigenous peoples" (Watson 2002: 18). She also describes imposed colonial sovereignty as the greed of the giant frog who continues to consume all the resources that need to be shared with the rest of the living world. She describes this as trying to: "get away with the maximum in terms of negative recognition of Nunga peoples laws, lands and well-being. It is a practise of the frog - one of enlargement - that has now gone global" (2002: 10).

Watson argues Aboriginal laws or sovereignty "simply exist ... Aboriginal laws live (Watson 2006: p. 24)" which interrupts the myth of colonialist sovereignty - *terra nullius*. Watson explains this myth as the conception that place is empty space to be filled with coloniser's "beginnings" of history and 'evolving' spirit" (Watson 2002: p. 13), as the coloniser took no account of the preexistent indigenous inhabitants and the concrete circumstances of the laws as inscribed in all the entities that surround them. She continues:

“But they came to a place where there was Nunga history, songs and stories of spirit-law, embodied and encoded in land and the greater natural world and universal order of things (2002: p. 14).

In *Rogues* Derrida describes the abstracted and deluded power of strong reason within the colonising relation as the “superpowerful origin of reason”, which is “essence without essence” (Derrida 2005: p. 138). Resonating with Agamben’s work on the state of exception he states “It is a question of power more powerful than power, conveyed in a sovereign superlative that undercuts in an exceptional fashion the analogy and hierarchy it nonetheless imposes. That is the essence without essence of sovereignty” (p. 138). The colonising rationale, and its delusions concerning power, is also interrogated by the anthropologist Rose, who argues that settler societies have loosened their:

accountability from ... constraints of place and time. In detaching from place these societies enable action to escape feedback from place. Settlers imagine themselves free to depart ... geographical and economic mobility are fuelled by people’s efforts to escape the results of their actions (Rose 2002: 2).

Without disconnection from place the legitimacy of sovereignty can start to be questioned again, as the necessary *pharmakon* or autoimmunity. The laws that reside in place provide the necessary sovereign legitimacy, as Watson argues:

... a true representation of Aboriginal interests would be the voice that is legitimised by the Aboriginal space, one that holds a law-full authority of those peoples who are being represented, in connection to a country or land represented ... a proper law-

full foundation is one from the law of place, the Aboriginal laws of place. (Watson 2006: p. 32-33)

Countering the colonialist delusion of *terra nullius* Watson elaborates that colonisers came to a place where Aboriginal “laws go before and beyond a sovereignty which is held by a physical force of arms” (Watson 2002: 40). Within the conundrum of strong reasoning, as the attempt is made to secure the grounds for sovereignty in advance, the non-recognition of indigeneity as the originary relation, and the repression of all the responsibilities this engages, to follow Derrida’s iterations with Husserl, has been secreted as amnesiac evil that increments fear and ignorance, while reinforcing the autoimmune cocoon. As “All people come into laws of place as they come into ruwi (land) but the greater majority has no sense or recognition of laws of place as they are controlled by ideas of sovereignty of state” (2002: 17) Watson argues that:

The word ‘nation’ needs to be exploded and expanded to properly reflect and accommodate the philosophy of Nunga laws. Expanded to include the voices of the natural world, so that the ruwi of the first nations has a voice. We are not merely on and in the land, we are of it, we speak as one voice of the Creation, the voice or song law. Land and people are one voice one song. (2002: 48)

Aboriginal philosopher Mary Graham also draws attention to how humanity is situated within the larger living system (Rose 2004: 4). And, as an anthropologist who is able to recognise this, Rose states: “... being is inherently, inescapably, and necessarily relational. An ontology of connectivity entails mutual causality ...” (p. 1). Her work argues for the re-grounding of accountability considering the indigenous ontological relation in place (2002:

p. 14), and she emphasises how place inscribes itself into peoples, rather than people assuming illusory notions of power domination in and over their inter-entity relations (pp. 8-15), arguing indigenous understandings of connectivity reveal ‘land is law’, requiring submission to the living world (p. 4).

Disarming the cannibal

As all people come into laws of place, Watson argues that until there is awareness of this: “the struggle remains constant and difficult, and continues until there is a coming to see ... the way we are all collectively victims of colonialism” (2006: p. 38). Watson addresses here the difficulty of speaking indigenous sovereignty into colonised space (p. 40) where cannibalising of indigeneity continues as further turns in self-colonisation. Addressing this logic of assimilation she writes:

... can we enter into a conversation on the cannibalism of our self, with the cannibal being the cannibal who is yet to see and know itself in its eating of us? How does the cannibal recognise itself? Is there a safe conversational space where we can have a close encounter without our own appropriation? (2007: p. 18)

In cannibalising the other, the autoimmune condition has the coloniser cannibalising itself at the same time. The more the colonising psyche presumes to secure itself, the more it self-threatens. Watson argues: “Aboriginal sovereignty is a difficult truth to speak, into the colonising space” (Watson 2006: p. 40). In the situation of continuing cannibalism, the conditions for self-colonisation are clearly fraught in the Australian state as hyper-attempts to self-legitimise reinforce reactionary guilt when colonial history is interrogated, or the question of indigenous sovereignty becomes all too resounding, and the need to de-alienate

and re-comfort oneself resurges. This can be seen in the push for ‘reconciliation’ where forms of indigenising or productions such ‘practical reconciliation’ amount to large scale commodification of, and capitalising on and through, indigenous knowledges in continued assimilative terms, which makes no substantive move towards response-ability to the other (McAllan 2009).

Watson asks “Is it impossible to engage with Aboriginal world views”, framing it in the global context of future possibilities (Watson 2006: p. 35) as Derrida also frames the global terms of mondialisation and autoimmunity, where paranoid denial can impact transnationally. The predicament of cannibalistic and capitalistic consumption is that these mechanisms can turn the wheels of ecological conundrums connected to horizons of human extinction. Yet in both Derrida and Watson’s work ‘impossibility’ is not a negative term, connected with nostalgia, romanticism, or onto-theology. The conditions to engage one’s indigeneity remain the ever-challenging ground of possibility/impossibility for Watson: “I see Aboriginal sovereignty as a dream for the future possibilities of a growing up of humanity ...” (2006: p. 27) and for Derrida, he situates this impossible relation in the ‘continuing presence’ structure of the ‘to come’. Watson also signals continuing presence when she says ‘law lives in this land ... a way of knowing the world that is still alive and waiting that ‘impossible’ moment of recognition and activation (p. 28)’. Derrida, throughout *Rogues*, signals ‘democracy to come’ as the continuing interrogation of the force that ‘decides for’ the collective demos, always a work of atemporal mourning.

Derrida’s conceptual understanding of mourning has been sketched as “an ongoing conversation with the dead who are both within us and beyond us and continue to look at

us with a look that is a call to responsibility and transformation” (Kirkby 2006). Kirkby argues that Derrida’s reformulation of ‘incorporation’ repositions forms of pathological mourning and is rather an impossible and reverent memorialising that respects the infinite alterity of the other. She writes “the voice of the other permeates us, constituting, traversing, exceeding, defying all reappropriation”.

Derrida’s writing reverberates with ghosts, revenants, specters as the subject negotiates the impossible responsibility of its constitutional relatedness and openness to alterity. For Derrida, the ego is thus expressed as “I am haunted” (Derrida 1994: p. 133). Derrida sketches the liminal communication networks regarding inter-subjective relatedness as the archive. He argues that the archive is where ancestral communication follows:

transgenerational and transindividual relays, transiting through an archive ... without which one would no longer understand how an ancestor can speak within us, nor what sense there might be in us to speak to him or her, to speak in such an *unheimlich*, ‘uncanny’ fashion to his or her ghost (Derrida 1996: pp. 35-36).

Ancestral presence remains integral to indigenous relational ontology (Mudrooroo 1995) and compels the infinite call to responsibility/response-ability regarding colonialism. Watson argues that she works with the hope of providing: “further openings or ways of looking beyond the limited horizon many believe is all there is.” She states: “Other horizons exist” (Watson 2007: p. 17). When considering the illusory power of colonising logic, the cannibal’s consumption of the other is self-delusory and self-colonising. As people embody country, place is the enduring location of ancestral spirit, where relationships are activated and made meaningful (Muecke 2004: pp. 12-16). Watson argues

“the other horizon—another way of knowing the world—is not dead to us but alive in the minds of those who continue to see through other horizons” (Watson 2007: p. 30). Within the fear-driven motivations to control its circumstances and protect itself in advance the cannibal is unable to recognise itself in its consumption of the other and neither in the self-cannibalising that this colonising spirit ensures for itself. Watson argues that the colonialists brought their own enslaved delusions of nationhood and colonial sovereignty with them to Australia:

The experience lived before the time of Cook⁸ was more than the idea of sovereignty; it was freedom from the ‘muldarbi’ or demon spirit ... Freedom is yet to be known by the muldarbi and its agents of power. we were already the truth of who we are as Nungas. We had ‘arrived’ our identity is set in law and land. The colonial state cannot ‘grant’ us who we are, for it was never theirs to give. Who we are emanates from law (2002: 18)

In consideration of Derrida’s sketch of mourning also, the illusory power of colonising holds no weight in scales that would measure the affirmative traversals of the self in responsible relations with the Other/other. As law lives in land, these affirmative traversals engage lawful memories, where impossible recognition and activation takes place. The potential for the coloniser to hear the call to ancestral responsibility, to respond to the laws of intersubjective relatedness, remains within the ‘threat as chance’ structure of emplacement.

Impossible grounds

⁸ Captain James Cook’s voyage to the east coast of the country began the British claim of ‘discovery’ and sovereignty.

As Watson has argued, limited conceptions of a colonising logic need exploding to allow for relational ontology. This explosion requires a self-encounter and continued interrogation of self-colonising sovereign forces. It is an encounter with the repressions and denials that have disconnected from inter-entity relatedness, through misconceiving negativity or impossibility as loss (McAllan 2009: p. 258). Relational ontology brings into question autoimmune sovereign relations that are merely fear-fuelled delusions concerned with controlling and possessing others and the world, counterproductive to lived experience as inter-entity interdependence.

Murri academic Karen Martin argues a truly relational ontology is “not only the Land and People, but it is also the Entities of Waterways, Animals, Plants, Climates, Skies and Spirits ... The strength of our country can be seen in the relationships with these Entities” (Martin 2006: p. 7). She argues that the way of relatedness is to set about engaging with identities, interests and connections, always embedded in context (p. 11). In *Rogues* Derrida’s speculations on relational ontology has him defining intersubjective responsibility in terms of measuring the incommensurability that extends:

to the whole world of singularities, to the whole world of humans assumed to be like me ... even further to all the non-living human beings, or again, even beyond that, to all the non-living, to their memory, spectral or otherwise ... to be negotiated with, endlessly... (Derrida 2005: p. 53).

Considering the conscious/unconscious structure of aporicity he further speculates ‘How are we to rethink a psychic and yet non-egological metronomy of democracy ...?’ (p. 55).

The search for democracy within the West is ongoing. Yet, with its use of strong reason Western philosophy's conceptualisations of consciousness and ego have largely remained modeled within the boundaries of the human psyche, with little adequate conceptualising beyond this. The laws of inter-entity interdependence deem it necessary to interrogate the colonising psyche to reveal the limits of this thinking. Both Derrida and Watson's explorations of the impossible and necessary negotiation within the intra-worlds reveal the realms of consciousness beyond the binary of positivity and negativity and the psychoanalytic limits of the naïve conscience of the coloniser. As is evident in both Watson and Derrida's calls to responsibility considering subjective emplacement, it is argued that intra-worldly desire, as the originary unity of negativity and positivity (passivity and activity), is not an abstract or objective movement, but an interrogative unfolding (Barbaras 2006: pp. 81-128). The mutual causality of inter-entity dependence reveals that the manifestation of the world constitutes only by letting itself be affected.

As I read both Derrida and Watson, epiphany for the colonising psyche is the recognition that negativity is not loss. Impossibility contains potentiality, excessive to horizons of expectation (Derrida 2005: p. 144, Watson 2007: p. 17). For Derrida, in light of the threat in chance relation of autoimmunity – the 'come what may' of the 'to come', the interrogation of the self, and its emplacement in its inter-entity relatedness engages active/passivity or weak force (Derrida 2005: p. 152), so that when it comes to sovereign democracy, there can only ever be a trace (p. 39). For Watson the recognition of the impossible is the moment of recognising the Nunga laws (the "land and people are one voice and one song" (Watson 2002: 48)) and the engagement in inter-entity responsibilities. I am therefore reading the autoimmune relation of emplacement

affectively as multidimensional — a polyportal aporicity to the worlds of the human, plants, animals, water, earth, sun, light. The worlds of energetics, ancestors and universes.

Derrida says that it is “necessary, in the name of reason, to call into question and to limit the logic of nation state sovereignty” (2005: p. 157). Watson asks “... where does the force of one law to extinguish the laws of the other draw its legitimacy from?” (Watson 2006: p.29) Self-colonisation, or the autoimmunity of strong reason, is wrapped up in the web of denial about state sovereignty’s original violence. This denial will come unbound with the recognition that Aboriginal sovereignty lives differently, living in the land, bodies, minds, and spirits of those who carry and still hold to (live) the laws of relational ontology.

In a performative joint discussion between an Aboriginal and a non-Aboriginal academic, Lillian Holt explained to Ruby Hammond that she is compelled to ask whitefellas (as colonising settlers) ‘Who are you?’ (Holt & Hammond 2007). This is a question that invites the coloniser to interrogate itself in relation to its own indigenous relatedness. In this discussion it is made clear that staying focused on interrogating the colonising relation is a ‘sane-making process’ rather than a mediating practice. Holt states she is happy when she comes across whitefellas who see their disconnection due to self-colonising forces as their burden and their diminishing. Hammond explains this as a growth area, a waking up with fear in the belly about the self’s position in relation to others.

As Watson has argued: “the other horizon – another way of knowing the world – is not dead to us but alive in the minds of those who continue to see through other horizons.”

And she asks

can we move into uncomfortable conversations? ... Can we move ... into what I call a meditation on discomfort’ – to places where settler society is made to answer these questions: what brings them to a place of lawfulness? Or how lawful is their sovereign status? (Watson 2007: p. 30)

These impossible questions, for Watson, are where thinking starts, and Derrida, arriving at the end of his work on the state, writes “to make ipseity see reason, it must be reasoned with’, prefacing this with ‘the reasonable that I understand here would be a rationality that takes account of the incalculable so as to give account of it, there where this appears impossible” (Derrida 2005: p. 159).

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Speaking/writing with

Introduction to the DVD *Speaking/writing with*

I had prepared a pilot DVD (the introducing narrative) to provide to potential participants in Victoria. This introduction began a connecting narrative in Manly (where I live), where I set up a contrast between perspectives (Macdougall 1994: 31) of colonial diarist Watkin Tench and Indigenous peoples at contact. These perspectives were further juxtaposed against modern signage, the absence of Indigenous representation, suggestions of contemporary non-Indigenous perspectives, a narrative from a descendent of one of the Indigenous persons documented by Tench during the colonial encounter, and my own narrative.

Manly was important as a location to situate the time and place of this colonial encounter and the instigation of mechanisms that worked to suppress Indigenous peoples' voices. The position of Tench's colonialist perspective as the dominant voice, and the absence of Indigenous voices are highlighted when Tench speaks *for* them. Juxtapositioning the coopting of Indigenous voices in the colonial period with a comparative absence of contemporary Indigenous representation in Manly today was important in relation to introducing the Indigenous descendant's narrative, as she witnesses the continuity of these descendent families and speaks to this absence. This narrative was self-directed and included footage from a reunion of Darug descendent families, with details of the historicity that connects the ongoing presence of Indigenous families in a genealogical trajectory.⁶⁰

At the end of 2008 I went to Victoria to film the narratives of those people who had responded to the DVD pilot and who had agreed to provide their stories. Financial constraints determined a schedule of three weeks, which included a week to finalise participants and to learn to film and edit, a week of camera hire and filming, and a week to finalise the gathering of photographs and archival materials to be included, as well as consult further with participants. Although a couple of years of research had passed and the building of relationships with these communities had progressively developed, at the time

⁶⁰ See note 15 re genealogy and origins as dispersals, and note 52 re Derrida and hauntology.

of arranging the filming I had no firm details on who was going to provide their narrative, and what the narratives would consist of. The connecting narrative was therefore constructed during the same week the narratives were filmed. I was able to prepare in a somewhat haphazard way for what may be spoken about, but was not sure until the last day of the filming week which people would be able to take part.

It was decided that four participants would be filmed, two being descendents of one of Taungurung families that had custodial responsibility for the land taken up in selection by the Protector's families. The other two were descendents of one of the last families to remain on the Coranderrk Mission, with connections also to sacred lands where Kulin survivors gathered, along with an egalitarian minister at the time of the Protectorate closure. I had to also film enough location footage for my connecting narrative during this filming week, including these custodial lands. Continuing with the structure I began in the pilot, I set up a juxtaposition of settler perspectives, historical details, current representation and signage, along with location footage that would likely backdrop the participants' and my own as yet unscripted observations.

So the footage was very much being constructed by situations as they transpired; a semi-formed narrative in my head; the participant narrators themselves and their choices about whether and how to participate (which presented an opportunity to orchestrate particular knowledge dissemination (Macdougall 1994:35, Ogden 2009); and an observational approach — a general openness to what happened (Macdougall 1994: 33). I was conscious that I was able to act as a conduit for information, and that my outsider position facilitated this. Macdougall offers that: 'Whenever cultural forces within a subject act upon the structure of a film ... through the patterning of an event, a personal narrative ... the film can be read as a compound work' (p. 35). Monaco, also writing on film narrative, notes that Kracauer finds the ideal film form to be the 'found story'. Such films, while always only able to produce a narrative account, are 'discovered rather than contrived' (Monaco 2000:400). Kracauer's emphasis is on how film exists in the context of the world around it.

In the editing process, I searched for what resonated strongest in the participant's self-directed personal narratives, in order to minimise my own constructive control. After filming the narratives I was able to place together areas of commonality in the participants' stories to bring the narratives into a story 'conversation'. This guided how I constructed the connecting narrative and also which supporting literature and historical documentation

were most salient. The participants, though not knowing what the other narrators would be saying, were thus the guiding force in the construction and selection process and therefore determined how the film was put together. By leaving the organising principal as open-ended as possible and allowing for the personal narratives to co-construct the way the connecting narrative ran, what emerged, to my thinking, was complexity that revealed both differences and continuity beyond what was under anyone's control. In this way what was produced was 'more than a transmission of prior knowledge ... [rather] a way of creating the circumstances in which new knowledge can take us by surprise' (Macdougall 1994: 35).

Evoking the unsaid

When I was first given the diary at the start of my PhD research I had hoped to explore the connections between the diarist, those Indigenous peoples' he interacted with, and descendent families today. The confronting colonialist language of the diary and its description of Indigenous 'primitives' compelled me to provide opportunity for the voices of the descendants to speak back to the years of western ontological dominance. I was interested in critique that turns the anthropologising of the west upon itself (Rabinow 1986: 241), encouraging viewers to be 'cognoscenti of their own bamboozlement' (Gitlin 1990:19). What I couldn't have anticipated was how intimately this historicity resonates uncannily (Derrida 1987, Kristeva 1991, Bhabha 1994[2]) with my own and with the historicity for many in Australia who may not yet realise how the assimilatory colonial policies and imagination continue to produce conditions that are surfacing their effects in this generation.

From new places of awareness, we are provided opportunities within this churning, for further revelations, where severed connections that had turned in on themselves can open out unacknowledged repressions. One example is the continuing revelation of Indigenous ancestry in Australia's presumed predominantly non-Indigenous population. The DVD narrative accounts of different experiences of Indigenous heritage brought a focus to the in-betweenness of identity, the place where cultural values are negotiated (Bhabha 1994[1]:2). What also presents is the ambiguity of the division between Indigenous and non-Indigenous collectives, and further exposure of the contradictory nature of the regulatory policies of a colonising nationhood that excluded 'apparent' Indigenous peoples in its ideological and political/judicial parameters. What becomes clear is how subjects are formed in-between, and in excess of, the sum of the parts of difference (Bhabha 1994[1]:2) and therefore the focus rests on the necessity to ask questions of the binary divisions, where social experience is exposed (p. 13). Bhabha argues:

Difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in a fixed tablet of tradition ... [its] social articulation, from the minority perspective, is complex ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorise cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation ... Recognition that tradition bestows is a partial form of identity. In restaging the past it introduces other incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition. Estranges any immediate access to an originary identity or received tradition ... the awareness of

epistemological limits of ethnocentric ideas are also the enunciative borders of a range of dissonant and dissident histories and voices, forming a bridge in this movement of the oppressed, a passage that crosses ... a middle passage of contemporary culture ... a process of displacement and disjunction (Bhabha 1994[1]:2-5).

In pointing to this enunciative liminality, it has therefore not been my intention to encourage opportunity to legitimate or hierarchise determined forms of valorised belongings for Indigenous or non-Indigenous peoples. This is impossible. In the argument that I have sketched in this thesis, the question of belonging can only be connected with ongoing response-abilities regarding the specifics of individual emplacements, and in this country, this will always entail engagement with the inscribed indigenous laws of this place. It will also always entail addressing the oppressions and denials that were and continue to be produced through ideological power-plays based on particular ideas of identity and particular differences. The focus is thus on 'response-ability', not on 'rights' pertaining to belonging.

Neither is a reclaiming of identity for those Indigenous people uncovering their heritage a claim to essential truth about an Indigeneity (a simple biological or social determinism). Rather the exploration of the interstitial inter-subjective communications reveals where the inwardness of the subject is always inhabited by the radical and anarchical reference to the other, a claiming and naming through interstitial subjectivities (Bhabha 1994[1]:17). And my research experience has shown me that it is worth staying with the context of every specific connection in one's subjectivity regarding related material/energetic effects. This is the teaching of the groundedness in the laws of land. As Derrida's sketch of hauntology also indicates, the cultural memories of repressed pasts are insurmountable ambivalences that continually introduce alterity in the present (Bhabha 1994[1]:157). In terms of my explorations into the suppression of Indigenous/indigenous voices, and the concurrent exploration into my own suppressed knowledges and historicity, what I find interesting is the phenomenological and non-phenomenological connections that resonate both within and beyond this journey.

A circumstantial decision of the diarist's great granddaughter to supply me with her ancestor's diary connected me with the people whose repressed familial connections were directly related to this ancestor's decisions that had affected these repressions. This also

connected me into this shared experience of discovering repressed ancestral connections. This liminal experience had been affirmed/activated in the desire to connect on inter-entity levels, to explore impulses and unknown longings beyond determined research directions, reasoned estimations and intentional outcomes.

I recognise this as the area of contagion,⁶¹ the commonality where subjectivity connects and in this case, makes explicit the continuity of inter-subjective inter-entity communications. Meaning is always inter-subjectively derived. Bhabha offers that indeterminacy in the linear narrative of the nation is articulated through a temporal break, where ‘inter-subjectivity returns as subjectivity directed towards rediscovery of truth’ (Bhabha 1994[1]:191), thus where a reordering of symbols becomes possible. Continuity (interrelated utterances Bhabha⁶²), or witnessing (Oliver 2001), was what was able to resonate in the stories of the DVD participants, despite the diversity of their lived social conditions.

What this has meant is that the unsaid in ancestral conversations has been able to return to disrupt the linear continuity of the national narrative. Inter-entity affirmed continuity was expressed through expressions and gestures of responsibilities to land, family, community, cultural practices (whether discerned or skilled), language, art, song and ceremony. What is being revealed, I argue, is the presenting of the shared-experience of liminality, exposing relationships that, while differently imagined and incommensurably lived, are opening out communities to themselves with new connectivity and confluences, and with new ways to imagine the future, in light of the repressed knowledges of the past.

Martin explains that working back within our relatedness is a returning to ancestors for recentering, as we are caught in the existential space and if we aren’t deconstructing we will be perpetuating further repression (Martin 2007). Resonating with this is Derrida’s theory of the archive, or cultural preservation, where traces follow:

quite complicated linguistic, cultural, cipherable, and in general ciphered
transgenerational and transindividual relays, transiting through an archive ...
without which one would no longer understand how an ancestor can speak within

⁶¹ Bhabha’s contagion is opposed to ‘pedigree’ that seeks to discover lost but recoverable differences, contagion reveals existence of recoverable affinities between disparate peoples (Bhabha 1990:245) See also (Jervis 1999).

⁶² See page 77 on enunciation and Bhabha, see also note 13.

us, nor what sense there might be in us to speak to him or her, to speak in such an unheimlich, ‘uncanny’ fashion to his or her ghost (Derrida 1996: 35-36).

As I had opened to inter-entity communications to guide me in my research and relationships with the Kulin people, letting my gut responses and what would arise structure my decisions, I was surprised that among the interviewees there was one that I had not yet shared a ‘rainbow experience’ with. Our relationship had been just as gut-led as my other relationships. At the end of our filming session this Elder shared a number of stories of profound experiences beyond rational explanation, and the meaning the experiences had gestured towards. As I was leaving the Elder directed me to an ancient tree that was under threat in the grounds where this Elder lived. When I walked to this tree and looked up into its towering branches a vibrant rainbow came into view, streaming from behind the Elder’s dwelling.

When walking at the foreshore alongside Sydney harbour at Manly where I live, before I began the research in Victoria, but after I was given the diary, I was struck by an old banksia growing with its ancient roots intertwined with a large rock that supported it and I felt compelled towards it. Looking out from this vantage point across the harbour, I was immediately overwhelmed with the thought (welling up in me from some depth beyond anything I thought was within my consciousness) of the sighting of First Fleet’s initial approach. I cannot convey the experience in words, it is beyond anything I can assemble, impossible to express. When I returned from my first trip to Victoria and first saw that this ancient tree had been reduced to a stump, I gasped like I’d been sawn in two. Yet within a month a shoot had come up from one of its roots, and it is now standing as tall as the mother stump. The stump itself has now sprouted also, near the top of its presumably dead girth.

When another Elder finished her filming session she also shared a story with me. This story was an ancestral story from her clan. It was about a tree that grew with its roots clasped around a rock then into the ground. She explained that the tree could not be strong enough on its own, so the rock had agreed to contribute to the strength needed to withstand the challenges the tree faced, and they would face them together. I didn’t ask the Elder to explain the meaning intended in the story. Instead I told her my story about my experience with the tree at Sydney harbour. She then showed me a photograph taken of her at a sacred place, with an unexplainable glow that had transformed her skin into a translucent white.

We didn't need to speak beyond the simple sharing of our stories, as all the unsaid was powerfully conveyed to us in the simplicity and eloquence of the stories alone. We had no need to search for an interpretative schema, as any interpretative schema would be thoroughly inadequate, a reductive interpretation simply impossible.

The DVD *Writing With: Indigenous and settler interrelations and Identity* with teaching notes is being distributed to Universities, TAFEs and secondary schools by Video Education Australia, with all royalties returning to the participants' communities.

***Please view the DVD now.** The DVD is in the sleeve in the back cover, with teachers notes written in cooperation with the participants.

Conclusion

Allowing the mother tongue

Battiste argues that indigenous knowledge cannot be understood from within the western frame and that the entrenched Eurocentric consciousness is the biggest problem (2002: 38). Yet, within the conundrum of self-denial, western assimilation, under the guise of inclusion, increasingly threatens the indigenous knowledges of the world, raising enormously challenging and complex ethical issues (p. 33). Battiste writes:

Reconstruction of knowledge builds from within the spirit of the lands and within indigenous language. Indigenous languages are not just a communication tool for unlocking knowledge, it offers both a theory for understanding our knowledges and a process of orientation that removes us from rigid noun-centred reality and offers an unfolding of transformation and change in its holistic representation and processes that stress interaction, reciprocity, respect and non-interference (p. 40).

I've frequently been advised by Indigenous Elders and friends that indigenous knowledge follows not the rational thoughts of the mind but the silent inner rhythms of the heart. Speaking on the repression of language Battiste stresses that the processes of the socialisation of indigenous language and 'ways of knowing, non-verbal and verbal communication' are 'not easily dissolved' and that research has shown that four generations can pass before language will begin to trail off, so that in communities who have lost language, 'the spirit and socialisation of languages are still embedded in the succeeding generations' having a 'spirit or a soul that can be known through the people themselves, and renewing and rebuilding from within the peoples is itself the process of coming to know' (p. 39).

Although colonising conditions included the prohibiting of Indigenous peoples to speak in their own languages and continue their cultural practices (in urban situations particularly), as I have explored and argued, the continuation of these knowledges have survived within oral tradition, as well as within, through and beyond the energetics/spirit of such. This is being evidenced in their revival from beyond their presumed extinction. While some perceive this reductively as merely a

historical turn regarding the policy changes of recent decades⁶³ and a reinventing of traditions, my research reveals a far more complex inter-entity relatedness at play.

What my research journey has been revealing to me is the uncanny resilience and re-emergence of indigenous voices despite the overwhelming and relentless conditions of colonial repression. As I continued my intuited research path, tracking over the battlegrounds of colonising knowledges, I increasingly became aware that though Indigenous/indigenous voices remain threatened with colonising manipulations and repressions, it is those who continue this colonising that are ultimately limited in their ability to communicate. Accompanying these insights have been the uncanny parallels concerning the emergence of Indigenous ancestry in assumedly non-Indigenous populations.

Anderson, Reynolds, Briscoe, Ramsland, Blyton, Grieves, Read, Haebich, Luker, are some of the historians that have contributed to critical exploration of frontier conditions in light of Indigenous/settler relations and subsequent generations of interrelated ancestry. Convict records have revealed a six to one ratio of male to female convict intakes, which continued for almost the first hundred years of settlement (Robson 1965). Luker finds:

The conditions of frontier, as distinct from later colonialism, often conduced to the acceptance of interracial liaisons and their offspring. This initially relaxed attitude to interracial sexual relations was partly a matter of sexual pragmatics since white women were usually scarce on the frontier. It could be partly strategic; since liaisons with local women could help white men gain useful knowledge and relationships (Luker 2008: 309).

She continues that policy/ideology shifted to an assimilation process that was intent on whitening and breeding out Indigenous populations. One recent critique of assimilation policy and its impact reveals:

...Victoria [was the] first colony to legislate for the 'protection' and legal victualing of Aborigines, and the first to collect statistical data on their decline and anticipated disappearance. The official record, however, excludes the data that can explain the Aborigines' stunning recovery. A painstaking investigation combining family histories; Victoria's birth, death, and marriage registrations; and census and archival records provides this information. One startling finding is that the surviving

⁶³ As documented throughout the thesis, for example the DVD with teachers notes, see also footnote 64.

Aboriginal population is descended almost entirely from those who were under the 'protection' of the colonial state (Anderson et al 2008: 533).

McGregor (2005) makes the claim that policies of assimilation actually ensured that eventually Indigenous heritage will be evident across the majority of the Australian population.

Long-identified Indigenous people have discussed their knowledge of this unacknowledged mixed ancestry with me, (explained by one man as a 70% Indigenous quotient in the Australian population). Also emphasised was how their knowledge of Indigenous familial lineage cannot be unproblematically shared with those who are not aware of the inter-imbrications of this heritage and its implications. Mixed ancestry acknowledgement, as Probyn (2007) argues in an article on kin-fused reconciliation, is a profoundly difficult terrain, where recognition of kinship networks is subject to multiple forces, including non-Indigenous reactive guilt, efforts to biopolitically reform the 'nation', absorption of cultural difference, non-Indigenous legitimising of belonging, and a leap into Aboriginality while suppressing the often dubious historical circumstances of this connectivity (see also Kinnane, Read, Pateman, Perkins).

What is now emerging is a burgeoning of people identifying as Indigenous, who had, through race ideology/policy, and unbeknown to themselves at the time, received 'privilege' due to skin colour, often as recipients of education and access in non-Indigenous social systems less available to darker-skinned relations.⁶⁴ This presents new challenges within the communities of Australia. Not least in these challenges, and faced especially by those who've lived the legacies of exclusion at the coal face of race relations, are fresh claims of Indigenous heritage from those who have obviously lived very different social experiences.

⁶⁴A heterogeneous mix of social circumstances in recent decades have been contributing to growing familial reconnections in relation to removal policy e.g. the Stolen Generations Enquiry that led to initiatives like Link Up providing Indigenous peoples repressed information on their families. These removals more often involved continued disadvantage, disaffection, alienation, racism and discrimination, than situations of social advantage. See www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/bth_report/about/personal_stories.html. Other forces at work to increase understanding of Indigenous heritage in non-Indigenous identifying people may be in relation to changing attitudes from initiatives like the Reconciliation Council connected to the Black Deaths in Custody Inquiry and further social change stemming from early Aboriginal activism in the 30s, citizenship, political activism of 60s and 70s - Freedom Rides etc, Whitlam and Land Rights, Keating's Redfern Speech. Emerging now is also repressed information within 'non-Indigenous' sociality about hidden Indigenous ancestry.

Yet inclusiveness within Indigenous cultural systems appears to prevail in proportion to how one's recognition of their emplacement is embraced and engaged, as I have personally experienced (and as Probyn's research also finds, and as Myers also points to regarding Pintupi socialisation re 'onecountryman'). It was explained to me by an Elder, who is related to many who've descended from families at Coranderrk, that it is crucially important that his recently-acknowledging family members detail the truth of their past and what they have discovered, so that this past can be acknowledged. It is this ongoing acknowledgement that produces increased awareness in the wider societies. The acknowledgement also introduces responsibilities that open up a new learning journey in relations of reciprocity, with guidance coming from within the family communities. The greatest challenge to those discovering the liminality of this historicity appears to be the wholehearted unlearning of positions of privilege gained in colonising systems. It is this privileging that has repressed the continuity of the universe-referent and inter-subjective laws that emplace all individuals. This challenges each to embrace these laws in their subsequent responsibilities.

Regardless of whether individuals are recent arrivals to the country, or whether they have ancestral connections, responding to 'laws of place' is a relationship that takes place in incommensurably singular circumstances that remain open to heterogeneous forces materially/energetically, always in flux and shared inter-subjectively. Irresponsible inter-subjective relations of the past are everybody's business in the present, as the present atemporally emerges with past and future. If affirming relations in Country can be engaged it can only be at the level of singularity, whether collectively enacted or not. Many circumstances of the past are known, thus their affects are traced in the present, while many are beyond the limits of thoughts and memories and this is the gift⁶⁵ that lived-experience contains, the potential to make a difference, despite whether responsibilities are individually or collectively held.

Much of what has been repressed through continued guilt or fear, along with forgotten or unknown sacrifice and love, resides atemporally and disrupts synchronous time at the ontologising limit between the biophysical and the psychic (Bhabha 1994[1]:251). Belheirz has said (of Smith's study of the history of ideas in Australia) that rich cross-cultural

⁶⁵ The gift has been theorized by Derrida (and others) as the disjunctive break outside of linear history, exceeding any economy of cause and effect, equal exchange etc. There is no guarantee of reward, no just recompense etc. the gift can only be such if there is no expectation of return.

exchange was refused by the idea that one culture had nothing to offer (1997: 34-40). In the withdrawing from aporetic confidence (alterity) much is missed in the potential interchange of qualitative meaning. What now appears to be emerging is a revelation or uncovering of the (always already redefining) transformative potential of the cultural strength in the people/land/laws of this place (Rigney 1999, Hart & Whatman 1989). As all individuals coexist in the ontological structure of emplacement, inter-entity response-ability and communication is every individual's autochthonous configuration. Indigenous voices have always been speaking, and with ears open to inter-entity realms, reciprocal negotiation can constitutively reform with different energetic/material effects. The potentiality for the evocation of indigenous voices in this country remains immeasurably open to the future.

Awareness of laws of place offers constructive potential for social patterns in universe-referent terms outside the 'progressive myth of progress' (Bhabha 1994[1]: 248). While the 'British' (who could never justify their coming, *en mass* uninvited) withdrew from engaging with the Indigenous/indigenous inhabitants in an open exchange, they paid no heed to their knowledges of this place, for example, how the emu eats the bush cucumber and deposits its seeds to regrow, yet introduced stock will gorge on this food and fully digest its seed so that it grows no more (Deere & Quarmby 2008:28). As either a recalcitrant resistance to, or appropriative assimilation of, the cultural knowledges of Custodial Elders and their communities continues throughout the country, as in the case of the introduced stock brought by the European, little heed has still yet been given to the related affects.

I began this research trying to allow for how Indigenous/indigenous people think from their perspectives, not from imposed perspectives or external representations (Myers 2006:253). I attempted to 'write with' (Nancy 2000), from a disposition of inter-subjectivity, that is, trying to engage the structures of relationality, irreducible to a structure that engages one at the expense of other. It has also been an attempt at embodied and universe-referent research. I did not simply make the research journey academically. Interrogating the repression of Indigenous/indigenous voices in the face of national identification has revealed a precarious straddling of the non-Indigenous/Indigenous zone, a disruptive and ongoing troubling of the determined barrier that delimits the traditional western-imposed race divide. I have attempted to articulate how this always liminal zone is

open and transformative beyond anyone's expectations. As 'onecountryman' (Myers 2006: 253) we are yet carrying our own specificity into every liminal exchange.

What is fundamental to pointing out the troubled division between Indigenous/indigenous and settler identity or uncovering repressed Indigenous/settler ancestral connectivity is not a desire to see a reconciled future where differences can be alleviated in a mutually inter-cultural acquiescence. Irreconcilable difference, as the constitutive ground of our interrelatedness, needs to be fully recognised and accounted for. Kinnane argues that shadow lines are those lines that run through Indigenous/non-Indigenous connections opening up the dissonances and allowing for other perspectives and the opportunity to give way to difference. This makes possible reappraisal through 'alternative cultural memories which underscore official histories, settler 'pedigrees', the land and interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Australia' (Probyn 2007). In the 'spiral of differ^{ance}' encounters are temporally contingent, 'the processional quality of meaning is not material instantiation at any given moment but the efficacy of passage', expressed as marginal and disjunctive, moving subjects along in ever-unique journeying, in 'neither teleology or endless slippage' but linear progress ever disrupted by 'pauses and gestures of the whole performance ... stemming the stream of life' (Bhabha 1994[1]: 253).⁶⁶

The Australian government has continued to position Indigenous/indigenous culture, regarding its full ontological recognition, as a threat to its sovereign legitimacy and entrepreneurial autonomy. This positioning is so often connected with unacknowledged perceptions of culpability, I have argued, due to the oppression of Indigenous/indigenous peoples being directly subject to political/ideological engineering. If the legacies of this oppression continue to be responded to with yet further appropriation, reactive denial will continue to captivate the Australian imaginary. This will continue to complicate any opening up within human-centric relations of power that have already become over-determined within conceptions of economic upheaval, international security and threatened resources. Openly engaging universe-referent communities that respect difference as not only shared but constitutive will require significant structural change within Australia, both materially and imaginatively.

As post-structural and Indigenous theorists interrogate the limitations of colonising systems, they reveal the constitutive and enriching qualities of difference that produce

⁶⁶ See also Deloria 2002 re the spiral.

cultural meaning. A fundamentally shared ethos, affirmatively engaged in both theories of deconstruction and the continuing generative practices of Indigenous/indigenous cultural systems, provides ways of negotiating the difficulties that arise when identity is prioritised over difference, rights over responsibility and individual autonomy and self-justification over inter-subjective/kinship relations. While ongoing processes of identification are necessary, these processes require an openly engaging aesthetic where difference freely proliferates, in order for individuals to work together in reciprocity, from within their unique paths. It is the marking of identity within hierarchical power relations which causes oppression, which misses the recognition that both identificatory and interpretative processes are inadequate to our incommensurable differences.

The research question posed at the outset of this thesis asked whether it is possible to theorise and engage an in-relation ethos/consciousness that will transform relations of suppression to relations of reciprocity, mutual respect and engagement, as a model for a new sociality in the Australian situation. The thesis research has proffered such a model, to provide another way of knowing that allows for respect at the intersections of all cultural identities and the generated and accumulative force of their lived histories.

In the struggle of the West, as it lost its way and forgot itself, and as the denial, fear, and guilt resulting from the control of lands and appropriation of the other grew, the crucial aporia where form and content relate, where all difference proliferates and relates, became like a dysfunctional separator, creating ever worsening hierarchical relations and disarray to the delicate inter-entity balances.

The blueprint for a changed sociality for Australia is an ancient one, discerned through a journey within to find where we have been travelling. It is a retuning to the mother — this ever-fecund, all-encompassing aporetic font that generatively churns the engine of creation, relating everything to everything else.

Considering the material consequences of continued repression of indigenous voice, in its full inter-entity manifestation, the return of the repressed presents continuing opportunities for transformation and new modes of interaction. This return of the repressed is forever surprising in both its disruption and its potential (Derrida 2000:76). When we open to inter-entity communication we can fall in with the directions of the flux of the universe, possibilities become clear, paths open out, signs are provided, mists clear a way ahead in

the distance, and close over again and become labyrinthine, so that you must follow on in the way of the heart, ever aware of the track you're traversing, the paths that have lead you to where you are — and trusting that the clearing is ahead and will open out to you again.

I will entrust the last words in this thesis to Eber Hamilton, who Battiste quotes, and I acknowledge with Battiste the eloquence with which this Elder speaks concerning the repression of indigenous voice:

The Europeans took our land, our lives, and our children like winter snow takes the grass. The loss is painful but the seed lives in spite of the snow. In the fall of the year, the grass dies and drops its seed to be hidden under the snow. Perhaps the snow thinks the seed has vanished, but it lives on hidden, or blowing in the wind, or clinging to the plants leg of progress. How does the acorn unfold into an oak? Deep inside it knows – and we are not different. We know deep inside ourselves the pattern of life (Battiste 2002: 40).

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