



THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

**Following writing around: Encountering ethical responsibilities in pre-service
teachers' reflective journals in Indigenous education**

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Abstract

The setting: A university course for pre-service teachers entitled “Indigenous Knowledge and Education”. The course is a semester long compulsory unit in a metropolitan sandstone university, where the classroom is seen as a location of possibility for education as the practice of freedom (hooks, 1994). In the course, students are introduced to a mixture of theoretical concepts such as the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007) and Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998) as well as practice-based pedagogies (e.g. Yunkaporta’s (2009) 8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning framework). The course’s compulsory status is in response to a state and national setting that has begun mandating the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives into school classrooms. At a state level, teachers are being asked to Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools, using a framework that aims to build meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples, support Indigenous students, and give all students an understanding of Indigenous histories and cultures (Department of Education and Training [DET], 2011); yet the uptake of such frameworks is slow (DET, 2012).

The characters: 17 pre-service Bachelor of Education (Primary) teachers who are mostly in their third year of a four-year program. These teachers are asked to reflect on who they are, who they will teach, and what they will teach in their future work as teachers, using reflective learning journals as a tool to know their/our worlds. For many of these becoming-teachers, this course is the first time that they have explicitly learnt about and been asked to reflect upon the roles that Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives and knowledges will play in their classrooms. I, as teacher-researcher-narrator, will meet Indigenous, feminist and decolonial writers, as well as a French-Jewish-Lithuanian philosopher. More than just extras, these characters (Nakata, Moreton-Robinson, Haraway, Richardson, Barad, and Levinas, to name but a few) will irrevocably change the path that this story takes, reminding us that research “outcomes” are not inscribed in stone, but rather always partial representations (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005). By folding the writings of these writers into each other, little differences in the story that is told here become apparent.

The plot: From my own first days at the university where the story begins, through two years of data “collection”, to some indeterminable point in the future where our protagonists will one day teach and learn in their own classrooms, this story folds the pre-service teachers’ reflective learning journal writings into my constructions and representations of the teaching and learning activities in the Indigenous Knowledge and Education course. Whilst a fixed and knowable endpoint evades me/us, the story searches for “effects of connection, of embodiment, and of responsibility for an imagined elsewhere that we may yet learn to see and build here” (Haraway, 1992, p. 296). In using writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005) and “following words around” (Ahmed, 2017), I and

the students write changes in ourselves; little differences that might matter. I follow both the pre-service teachers' and my own "wants" around, to consider the shifts that occur over the course of a semester. As one of many possible frameworks that could be used to write about these changes, I use Levinas' work as a way of making sense of the words I encounter. Levinas writes that to act as if we were alone in the world—as if our actions had no consequences—is the greatest violence, and that instead we have an ethical responsibility to respond to those whom we encounter. Levinas cautions however, that to claim that we could ever know the other is to also enact violence, denying the other's subjectivity by drawing them into our totality and understanding the other only through their difference to our own selves. By writing with Levinas' ideas of violence and responsibility, I seek to move in the direction of decoloniality.

The climax: By paying close attention to words, wants, and writing, is it possible to entangle connections, commitments and responsibility into our becoming-selves? What might pedagogies of remembrance, possessive logics, practicum encounters, and responsibilities to the present teach us (as teachers *and* learners) about working within the Indigenous education landscape?

The (not) ending: How might we reimagine our work as educators as we learn to build a more embodied, connected, and ethical "elsewhere" here?

Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

I have clearly stated the contribution of others to my thesis as a whole, including statistical assistance, survey design, data analysis, significant technical procedures, professional editorial advice, financial support and any other original research work used or reported in my thesis. The content of my thesis is the result of work I have carried out since the commencement of my higher degree by research candidature and does not include a substantial part of work that has been submitted to qualify for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I have clearly stated which parts of my thesis, if any, have been submitted to qualify for another award.

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Publications during candidature

Peer-reviewed papers

McDowall, A. (2017). (Not)Knowing: Walking the terrain of Indigenous education with preservice teachers. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*. Advance online publication. doi: [10.1017/jie.2017.10](https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2017.10)

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As a white woman of Scottish-Irish descent, I want to begin my acknowledging Country, both of the Kabi-Kabi people where I now live, and of the Turrbal, Juggera, and Jinibara mobs where and with whom I work. I acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded, and that teaching and learning has always and continues to take place on Country.

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List of Abbreviations

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ATSIS Unit	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit
CAP	Creative Analytical Practice
CCP	Cross-curriculum Priority
CRT	Critical Race Theory
DET	Department of Education and Training
EATSIPS	Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools
SECaT	Student Evaluation of Course and Teacher

The woman sat down and began to write.

Slowly at first, then surer and surer, tapping out the words as her fingers found them, and then ever faster, as if a fever had infused her body and her fingers, the words rushing forth faster than she could think them.

Leaning back in her chair, the woman let her eyes fall shut as she rested her right hand on a stack of 17 orange and black striped A5 exercise books, reflective learning journals written by the pre-service teachers in her Indigenous Knowledge and Education class. Her mind lingered on a particular question, one of many she had worked through: *“What commitments, connections and responsibilities are produced when I entangle my and pre-service teachers’ writing about teaching and learning within Indigenous education?”*

Chapter One

Introduction

The year, 2006. The place, the University of Queensland.

The White Woman¹ stepped hesitantly off the bus, her bag filled with lined notepads, matching biros, a set of highlighters. It was her first day of university, and somehow she felt she had been waiting her whole life for this day to begin. Her parents had met and married on campus. In later years, the White Woman would go to search out the old staff club where her father had worked as a waiter. Her grandparents had also studied at the university, and the White Woman suddenly remembered that her grandfather had been a lecturer here. As she looked around at the students talking and laughing as they hurried off to lecture halls, she realised that she was not new to this university. Her family had often picnicked down by the lake or driven visitors around the beautiful campus; the sunlight dappling purple carpets woven from jacaranda blossoms². And now she too would join the ranks of prestige.

The White Woman counted her blessings as she walked slowly up the path, eyes trained on the slabs of sandstone that lined her way. She knew that her education and her middle-class background had helped her to arrive here in this place³. But as she walked along the sandstone buildings towards the entrance of the university, the White Woman did not reflect on her whiteness. Sure, she was white, she knew that much. But her whiteness did not bother her, and she presumed it did not bother anybody else around her. The White Woman wasn't sure why anybody would choose to define her by her Whiteness, nor by her Woman-ness. She chose to identify herself in other ways—through her family, her upbringing, her friends, her year spent living in Europe. Squinting her eyes, the White Woman adjusted the big colour-blinding sunglasses with their rose-coloured lenses that rested on her

¹ This term, the “White Woman”, is mentioned on so many occasions in this thesis. This is because as researchers, our positioning continues to impact how we teach, learn, think and write. You may find this term irritates you a little, however, consider its use a “methodological tool interruptive of practices of gathering data as ‘truths’ into existing ‘folds of the known’”: an uncomfortable reflexivity (Pillow, 2003, p. 192).

² Time folds over itself and the past is the future is the present. The jacarandas (the same trees I sat under as a child, and my mother before me) are blossoming again now as I make my final edits, enfolded within the past-present-future possibilities for enactments of agency (Barad, 2014).

³ There were so many things the White Woman did not yet know that had helped her along the way. Being a White, middle-class, able-bodied, cis-gendered, heterosexual Woman had all played a role in creating the playing field she stood on (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2003).

nose; sunglasses that didn't just block out the harsh Queensland sun but also allowed her to not see race, nor the histories and presents of oppression that accompanied what she did not yet understand to be a social construct. Her heart and mind were restless and the White Woman yearned for excitement; for the thrill that access to new knowledges could awaken in her.



Figure 1. Jacarandas and Eudlos (the Kabi Kabi word for Silky Oak) blossoming on campus in October. Jacarandas are a loved introduced species; eudlos are native plants. Source: Author's own.

The White Woman paused before entering the hallowed halls of the building of her first class. She looked up at the sandstone blocks that were both familiar and exhilarating. As she read the inscription carved over the entrance to the Forgan Smith building, a shiver ran down her spine. Great is Truth, and Mighty Above all Things. She too was to join this great institution. The White Woman quickly settled into the rhythms of university life. She attended her classes, hungry for Knowledge and

Truth, which twisted and tugged at her mind. She took part in classes, in societies, in study groups. She thought about possible career paths she might follow, and decided that she would very much like to stay here. This great institution was where she belonged.

...

Books have always been part of my life, and I've always been a voracious reader, greedily consuming anything and everything that I could get my hands on. Luckily for me, this was easy enough. The walls of our house were lined with bookshelves, the playroom framed with white cabinets, stuffed to the brim with books. All types of books. Some of these books I remember: my mother's old reference books were some of her most precious belongings, like the hard-covered tome of "What bird is that?" (Cayley, 1931/1984). I think these books carried the weight and authority that she craved as a student who fell into bed exhausted each night from balancing a law degree and working enough to afford food. My Dad's paperback novels; law thrillers, sci-fi thrillers, crime thrillers. The suspense that they held! My grandmother's Mills and Boons, rows upon rows of those neat little episodes, their identical red and white spines hinting at the identical throes of passion only barely contained on the pages. And hundreds and hundreds of children's and adolescents' books, merrily brought home in stuffed plastic bags that had been filled on the last day of the secondhand book fair. Finding something to read in our house was as easy as perusing the book shelves, until a name caught our eyes.

The words I consumed grew within me, becoming little stories of their own. My memories of writing are much briefer than my memories of reading. There is a story written about a dream trip to the Great Barrier Reef when I was in primary school, the pages detailing in minute description all of my fantasies: a hotel room with television that could be watched all day and lazy hours spent wallowing in the warm shallows, surrounded by the most exotic of fish. More than a decade later, a twenty-year-old me stamped wool-lined boots on a pathway paved in snow in Montreal, the darkness burying me at half past four in the afternoon, as the rhythm of my boots imprinted a poem in my head. I repeated the poem over and over again as I raced home, finding the first scrap of paper to write the poem down on. I can write well, I've been told again and again, yet taking time to create stories I loved was something I either didn't do a lot of, or else has been buried too deep in my memory to access.

...

The White Woman stood again in front of the sandstone buildings, the inscription hailing the mightiness of Truth, her colour-blind sunglasses long since broken after she threw them carelessly away. The White Woman had come back to learn more, but the pathway she walked twisted and tugged her mind in ways she never imagined. She was walking across the same topographies she had

previously inhabited, but this time around was searching for a new pair of sunglasses and a roadmap that would take her to “elsewhere” (Haraway, 1992, p. 295). A newly met acquaintance had lent her new sunglasses to replace the old colour-blind ones. The friend had designed the theoretical sunglasses herself, chic black frames with streaks of dark green throughout; designed to diffract the world around her and bring into focus connection, embodiment, and a responsibility for this elsewhere that she was heading towards (Haraway, 1992, p. 295). The White Woman had asked this friend where this “elsewhere” was, and the woman had replied that it was a place that did not yet exist, but was a place “that we may yet learn to see and build here”; a place that prioritised relationship, responsibility and embodiment. The White Woman thought about the university and the education systems, and the colonial narratives that had long positioned Indigenous students and Indigenous knowledges as lacking. She too wanted to help build this “elsewhere”.

...

This story that you are about to read—or truth be told, have already begun—is a story about teaching and learning and researching in the Indigenous education landscape. A book even, a set of pages bound together, that you can hold in your hand, or use to cushion your head if life gets too much and the need for sleep overcomes you. It’s alright, I understand. I won’t take it as a reflection of me, my writing, my book⁴. To do so would be to project the self-same back onto you. This is a book, a thesis, (and in calling it such, I write the illusion that the story might one day be finished, bound together as a final say, when I know that is not the case) about teaching and learning and researching. It contains many stories, woven into one diffracted and diffractive narrative, entangled together from 17 reflective learning journals written by pre-service teachers, my own writing and that of other writers, and my intra-actions with the materiality of teaching and learning. Stories about pre-service teachers learning about Indigenous education, and writing their places into this terrain through the use of reflective learning journals. Stories about coming to writing. Stories about encounters with philosophers, and a pre-service teacher’s horror as her supervising teacher inflicts a form of epistemological violence on her classroom students. Stories about wants. In reading and writing these stories, I started to ask myself, “*What commitments, connections and responsibilities are produced when I entangle my and pre-service teachers’ writing about teaching and learning within Indigenous education?*”

Among other things, this book—or should we begin to name it this thesis—seeks to speak back to the colonial narratives that inscribe Indigenous students and knowledges as lacking. This seeking

⁴ You may notice in reading that the theme coffee comes up a lot. This is a both accidental and deliberate inclusion—deliberate seeking to fold into my writing the matter which matters within writing, and accidental in that I didn’t know coffee would be the substance that made itself known again and again. If coffee is your thing, you might like to also grab one now as you settle in to read, and drink it alongside me.

reflects some desire on my behalf and there is “a slippage between wanting and seeking”, my advisor Liz suggested once (Mackinlay, personal communication, March 2016). And thus, this book seeks/wants to entangle wants: the types of wants that I have for the pre-service teachers that I teach in an Indigenous education course, the types of wants that these students have for their own learning, the wants that Indigenous peoples have for education and research concerning themselves, the wants that the government and policy-makers have for the like. The wants I have for my own research.

One of the wants I have for this work is to speak back to the narratives that position Indigenous students as lacking. There has been a lot of conversation about this in recent years: how Indigenous students are already presumed to be in deficit when they enter the classroom, and the outcomes this has on pedagogy and teachers’ expectations (e.g. Sarra, 2012; Vass, 2012).

I think back to my own original research proposal, which began by declaring once again the statistics that suggest Indigenous people are disadvantaged, are without, and represent a “problem” in need of “fixing”. I abhor such starts to research articles these days. It’s not that the statistics aren’t important, you see, or that Indigenous Australians aren’t more likely to be subjected to various intersecting sets of oppression. But as Pholi, Black and Richards (2009) suggest, “[s]uccess’ is defined by the extent to which Indigenous Australians conform to a set of pre-determined, measurable characteristics of the non-Indigenous ideal, while ‘failure’ is any outcome that falls below, or manifests outside the scope of these ideal indicators” (p. 10). To focus on Indigenous students as lacking or in deficit is to continue an assimilatory perspective that measures such students against a “non-Indigenous ideal”, and reifies an impossible position where Indigenous peoples are asked to escape who they are in order to succeed by the indicators of mainstream society. As Hage (2009) writes, racism often manifests itself through a racism of exploitation, or a racism of extermination; two fluctuating poles. If exploitation played a role in the building of the nation-state of Australia (for example, the wages that were stolen from Indigenous workers), then a discourse that positions Indigenous people as disadvantaged is another form of exterminating Indigeneity.

...

When I open a book, the first thing I see is words. Nice neat rows, most likely black ink printed on yellowish-white paper. Before I begin to read the individual words, that accumulation of letters grouped together is visible, filling page after page. And of course, it is the words that are chosen by the author that create a particular story.

The words of this thesis are reflective learning journals written by pre-service teachers throughout a semester of study, whilst enrolled in a course named *EDUC2090 Indigenous Knowledge and Education*. The journals constitute my “primary source of data”, if you want. This is a course that introduces students to some of the history, theories, and pedagogical strategies that are relevant for their teaching practice in the Indigenous Education landscape. In recent years, the course has been

entangled with a changing policy landscape, changing in response. In 2010, the Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET, 2011) introduced a policy and framework entitled Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools (EATSIPS), to support all teachers of all students in working within a cultural interface (Nakata, 2007) of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems in their classrooms. With the release of the Australian National Curriculum (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2010), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures was introduced as a Cross-Curriculum Priority (CCP), positioned as part of a wider move towards reconciliation. And finally, the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2014) introduced Professional Standards that graduate teachers have to meet before receiving registration. The course has been accredited as preparing students to meet two of these standards in particular: 1.4—*Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students*—and 2.4—*Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians*.

Throughout the course, students are asked to complete a reflective learning journal (at times I refer to these as “the journals” or even simply “journals”) to critically reflect on the perspectives, theories, histories, and pedagogies introduced each week. Students wrote their journal entries in class at the end of a two-hour learning workshop each week of a 13 week semester. For four of these weeks, the students in this project wrote their reflective learning journals in their own time during a teaching placement, known as their professional experience or practicum, and more colloquially, as “prac”. With the students’ consent, I used journals from the 2013 and 2014 cohorts as the basis of the research you are reading here. A lot of choices were made along the way, starting with several hundred journals, moving to only students enrolled in a Bachelor of Education (Primary), and then finally randomly selecting just 17 journals out of the 93 Primary students to be able to respond more deeply to the students’ writing. The reflective learning journals represent many things for the different students. A chance to explore ideas more fully, a tracking of their learning, a resented piece of assessment, an opportunity to think about past experiences, an emotional outlet, a communication tool between students and the teaching team.

And so, having written all of these words to get here, we circle back to words. The students’ words, and my words, become the words of this book, the text filling the pages as you peek ahead to see where the end of the chapter is, or guiding your finger as you follow a dense passage. Without these journals, this particular story would never have been written. Another story? Sure. But this one was the result of the pattern of differences made in my thinking through my entanglement with the journals. The ways I had been thinking about race and whiteness studies, and about teaching and learning critical and engaged pedagogy, shifted as they were folded into my readings of difference (Trinh, 1989), leading me onto Haraway (1992) and eventually Barad (2007). Having been entangled

with these journals, my thoughts spread in new directions, never to continue the same way again. And so the students' journals and words are the words of this book that I am writing here.

In this way, my own writing has become inextricably enmeshed with the students' writing. The writing of this PhD in itself is an obstacle in my thinking. The words I have encountered, written by those that I have come to see as dear friends (even when we have only met in writing) have irrevocably changed the way I know and move through the world. The words I have written myself have done the same.

Speaking of words, you may have noticed already some alterations in my formatting and writing. Many different peoples' words come into play in this thesis/book: the students', other writers and authors', my advisors', my own. Whilst remembering that I am always re-entangling these in my writing (as you will re-entangle in your reading), I have introduced a few formatting rules so that we can make sense of the research together and govern this field of play (after Richardson, 1997) in which we find ourselves:

The little poems
Left left-aligned
Are analytical moments
Written-created-threaded
From the students'
Journals-words-data

*The little poems
Allegorical moments
Sitting centred
Italicised
Are responses memories reflections
From myself and
All those influences
That constitute a
becoming me*

When I use the words from the students' reflective learning journals, I have indicated these with "quotation marks" (other than the data poems I have just mentioned). I have chosen to leave these unitalicised, as to not mark them with too many physical indicators of difference: they are one of the many entangled sources of ideas that are knotted together, changing as they come into contact with one another again and again, their pathways diffracting with each meeting. When I include writing from my own reflective journals that I wrote in tutorial classes alongside the students (e.g., p. 124, p. 126), I have italicised these, turning the gaze back onto myself.

You might encounter some surprises in this text, unexpected obstacles in your thinking path. Perhaps a playlet, where the words attributed to the students are indeed their own, unless marked by writing conventions such as a pair of brackets to indicate words added or changed for flow. An encounter or two with some thinkers and writers whose words I regularly read. Any conversations I have with people I meet along the way are fictional, unless I specify that they are not. The words that these people say are my own paraphrasing of their writing, unless the words are written in quotation marks. Within these conversations, I have chosen to use footnotes to reference the citations, as to less distract from your reading experience. I recognise that I am not just writing to myself, but also to you, and feel the need to respect your comfort as you engage in these ideas.

I feel I should address head on that I have not followed normal academic conventions around what is usually perceived as academic writing practice. I am aware that by now you have realised this, and might be questioning yourself as to whether I am going to write to the topic, and if so, when. I almost didn't, you know. I almost just let you into this shared world between us without warning you what might happen as you stepped into the threshold. My writing choices are inspired by a series of feminist and Indigenous academics—and indeed Indigenous feminists—who speak back to the academy and its written academic conventions by challenging what is perceived and construed as standard academic practice. These writing practices often invoke the use of stories, which have long held an important place in the decolonisation of research (Tuhiwai Smith, 2009). In *Critical Race Theory* (e.g., Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) and *TribalCrit* (Brayboy, 2005), narratives and stories are positioned forefront and centre as legitimate sources of knowledge as to racialised experiences in the world. This theme echoes the work of earlier feminists such as Anzaldúa (1990, p. xxvi) who argues that there is no “‘correct way’ to write theory” and Richardson (2000, p. 5) who reminds us that writing is never neutral, and instead reflects changing dominant paradigms. All textual choices are power moves, even the use of a category such as “The White Woman”. In one way, this might be a closed narrative that limits my own self, but at the same time, the category allows me to think about how university (amongst other) environments produce gendered and raced categories, and how I fit into these. Even to use “Indigenous” and “non-Indigenous” as taken-for-granted categories as I do suggests that two pre-existing entities are coming together, rather than focusing on the ways that one is only made possible through its entanglement with the other. However, I find myself in a stuck place with words, where those categories still matter in terms of questions of land, sovereignty and privilege. I, as a white non-Indigenous woman, do not have the same rights to land, nor the same experiences of oppression, as Indigenous peoples. As Haraway would say, “You’ve got to be aware of the klutzy quality of the category, but again, that doesn’t mean that you don’t use it” (in Olson, 1996, p. 15).

To take a step back and reconsider my writing approach is to consider how I can continue to decolonise my research: “scientific writing” is a tool that has been used to espouse an empiricism that

designates itself as “value-free”, all-knowing; the hubris of a zero-point positionality that permeates Western colonial conventions (after Mignolo, 2009). Trinh (1989) reminds me that “official taught language and correct writing” are “two old mates of power; together they flow, together they flower, vertically, to impose an order” (pp. 16-17). To write as if I could make a claim to a zero-point knowledge, or knowledge that wasn’t fundamentally connected to those with whom I share the world, would be a function of coloniality.

To write in the way(s) I do is to remind your/my/ourselves that my knowing is ever tenuous, always situated, and soaked in values and wants and desires. And to remind both of us that academic work should be fun and engaging⁵; not imprisoned in the stuffy confines of university basements and office hallways—No! It should rush forth out of us, keep us wanting to change the page, take us to somewhere other than where we started, even if that elsewhere cannot be defined or categorised. And not to forget: “Any dinosaurian beliefs that ‘creative’ and ‘analytical’ are contradictory and incompatible modes are standing in the path of a meteor. They are doomed for extinction” (Richardson, 2000, p. 10).

...

But these sunglasses weren’t particularly good at keeping out the glare. Squinting her eyes against an afternoon sun that burnt streaks of deep orange into the sandstone, the White Woman stared again at the inscription, Great is Truth, and Mighty Above All Things, a more critical eye bringing the scratched out words into focus. Now, in 2017, she had a more nuanced understanding of where the words originated and the types of power that were traced into the sandstone with the carving of these letters. Rifling through the library stacks, she had found in an old yellowed book the biblical story of Zorababel and the King, Darius. Darius, a Persian King held in Jewish captivity, entertained himself by asking the guards to debate answers to the question, “What is the strongest thing in the world?” In the story, the guards answered, one after another, “Wine”, “the King”, and “Women” (Pascoe, 1992, p. 85), followed by impassioned speeches to represent their points. But the White Woman had long learned that historical stories rarely represented a universal truth, instead are rewritten to suit those in power. And so, the story of Zorababel was rewritten and extended. This time around, the guard Zorababel gave a witty and “hilarious speech about the power of women”, concluding with the assertion ““But, above all things, Truth beareth away the victory”” (Pascoe, 1992, p. 85). With these words, he won the quiz. An audience applauded him with the sounds of voices shouting, “Great is Truth, and mighty above all things” (Pascoe, 1992, p. 86). The White Woman played this story around in her head as she squinted at the burnt orange words. Why was the speech so hilarious? Was the

⁵ Another want reveals itself—to feel something “should” or “ought” to be done is one of the definitions of wanting that I will use in my data chapters (see p. 157). But I am getting ahead of myself.

thought of a strong female enough to make the guards and the King clutch their bellies in laughter?

And most intriguing to her was the rewriting of a story deemed too frivolous, and the irony of the inclusion of this assertion in a retold story. No textual staging is ever innocent (Richardson, 2001, p. 878) and the disclosure of the rewriting had revealed something about the power of those who had written the statement, and about the positioning of truth itself (Derrida, as cited in Richardson, 2001).

She had come to question any research that posited an absolute truth, or a universal truth. Instead, the White Woman was interested in how knowing might be tenuous (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005), and how research might claim to represent the world not of the researcher, nor those who were part of the research, but instead a world in-between (Hastrup, 1992, p. 116).

...

I've spent a lot of hours over the years sitting in my advisor Liz's office. Advisory meetings, discussions about teaching, asking for life advice, sharing a joyous moment or the illness of a family member. Advice and hugs and tears and laughter have been shared. Something that comforts me every time is the splash of colour across the wall, hundreds of book spines facing out. There is a sense that each book is loved; carefully selected from an array of other books that could have been bought, read and placed onto the shelf. The wall of book spines provides a point of focus when I need to look elsewhere, or take a second to stop my thoughts from flying too fast, or distract myself when someone else comes to the door or the phone buzzes—life continues whilst advisory meetings take place. A new book spine speaks out to me on each visit. It's usually something I've been thinking about recently that decides to make itself known to me, the spine offering delicious glimpses into what might be held within. Laurel Richardson's (1997) "Fields of play" always jumps out at me, as does Stephen King's (2000) "On writing". The pile of Cixous books on the table in front of me is a frozen sea, enclosing all types of writing just waiting to be smashed open. But the book spines do more than just indicate the contents—they hold the book together. Each page is carefully pressed into the spine, and without it, the book would just be a pile of paper; loose leaf scattered at the first wind.

The writing on the wall of the burnt orange sandstone university building, *Great is Truth and Mighty Above All Things*, indicated as clearly as any spine on a book the types of values and stories that might be found in this institution—at least at first inspection. In this thesis too, the spine of the story is writing: the students' reflective writing as an approach to developing critical consciousness (Mezirow, 1990; Moon, 2004), writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005), and my writing as a doctoral student, and the political choices that are part of the ways I write. The three threads of writing continually knot together until I can no longer detangle them, with others' writing that I engage with caught/brought in the mix. To consider writing not just as representation—a tracing

of what is already known—but that “thought happen[s] in the writing” (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 970). It is by putting pen to paper, or fingertips to keyboard, that something altogether unexpected can occur. And in thinking about writing under erasure rather than as an act of representation, we can consider St Pierre’s (in Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 969) question: “what else might writing do except mean?”

This work that I’m writing is desperately trying to un-build its own positioning as a claim to truth. There is nothing Great or Mighty here; no omniscient ability to enter the worlds of the students whose journals I read. Some of this un-building will take place through my writing style, as you have surely already noticed. At this point I don’t wish to spend too long on writing about this writing, for fear that I will use Science to explain Art, rather than committing to a Creative Analytical Practice (Richardson, 2000) that dwells in the in-between. This is not to say that it is not important to think about how we write—for “[h]ow we are expected to write affects what we can write about”, and these writing conventions “create and sustain particular visions of what constitutes knowledge” (Richardson, 2000, p. 7). To unbuild the illusion that this thesis is a whole and authoritative claim to truth (the same truth that is inscribed on the university buildings), it is necessary to unbuild the illusion that only certain types of academic prose are suitable of creating and sustaining knowledge. Language is itself diffractive: it does not just hold a mirror up to our lifeworlds and reflect a lonely reality but instead creates and gives meaning to our multiple realities (Richardson, 2000, p. 8). And so this is a thesis about writing, and writing is what holds this thesis together.

...

As she considered this idea, the White Woman raised her head to consider the coat of arms resting above the inscription; its motto proclaiming that “Scientia ac Labore”. “By means of knowledge and hard work,” she muttered, considering these dual values and all that they stood for. “Whose knowledge?” she asked herself, thinking about the Eurocentric curriculums of schools (de Plevitz, 2007); or the types of universities whose teaching of Indigenous knowledges was “invisible, marginalised, limited, non-existent” (Behrendt et al., 2012, p. 96). “Some would say,” she pondered, “that this country has not just experienced genocide, but also epistemicide: the deliberate killing off of different types of knowledges, a cognitive waste (de Sousa Santos, 2014). So if success comes through knowledge, we can’t forget that the privileging of Western science required the suppression of other forms of knowledge and their knowers (de Sousa Santos, Nunes, & Meneses, 2007). And then these knowledges are treated as lacking!”

“And,” she thought, her eyes critically reading the motto, “Hard work. What’s hard work anyway? Hard work, yard work, starts to lurk, hard work.” The White Woman tried the words aloud,

her tongue wrapping deliciously around the rhymes as syllables spilled over each other. “Hard work, yard work, starts to lurk, murky. Match it, patch it, it’s all a ratchet. Tear it, pair it, judge it on its merit.”

Merit. Hard work. Is hard work not just another word for merit? And a belief in meritocracy would suggest that we achieve success based on our own hard work, that merit differentiates those who do from those who don’t. “Don’t worry about the gullies and the vantage points on the playing field of life (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011),” the White Woman muttered, suddenly aware that passerbys were staring unashamedly as they walked by. She pretended to talk into her phone and prayed it wouldn’t ring. “A belief in meritocracy suggests that the playing field is level, that we all start with the same chances and are given the same opportunities. The good old Aussie fair go. And that’s definitely not the case.” The White Woman thought about the day she had taken her colour-blind sunglasses off, and how they had passed on to another life in the way that most all sunglasses do, under the crush of a careless foot. In any case, she hadn’t needed them anymore and since smashing the colour-blind glasses, the opportunities the White Woman had been offered in her life had come into focus, stepping out from behind the shadows—dinnertime conversations filled with reflections on her parents’ own schooling and life experience, running their own businesses from which she learned so much more than a curriculum. Private schooling. An exchange year living overseas. Teachers who had always encouraged her. Curriculum and pedagogies that validated her ways of knowing, being and doing in the world. The day that her colour-blind sunglasses had been smashed, these opportunities had come into focus and she was no longer able to ignore what they had meant for her life to date. These by far weren’t the only opportunities that mattered in the world, but they mattered in terms of success in the university. And yes, she had worked hard, but this had only been one of many factors that had assisted her along the way.

...

Whenever I pick up a book, and hold it in my hands, the contact between the paper and my fingers is one of the first things I notice. It’s almost a ritual—brushing my thumb across the page, the smooth appearance belying the bumpiness of mulched fibres. Pages are a constitutive element of what makes a book a book. Without pages, the story and words within would live in another form—a spoken story, a conversation between friends. But in that conversion to becoming a book, a type of magic happens. The words are materialised on the page, giving them the ability to be re-read and re-lived over and over again; each time the meaning shifting ever so slightly. In this book, the theories are the pages. They underlie and carry the words I chose to write on the page. I could have written many other words, and told other stories, but the ones I have written here have been chosen in part through the theories that have accompanied me along the way, pointing out different elements that I might not

have otherwise seen. The theories I have chosen to include here are also carrying the words of the students themselves, with the data chapters responding closely to the entanglements presented when theoretical perspectives are engaged. Working with and through and across the ideas of other academics helps me to see not just what my work might become, but where my work sits.

There are many intertwined and entangled theories and key concepts that have guided my thinking through the writing of this thesis as well as the development of my own perspectives. These theories have been key at different moments of time, unlocking and shifting barriers to new ways of thinking in both my professional and research work, and my own relationships and the way I move in the world and are folded into one in the thesis. These different time points are now folded together into a piece of writing presented linearly, although I have circled back through these again and again. Whilst not an exhaustive list, I wanted to provide you with some of the key theories that I have engaged with at different points of time. To start with, decoloniality, as a broad field of studies, looks to examine and delink from the ways colonial systems of knowing, being and doing continue to impact our everyday lives, long after the removal of colonial administrations (Grosfuguel, 2008). In Australia, my own presence sitting here as a non-Indigenous woman writing is in itself a reminder that “in Australia, the colonials did not go home” (Moreton-Robinson, 2003a, p. 30). In education, decoloniality might help us to move away from a cultural agenda of centring Indigenous ways of doing and being (Nakata, 1995). Instead, a focus on knowledge production might help us as teachers and learners to better understand the conditions of possibility that enabled and enable colonial dominance, as well as the “conceptual limits of [our] own thinking, as well as the discipline’s” (Nakata, Nakata, Keech & Bolt, 2012, p. 121). Decoloniality asks us to question not just “Whose knowledge?” but also “Where does that knowledge come from?” and “Why is it positioned as universal, as if it could speak for all?”

Another key theoretical idea is Moreton-Robinson’s concept of possessive logic. Moreton-Robinson refers to possessive logic as a mode of rationalisation used by the state to justify its actions in regard to sovereignty and the denial of others’ will. A discursively bound grammar, possessive logic is “underpinned by an excessive desire to invest in reproducing and reaffirming the state’s ownership, control and domination” (Moreton-Robinson, 2011, p. 647). That which the state cannot own—Indigenous sovereignty—is refused. Moreton-Robinson’s work is predominately focused on the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty on a governance level (for example in the High Court, 2004a, and in the United Nations, 2011). In writing this thesis, I’m interested in how possessive logics are enacted in education, in this case particularly by students. Meshing closely with other ideas, the pre-service teachers in this project at times talk about a desire to possess more knowledge about Indigenous people, to control the expressions of Indigeneity in their classrooms, and that these might

make them better teachers. Yet to carry these stories with a decolonial approach would be to critique this desire to possess as a way of teaching.

Another theoretical perspective is that of Critical Race and Whiteness Studies. This area was a starting point as I first began this research; it was the smashing of my colour-blind glasses. But it lost prominence as my vision refocused and other features began to come into view. Nonetheless, Critical Race Theory (CRT)—with its keen emphasis on the normalisation of racism in society (Ladson-Billings, 1998) and whiteness—remains a useful way of understanding how white students and staff are privileged in spaces such as the university, through a simultaneous marginalisation of non-white perspectives and peoples (Gunstone, 2009). Dismantling myths such as that of meritocracy becomes an important point for students not just to understand and reflect their own conceptualisations of the world, but to open up the cracks and fissures in different ways of thinking. As part of the course, CRT composes an important and regularly confronting aspect of students' learning, when students (white and non-white) are asked to explicitly question whiteness and white privilege, often for the first time.

I also want in my writing to rethink the teaching and learning work we do in courses such as these through a different approach: that of diffraction (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1992). Diffraction as a metaphor considers the way that waves change course when they encounter an obstruction. Writing can be reimagined as a process of diffraction, rather than reflection—we continually encounter new ideas and matter that entangle themselves into our ways of thinking and writing, irrevocably changing the patterns that they then take. Similarly, diffraction may be a useful metaphor to think about decolonial pedagogy. Rather than approaching our work as wanting particular types of changes in students' perspectives (an example from transformative learning literature would suggest that we should take “problematic frames of reference” and make them “better”; Mezirow, 2003, p. 58), a diffractive analysis of transformative learning would look at the obstructions that students have encountered, and follow through the new patterns that their thoughts take. What types of obstructions and interferences will create patterns that invite connections, commitment and responsibility? It is my hope that these new patterns will be more ethical and more opening—but who is to say? As hooks writes, “As students become critical thinkers they often of their own free will change perspectives; only they know whether that is for the better” (2010, p. 27).

...

Slipping her phone back into her pocket, the White Woman continued walking along the wide concrete path, students chattering about their plans for the evening as they headed towards the buses. She took a moment to pause in front of the friezes that adorned the entryways, friezes of the stories of the colonisation of Queensland. Looking carefully into the corners of the friezes, the White Woman spotted the two Indigenous men her friend had told her about. The two men stand passively

to the side, positioned as onlookers to the scenes of settlement that are depicted peacefully. She thought about the stories Martin (2008) wrote about Aboriginal resistance throughout the colonisation of Queensland; about how Indigenous people had always regulated outsiders and continue to do so. She thought about how these depictions of historical events were told not from an Indigenous standpoint (Nakata, 2007) which would have shown genocide and resistance, but from that of the colonisers' perspectives. She thought about how this absence of Indigenous perspectives contributed to the whiteness of the university, seeping from the physical buildings into the consciousness of the students and staff who walked the hallways, more conspicuous to her now because of its invisibility to those around her. She thought about how this whiteness made its way into the curriculum content that so rarely discussed Indigenous peoples in ways that didn't position them as lacking or as past-tense people, or rely on a discourse of Aboriginalism (McConaghy, 2000). She thought about how these friezes tried to hide the maxim that You Are Not Alone in The World (Graham, 2008), but couldn't.

...

From time to time, days after I close the final page of a book and return it to the bookshelf, an idea stays behind. Nothing is ever finished, and the realities created by the book's words live on. Sometimes, these realities take on new life forms as I use them to think through everyday life; the meaning of the stories simultaneously entangled with the every day. Sometimes, stories just travel along with me, becoming old friends to whom I might one day return, cup of coffee in hand, ready to spend time together. Not everything I read sticks with me in this way, and nor do I always understand what these memories I can't shake might mean: nonetheless they change the way I relate to those around me.

The story that stayed with me, changing the way I read the journals and other research and interacted with people in my everyday life, was the idea that we are always already in relation, and so that we are immediately called into responsibility to each other. Levinas (1969), a Jewish French-Lithuanian philosopher writing in the aftermath of the Holocaust, challenged the idea that we are free. To believe so would be to deny that we are always already together, and that the presence of Others in the world imparts a responsibility on the Self that is inescapable. But we don't even need to travel as far as Paris—as Aunty Mary Graham, Kombu-merri elder and philosopher, says: “You are not alone in the world” (2008, n. p.). We have a responsibility to each other, as well as the land; and violence is the refusal of this relationship that binds us (Rose, 2004). And so boundaries start to blur and disappear as we recognise not that we are intertwined, but that we are entangled in a way that refuses a reduction of responsibility (Barad, 2010, p. 264). In the same way, the men standing in the background of the carved friezes won't allow us to forget that in Australia colonisation is unfinished business: the process

of extermination was never fully achieved. As Moreton-Robinson writes, Indigenous relation to Country “is omnipresent, and continues to unsettle non-Indigenous belonging based on illegal dispossession” (2003a, p. 24).

Another story that I cannot shake from Levinas’ work is the idea that to seek to know others as we know ourselves—to draw them into our totality—is itself another act of violence: epistemological violence. To claim to know others is to bring them into our own frames of references and to try to understand them through the way we see the world, making them ever more like us. Levinas writes that the Other—the one who is not part of our totality—is so radically different that it is impossible to make her part of our totality, but that attempts to do so are violent acts. For non-Indigenous students learning about Indigenous education, the attempt to know and define Indigenous others in the non-Indigenous students’ frames of reference is a form of this epistemological violence. To make the other more like the self-same is to do harm.

These stories stay with me as I read the journals and other research in this space. They run across the entire thesis I have written here: how might we view and move through the world if we remember first that we are not alone in the world?

...

The White Woman began walking back across the campus, across the garden where the Burnett River rocks lay, alongside the friezes, stopping briefly once again at the inscription of truth, shaking her head as she paused, and past the library with its motto proclaiming hard work and knowledge. The White Woman arrived at the Social Sciences Building that housed the School of Education, the maroon and cream façade harking back to the 1970s. Here was the place, not where it had all begun, but where she now found herself. Looking up at the building before her, the White Woman reflected on how she had ended up here. She had wanted to do research, to find out more knowledge about the world she lived in, because she thought that she could help people with this knowledge. The woman had held a belief that knowledge could change the lives of Others around her. It was this belief that had compelled her to return to the University, and to this building, the School of Education. Knowledge, she had thought, was something that could best be distributed on a widespread systematic level through schools and other educational institutions, and thus enact the most powerful change. Thinking back on this thought now, the White Woman realised that whilst she still held belief in the power of education, this belief had now been transformed in regard to how the potential for change would take place. Rather than a static knowledge that could be passed on from generation to generation, handed over, the White Woman now saw classrooms as a location of possibility for transformation (hooks, 1994, p. 207)

...

There is a particular joy I take in reading hard cover books, even if I can't throw them in my bag as I leave the house to read on the train or in a queue. The weight of the book and the strong corners of the cover give it permanence as do the dust jackets, with their beautiful illustrations. When you pick up a book, the cover is the first thing you see. Despite old adages about covers and judgements, that first impression frames the way you go on to read the story within. But I also love looking inside the dust cover to read the description of the author. Stories always make more sense to me when I can imagine the person who wrote them. Even now, I look up pictures of the academics whose work I am reading and writing with—it helps me to imagine them as people, not just treatise-producing autobots.

In this book, the cover is both the course and the experiences that I, my teaching colleagues, and the students themselves have as teachers and learners in the Indigenous education landscape. This is a story about teaching and learning in Indigenous education: a research project about pre-service teachers learning to be part of the Indigenous education teaching and learning landscape as they prepare to enter classrooms. It is also a research project about my own experiences teaching and learning in this field. The course frames all of this writing, as it introduces the key ideas and experiences that students are introduced to in the time that they are writing their reflective learning journals.

The course, at the time these journals were written (in 2013 and 2014) was a 13 week compulsory course in the School of Education and the University of Queensland. Entitled EDUC2090 Indigenous Knowledge and Education, students spent 13 weeks attending a one-hour lecture and a two-hour tutorial, where key topics such as the history of education for Indigenous peoples, identity, the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007, 2010), and CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009) were discussed. In addition, we unpacked applications within education such as Chris Sarra's (2012) Stronger Smarter approach and investigated relevant policy models and frameworks (e.g. EATSIPS; DET, 2010). The course focused and focuses on both the teaching of Indigenous students and Indigenous perspectives in everyday classes, as well as an Indigenous Studies approach to working with pre-service teachers, filling in what is often gaps in knowledge.

Since 2010, when the course moved from the university's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit ("the Unit") to the School of Education, there has been a continual shift away from a focus on Indigenous knowledges to an approach that incorporates elements of practice, merging our theory and practice together. Working from praxis ourselves as a teaching team also models to the pre-service teachers in the course ways in which they can convert their social justice beliefs to action in and outside of the classroom.

...

And so, here she stood, a student, a teacher, and a researcher. The White Woman realised she would never be the same again as a result of this learning journey; that she could never again view the world through her rose-coloured colour-blinding sunglasses, could never walk through the university without feeling the piercing stares of the statues looking down on her, without seeing the carved murals where Indigenous people were inscribed to a position of passive onlookers, could never again walk through the doors of the library without wondering what myths of meritocracy were established in the university's motto. And as her perspectives changed and shifted, they transformed shape into something never quite but always becoming more ethical; more aware of the structures of power and oppression that shaped not just the lives of Indigenous peoples, but her own; more of a location of possibility for social transformation, The White Woman wondered how might the same apply to the students who wrote the journals that she now carried, safely packed in her bag and in her heart? Would the same apply for the education students, so very much like her—mostly in their twenties (albeit at opposite ends), mostly white, mostly female, mostly middle-class?

...

Many of these themes run through multiple layers, like a vein of gold through layers of shabby slate. I need to tread very carefully to ensure that I do not expose the students in this research project to the same epistemological violence that I worry they are at risk of enacting in classrooms (both in university and eventually their own). This potential for epistemological violence is doubled-over, like waves overlapping. The ways in which students are positioned and re/presented in research, resulting from the optical lenses with which we choose to “view” them, create particular realities for how we teach and learn.

And so, this work is written in the spirit of optical lenses—perhaps this placing of a proposition in your path, your stumbling upon this piece of writing, will alter and even diffract the way you think, write, work and live in this space. In the same way that light waves diffract when they come into contact with an obstruction, combining and spreading out, perhaps your reading of this work will combine our waves of thoughts, or send them into different directions (Barad, 2007, p. 29). As long as something happens. What that something is, I cannot say. Diffraction as an optical metaphor offers an alternative way of thinking about reflection. Instead of reflecting sameness back onto the self, diffraction looks for patterns of difference: a different way of thinking or writing about the work that we undertake as educators in the Indigenous education landscape and the ways we work with pre-service teachers. An optical device that does not hold a mirror to you as a reader, or me as a writer, and ask us to consider who we are in this space. To do so would be at risk of suggesting that this thesis has the answers. Instead, it might be an optical device that asks us to think about and thus makes a difference in who we are becoming.

If I'm pressed to give a nice succinct statement about what this thesis is about, then it's about non-Indigenous educators finding another relationship with teaching and embedding Indigenous perspectives other than one that presumes to Know Others—as if such a Knowing would be possible. But it's about so many other things as well. It's about writing. About the stories, experiences, and education of pre-service teachers. About coming to understand how the multiple realities of the space where I work and live impact my subjectivity as well as the subjectivities of those with whom I'm entangled. About an engagement with materiality. About responsibility. About “becoming a different person”, but also realising the threads of continuity/discontinuity as my subjectivity shifts and changes. About possession and desire. About knowledge. About what knowledge might mean, or might do, in higher education as in school level education as in research as in our lives. About the little differences that matter (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1992).

Chapter Two

The Course

Liz, one of my advisors and the course coordinator of EDUC2090, stands at the front of the lecture theatre, concentrating on the computer screen in front of her. As the PowerPoint slides fill the wall, we direct our gaze to the front of the hall. If there is a moment in time that a course ‘begins’, then this is that moment.

“Welcome to Indigenous Knowledge and Education,” Liz begins. “So today we are going to introduce the landscape of this course, so you’ve got a thorough understanding of what we’re going to be doing together and where we’re going to be going. I’d like to begin the course, and today’s lecture by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the Country on which we meet, the Yuggera and Turrbal peoples. I’d like to also acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging from these Nations, and Elders from other nations who are with us today.

In this course, we shall be undertaking a journey together, as you prepare (as initial teacher educators) to work across the landscape of Indigenous Australian education. There are many different points that we will be visiting as we work our way across this landscape during the semester. To begin with, I want to introduce to you to one of several frameworks we will work within: thinking about knowledge.”

*We ask of you
You as teachers
(Ourselves as teachers):
Know who you are
Know who you teach
Know what you teach
Know your world
The power and potential
To create change*

Know Who I/You/We are

I turn the recorder on my mobile phone on, and then reach over to the second phone I have brought with me and switch that recorder on too. Liz smiles at me. It feels a bit strange to be sitting with these tape recorders on, recorders that transform our cups of coffee into something more formal. Part of me wishes that we were just having a yarn about happenings in the School, or her son’s driving lessons, not “having an interview”.

I begin.

“So I want to write a chapter about the course, and I will of course include my own perspectives—”

“Of what’s going on,” Liz suggests (interviews never are as linear as a transcript might suggest, two people speaking in ordered segments. Instead we talk through, with and around each other).

“But you developed the course and it feels strange to just write my view of it. I would really like to include your view as well.” I finish and wait for Liz to respond.

She begins to tell her story—or at least the story which was produced that day⁶.

“I started teaching the course in 2010. At that stage I was working in the ATSI [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies] Unit, and the course was owned by Education, but the Unit had been teaching it for some years⁷. The Head of School in Education was a man on a mission and decided that with AITSL standards and the National Curriculum and the Cross-Curricular Priority [CCP]⁸, the School of Education had to be visionary and pro-active and wanted to make it compulsory. So I came over to Education and my primary role was to take carriage of that course.”

Liz’s words cause me to stop and think about who each of us are in this course that has become such a large part of both of our lives. I met Liz in 2012, in my search for a PhD supervisor. I remember that first day, sitting in the corridor outside her office, as a woman with a gorgeous bright dress arrived. I had come straight from the swimming pool and my hair and t-shirt were both still damp. I couldn’t help but feel young and unprofessional in front of her. The woman introduced herself as Liz, and said “Come in, come in! Have a seat.” I scrambled to get up off the floor and followed her into her office. From that first day, Liz made me feel welcome in the School, inviting me along to a function being held later that week. Yet she appeared not afraid to ask me about my motivations and positionings, or to gently point out where my words and wishes seemed contradictory.

Introducing Liz.

She grew up on Watharung country in Western Victoria.

Her mother’s family brought here as convicts; her father’s settlers from Scotland.

She holds a PhD in ethnomusicology.

⁶ This conversation I have written here is informed by an interview between Liz and myself recorded in March 2017. Some of Liz’s words are verbatim, others are paraphrased or shortened. I have also written some new dialogue for both myself and Liz to fill technical gaps of information that I think are important for you to know about the course and add even more depth into the theoretical perspectives that inform this work.

⁷ The course was originally developed by a team of academics across the School of Education and the ATSI Unit in 2001 (Sheehan, 2004). In 2010, the course was administered by the School of Education, however was taught by staff from the ATSI Unit.

⁸ The Cross-curricular Priority refers to ACARA’s response to the Melbourne Declaration (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008) and the identification of three educational goals relevant for all Australian students and Australia as a nation: “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures; Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia; and Sustainability” (ACARA, 2016).

A group of Aboriginal women from the Yanyuwa, Mara, Garrwa, and Gudanji nation located in the remote community of Burrulula in the southwest gulf region of the Northern Territory of Australia began the process of “growing her up.”

For these women, she is *kundiyarra*, partner in song.

She came to work in Brisbane.

She wrote a second PhD; power, race and relationship in Indigenous Australian Studies.

She is mother to her Yanyuwa boys.

She has taught this course since 2010.

She writes, teaches, and learns like a feminist.

(Drawn from Mackinlay, 2011; Mackinlay & Barney, 2014a; Mackinlay, 2015; Mackinlay, 2016)

Turning to myself, I have been a tutor in the course for the last four years. My research focus shifted to the pre-service teachers in the course shortly after I started teaching in it. Until that point, my plan had been to work with Indigenous tertiary students and explore their experiences of racism in the university. A chance meeting with a visiting Professor Warrior Woman, Head of an Indigenous Knowledges Centre, brought to the surface all of my fears and anxieties around this work—particularly my role in it as a white PhD student; yet another white researcher. Professor Warrior Woman put it more simply: “We already know that racism exists, and that our mob experience it. Why not spend your time talking to perpetrators? Ask the white students why this racism exists”. My research focus then flipped to the largely non-Indigenous cohort of pre-service teachers and their understandings of race and whiteness.

I return to my conversation with Liz, and she is talking about how the course has changed since those early days. “I think, with time I’ve gotten better at thinking around what are some of the things in the day-to-day work that teachers do in schools that links in with the course content,” she says. “But it’s not just me, it’s the teaching team. It hasn’t been an individual pursuit, it’s been a real collaboration, which for me has also been a thread in the course. We talk about relational education, and how significant that is for our students—and equally for my relationships within the teaching team and that relational approach to teaching has been important. And I think that students see that we are a tight little unit of educators; that we...we have a good relationship, and that we’re practicing what we preach within our own teaching team.”

Liz’s words on relationality remind me of hooks’ (2003) work on community. To put community first is to decolonise the ways of knowing that usually dominate classroom practice (hooks, 2003, p. 3). For Lugones (2003, p. 11), the coalitions that can form when resisting complex interconnecting oppressions decolonise knowing by allowing access to “a multiple sensing, a multiple

perceiving”. Shrewsbury (1987) also writes of the importance of community within a feminist pedagogy—to increase our self-confidence in our capacity to act and enact change (after Arendt), to better recognise the personal as political as pedagogical, to turn theory into action. I think about the colleagues I have worked with as part of the teaching team over the years: Sandra, Rhonda, Suraiya, Mitch, David, and Cate; as well as other friends who have jumped in to give a hand when needed. Working within this team has given us a sense of solidarity: collective strength to face difficult students or conversations, a breadth of experiences that we learn from and use to build our own teaching practices. In similar ways on a parallel journey, working with my other advisors, Annemaree and Julie, as well as with Liz, has provided strength and support as we move through territories unknown together; friendship, tissues, and endless cups of coffees becoming courageous to try new things and question more deeply.

Liz continues talking, reflecting on how the teaching team approach reflects the pedagogical philosophies that guide our work. “I guess for me that idea of making sure that everything we do—whether this is critical pedagogy, or it’s probably more like a feminist pedagogy that crosses over with Indigenous ways of thinking around teaching and learning...It’s making sure that everything you’re doing has a thread of relationality throughout it. Everything is built on relationship, enacting some of the Indigenous decolonial concepts that guide us.”

Institutional will.

“Thinking about those relationships and relationality, what about the size of the course?” I ask Liz, wondering what possibilities of relationship there are across the three cohorts we work with.

“When I moved over in 2011, the student enrolments...they were maybe not over the 300 mark like we’ve got now, but definitely in the mid 200s.” Liz pauses to think for a moment. “That for me was a bit of an eye opener as well. The student enrolments were high; the course has always been offered to all cohorts. And I...I’m not sure that the School of Education was necessarily equipped to manage the complexity of the course, of the cohorts.”

Being part of the university requires working within course structures that are not always as we might want. As the students wrote the journals that I have used as data, we taught across two cohorts, Bachelor of Education (Primary) students who were for the most part in the third year of their degree, and Bachelor of Education (Secondary) students who were enrolled in dual degree programs (Masters of Teaching students now also participate in the course). These Secondary students study in different faculties, and could enroll in the course at any stage of their degree. As such, our content and assessment had to be pitched at a level that was achievable by a first-year student, yet might still hope to challenge a third year. I think back to my first year in tutorials, discussing the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2010) and different content descriptors, and looking up to see half of the class staring at me

whilst the other half nodded their heads in agreement. Working across different year levels made (and makes) it difficult to ascertain a standard of assumed knowledge in order to teach new ideas.

Liz continues, “In my darker moments I’ve seen it as a structural racism. There have always been these impediments placed, barriers we have to try to jump over to make the course a success have always been there. And there just seems to be a reluctance to remove them. There’s an *institutional will*, to quote Ahmed (2014), that won’t budge.”

Liz’s reference to institutional will makes me smile—causes me to respond affectively, an embodied response—as I consider Sara Ahmed, a British-Australian Black feminist; a feminist killjoy. Ahmed’s not-philosophy writing uses a method of “following words around” (Ahmed, 2017, n.p.)—to follow is to move behind, but to move behind is also to work in the background behind the curtains. Working behind the curtains of institutional life are habits: “the continuation of willing what no longer needs to be willed” (Ahmed, 2012a, p. 129). Despite the Head of School’s desire to create space in the compulsory curriculum for Indigenous Studies, the institutional will continues to work for the whiteness of the university, to create structural impediments to doing the diversity work of Indigenous education. The institution no longer had to deny Indigenous Studies a place in the curriculum, in the buildings and in the staff, because the habit of whiteness instead transformed into a wall; a reluctance to remove barriers and walls to create a successful teaching experience. Individual actors are no longer required to block actions that are discontinuous with the will of the university: to crack apart the canon that constitutes educational theory and practice; to recognise plural ways of knowing, being, and doing; to stand in a lecture theatre and acknowledge that we meet here today on land that was never ceded, to teach and learn on a place where teaching and learning has been practiced for thousands of years. Instead, the accumulation and settled sediment of the institution’s will walls off endeavors to do differently, making visible the limits of what one is able to do.

But “to work against an institutional will”, Ahmed (2012b, p. 3) suggests, “requires willful parts”; people who are willful, that persist. Ahmed (2012a) writes of diversity workers as inhabiting two types of roles: those hired by the institution to transform and change them, and those who are marked by difference as not fitting the norms of the institution. The bodies that inhabit these roles are often the same. Even for Liz and myself, talking as two white women, our work “doing diversity” marks us as different, as not fitting the norms of the institution. There is a raised awareness when I sit in a meeting or around the family dinner table and “Indigenous issues” come up—“Be careful what you say around this one.” “She *cares* about Indigenous Issues.” “There is something different about her.” The first two are sometimes spoken, the third one left implied.

Living and breathing a decolonial approach.

Liz continues, “I guess my role as course coordinator has been trying to see how we can start to chip away at that a bit, and make it work for us. It’s been a bit of a change in mindset too, instead of constantly working against that will, how can I work within it to make it work for the course.”

“That’s always going to be the catch of an institution such as the university,” I comment, mentally coming up against the wall of administration; the lack of time available for the institution to reconsider and restructure the administration of large courses; the competing priorities.

“I guess it’s the compromise within the compromise,” says Liz. “You could say a course like this is already compromised by institutional structures and institutional will. Because it can’t live and breathe a decolonial process in the ways you might want it to. Knowing that then, how much are we willing to compromise to still keep the decolonial sentiments floating through it?”

I think about what it might mean to live and breathe a decolonial process. The academic field that concerns itself with decoloniality has many possible entry points, one of which is the notion that the human and non-human were created into a dichotomous hierarchy by Western modernity, as were men and women (Lugones, 2010). As European colonisers travelled across the world, this hierarchy enabled the exploitation of Indigenous peoples who were categorised as non-human in the pursuit of material gains for the colonisers. This dehumanisation of Indigenous peoples constitutes a core aspect of what Maldonado-Torres (2007) terms the *coloniality of being*: the normalisation of violent events for Black bodies, the non-ethics of denying being to those who would become the colonised. Decoloniality asks us to consider how, when and where knowledge is created: turning the attention away from the enunciated to focus on the act of enunciation (Mignolo, 2009). European knowledges and thought have been positioned as speaking for all (at least all that are counted as human under a European system of thought), concealing the conditions under which they were constructed; creating the “illusion of the zero point epistemology” (Mignolo, 2009, p. 160). In Australia, decoloniality moves beyond a re-centring of Indigenous knowledges by displacing the imposed Western ways of knowing, but instead considers how the construction of Indigenous knowledges includes Indigenous analyses and understandings of colonisation, creating ever-changing reactive knowledge systems (Nakata et al., 2012).

My own consideration of this course living and breathing a decolonial process is not just about making space for Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, but to take yet another step back and consider how these ways are positioned within a broader framework of power and coloniality in this land that is known as Australia. How is European thought normalised into a Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogy? How is the body of knowledge “about” Indigenous people (Nakata, 2007) in fact connected to the white bodies, located in particular geographical places? Who created these knowledge artefacts, displacing Indigenous peoples’ knowing of themselves through an act that speaks “you

cannot think (according to our terms), and therefore are not human”)? Why were such knowledges constructed? To work with students through these ideas in our conversations as we responded to the material offered within the course is to begin living and breathing this decoloniality.

Of course, decoloniality as a body of theory and community of thinkers and practitioners is not outside of critique. Nakata’s work on Indigenous Standpoint Theory (Nakata, 2007; Nakata et al., 2012) continually reminds me of the conceptual limitations of our own thinking; with the knowledges we are able to produce governed and restricted by where we stand. As Mukandi (2017) suggests, reflecting on Spivak’s premise that the subaltern cannot speak, a decolonial/South-South dialogue is always already governed by the Northern/European conceptualisation of a North and South to begin with, and as such, cannot be extricated from the conditions which make coloniality possible. Such a concept is followed by Ortega (2017), who challenges the ways in which a coloniality of power insidiously seeps back into the work of decolonial theorists, through the establishment of a canon (which I find myself returning to again and again) that valorises some (male Latin American exiles leaving in the US) over the “others” that are produced through their exclusion from the collection of key texts (Ortega writes of the lack of true engagement with the work of Chicana and/or queer feminists). My friend and colleague Fabiane Ramos and I have ourselves written about the ways in which the writing of decolonial theorists remains “disciplined” by the academy. The logic of rationalist essays that dominate this body of work also reflects the colonial and imperialist underpinnings of an academy that suggest the role of language within the social sciences is to represent—to know—others (McDowall & Ramos, 2017).

Despite my concerns, I am re-centred by conversations in classrooms with my students where they share stories about their families, or their experiences in schools. These conversations remind me of the broader colonial discourses that dictate how Indigenous peoples are perceived, spoken about, taught about and acted towards/upon. Even if we do not burn down bridges in our work as university educators, to be able to work with becoming-teachers and have them think differently, think otherwise, about difference and how they will go about teaching Indigenous studies and students in their future classrooms is to have a material effect on the lives of students, families and communities. As Walsh (2015, p. 17) writes, the decolonial “how” can be in pedagogy as method, working within and to broaden the “fissures and crack within the modern/colonial order”. Throughout the course, our work with students questioning and deconstructing the political agendas and enunciations of curriculum and pedagogy that positions itself as universal and all-knowing has a potential to move towards decoloniality.

Know Who I/You/We teach

In the lecture hall, Liz answers a student's question, and then moves onto the next slide, the glow of the PowerPoint filling the room. "We're going to stop for a second. Why are you here?" The teaching team floats through the room, sitting down with students to share their conversations; a becoming-community of learners. Various reasons are given voice in these conversations:

because it's important
equity empathy education
social justice anti-racism
close the gap
black lives matter
to make a difference
compulsory forced
to graduate
challenge my perspectives my assumptions
gain valuable knowledge
be a good teacher, a better teacher
better myself
get a job
learn. respect. respond⁹.

"One of the ideas we will work with," Liz says, drawing everyone's attention back to the front, "is how you can work with Indigenous students in a culturally competent and safe way, supporting their identity and culture in the classroom through culturally responsive pedagogies. It is important to *know who you teach.*"

Student preparedness to learn.

Back in the coffee shop, Liz and I are discussing the move from working in the Unit and coming into the School of Education. "That was when the course changed from being optional to compulsory, wasn't it?" I prompt.

"That's right," says Liz. "It was kind of a baptism of fire in my first year, cause when I was working in the Unit, there was no room, and no place, for anything other than a decolonial approach. Because we—staff and students—were driven by this very explicitly political agenda. The students

⁹ These responses are observations from answers students gave anonymously in a word cloud activity in the 2016 and 2017 courses. They reflect the students' responses in the reflective learning journals, but also are reflections of shifting discourses (for example, the "black lives matter" response in 2016). What I have left out, because I deemed them irrelevant yet important enough to let you know now, are the "nonsense" answers that suggests the students did not take this work seriously in week one: responses of the "for the boiz", "pokemon lure" and "eat pray love" variety.

had no issue with the language we were using around race, or Indigeneity, or being white, or colonials, or coloniality. And that was the only place from which we could teach the course. But the education students were just not ready for that kind of talk. And neither was I ready, or willing to bend.” Liz laughs. “Or to silence that side of my voice. So it was a real clash.”

“What happened then?” I ask.

“Our SECaT¹⁰ scores were really crap, and I needed to do something about it.”

Strangers and strangeness—a brief divergence.

To be recognised as a stranger is to be not part or perhaps not yet part of the body of the community. The whiteness of the neighborhood is established by the recognition of who is and is not part. (Ahmed, 2012b, p. 2)

Perhaps the invitation for Liz and the course to come to the School of Education was an invitation by the institution to join the neighbourhood; a house made empty for Indigenous knowledges to inhabit. But upon arriving in house and beginning to unpack boxes, it became increasingly evident that the old furniture did not fit in the new house: the living room was overfilled with Indigenous knowledges and political ideas and activist philosophies, and the students who came to sit on the couch for a semester at a time were uncomfortable and at dis-ease. They couldn't find anywhere to sit, and instead perched precariously on the edges of the furniture.

But that might be the point, I hear you say. Surely learning is supposed to be uncomfortable, uneasy, an irritation that creates a necessary change in how we process and be in the world around us?

That might be the case, but as the students sat around the room, wishing they could leave, a piercing wail filled the air, alerting the Neighbourhood Watch to the intrusion of strangers.

Institutions have “detection systems”: they have parts that register the approach of strangers. A collective body in registering those who are out of place, both creates strangers and establishes a direction towards them, as those who threaten the place of the “in place”, as those who generate anxiety. (Ahmed, 2012b, p. 2)

The SECaTs had triggered the detection system. An alarm was sent back to the institution warning that a stranger had tried to become part of the community body, a registering of threat to what was “in place”, what was standard practice in the School and in education. Recognised as a stranger attempting to join the community, Liz and the course that she brought with her had to find a way to become inconspicuous, to blend into the background as to not generate anxiety, whilst remaining a willful part of the body; an arm that refused to stay buried underground.

Willfulness is thus compromising; it compromises the capacity of a subject to survive, let alone flourish. (Ahmed, 2012b, p. 4)

This course and the people who teach in it have demonstrated willfulness in continuing to talk back and work back to the institutional will, by finding new furniture that looks more like what the students

¹⁰ Referring to the *Student Evaluation of Course and Teacher* surveys, a standardised end-of-semester evaluation administered by the university.

are used to: language that does not create as much anxiety, activities that focused on teaching practice.

But is new furniture always a compromise, or can it start to change the experience of being in the house? The foundations remain, sure. The structure and walls stay the same. The university remains built on the foundations of Western enlightenment, concrete laid out on stolen ground that was never ceded, posts cemented in through a coloniality of knowledge, holding up a structure of whiteness. Yet houses get remodeled. New wings can be attached, walls knocked down. And when you walk through the front door, the ways in which we experience a house can be radically different.

Boarding the political train.

As we both sip on our coffee, Liz continues to explain the change she had to take in her approach to teaching. “I think I was fairly,” she laughs, “militant. And radical. Unwilling to compromise. Although now I am more willing to be compassionate. Then, I couldn't really see how it was—or might be—possible to still hold the political mind but take a different angle. Because I was so used to having students who were already on-board the political train. And to have students who didn't necessarily *want* to be on that train...”

“It's a different starting point,” I comment.

“So my approach to shove them on board and tie them down.” Liz finishes. We both giggle at the image, or perhaps a release of tension from admitting such words. “It was not...it did not work. Some students got it. But for many, the language I thought was the politics of transformation, of compassion and care and ethical responsibility from a non-Indigenous standpoint, was read as militant and radical and anti-white. A ‘don’t make us feel guilty’ kind of approach. And I was not prepared for that at all. And I was devastated.”

Liz's comments remind me of what other educators (e.g. Aveling, 2002; Aveling, 2006; Hollinsworth, 2016; Hook, 2012; Kameniar, Windsor, & Sifa, 2014; Mackinlay & Barney, 2014a; Mackinlay & Barney, 2014b; O’Dowd, 2010; Phillips, 2011; Thorpe & Burgess, 2016), working in similar spaces in Australia, have written around students’ responses to being asked to interrogate Australian colonial histories from an Indigenous perspective, as well as interrogate their own positionalities. Resistance is a common metaphor that is invoked to think about how students respond to worldviews different to their own. According to the Cambridge dictionary, resistance is “the act of fighting against something that is attacking you, or refusing to accept something” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). This definition reminds me of papers such as Hollinsworth’s (2016), where some students enrolled in cross-disciplinary Indigenous Studies courses reject the concept of White privilege (McIntosh, 1989) and its impacts on their everyday lives. In an image that always strikes me as vividly material, Hollinsworth (2016) writes of one of his students scribbling out a question in her learning journal that asked her to reflect on how the privilege of her whiteness in working with Indigenous

peoples. Or perhaps Aveling's (2002) experience teaching in an education course where White students refuse to accept the alternative worldviews offered to them: refusing to "see colour", or that race is made to matter; becoming defensive when their own racialised assumptions—their own ways of making race matter—are challenged. Aveling writes of the anger that some students articulate at being "forced" to accept the lecturers' views as their own, or a resistance that plays out in an insistence that there should be less emphasis on Aboriginal perspectives. An unwillingness, perhaps, to recognise the complicity of colonialism. As students were confronted with histories and knowledges that called into question their own positioning—that they felt was attacking them—they fought back. I remind myself that this fighting back has racialised consequences, particularly for Indigenous academics whose family histories are related to the social and political narratives being discussed—and refused—in lecture halls and tutorial rooms (Asmar & Page, 2009).

The Cambridge Dictionary's second definition of resistance evokes a different metaphor—only a small difference, but a difference that might matter in how we as educators construct our work with students. "A force that acts to stop the progress of something or make it slower" suggests physics, the slowness of our legs as we drag them through water. Phillips (2011, p. 53) defines non-Indigenous pre-service teacher resistance as "any barrier constructed by individuals to avoid exploration into the reasons for their internal conflict", recognising that this resistance may not always take the form of an attack or an argument, but can be found even when students express "a well-intended desire to learn". Perhaps the force that slows one down as one encounters difficult knowledges in Indigenous education—contradictory worldviews to one's own—is the grip that coloniality has on the ways we think, do, write, teach and learn. Whilst it is important to realise individuals' agency in constructing these barriers and choosing how they respond, I know that my own upbringing, educational experiences, and research training makes it difficult at times to move outside of the discourses available to me as I teach, learn and write. The force of the discourses that have commonly been available to me throughout my life slow the progress of moving towards a more decolonial approach, making themselves known in my use of binaries, or my creep back into writing in a disembodied language. Perhaps by thinking through a definition of resistance as a force that slows down the movement of another force, we can think about how students' resistance is constructed or what forces might be at play. Thorpe and Burgess (2016) suggest, for example, that teacher educators are using their own frames of reference in positioning pre-service students as resistant, and that instead an emotional vulnerability may be the force that slows down learning in this space.

A "typical" student cohort.

I think about the students in the course. At the time that the journals were written, there were around 240 students in the cohort, from whom a quarter were enrolled in a Bachelor of Education

(Primary), and three-quarters in a dual degree program including a Bachelor of Education (Secondary). In 2013, the cohort was made up of “predominately young 17- to 24-year old, white females” (Mackinlay & Barney, 2014a, p. 26); a pattern which was repeated the next year¹¹.

Using these broad parameters of race and gender, the students we work with reflect many other teacher education cohorts in research looking at the tensions and processes of preparing teachers to work in “multicultural” and Indigenous education (e.g. Aveling, 2002). Yet these social locations do not completely account for the formation of students’ subject positions and how they construct their future work as teachers. Common to all students in this course is their enrolment in a university that positions itself (see Figure 2) and is perceived as one of the elite “sandstone” universities in Australia, the oldest, research-intensive universities (Marginson, 1999). The university has over 50 000 students enrolled, with about 70% of these students in undergraduate programs (The University of Queensland, n.d.). But to construct students only according to race (an assumed and observed location, as I did not ask students how they would identify themselves) and gender would be too simple. I think about what other social locations might contribute to how students experience their undergraduate education: how many students were school leavers, what other pathways they may have followed to become a student in the School of Education. Their own schooling experiences, particularly in regards to how Indigenous Studies may or may not have been integrated. Where the students in our course grew up. How they experienced the racialisation of their own subjectivities. The complexities of and intersectionality of students’ subjectivities, in ways I as a researcher could never know, would intimately impact the ways in which they moved through this course and imagined and performed their work as teachers.

¹¹ Liz and a colleague at UQ’s Teaching and Educational Development Institute (TEDI) undertook a research study to explore students’ attitudes to the course. Just over half of the course (56%) consented to their journals being used in the research project, consent which The University of Queensland’s Human Ethics Committee extended to allow myself to also look at the journals as part of my doctoral research. The following year, I asked the new cohort of students if they would also consent to their journals being used.

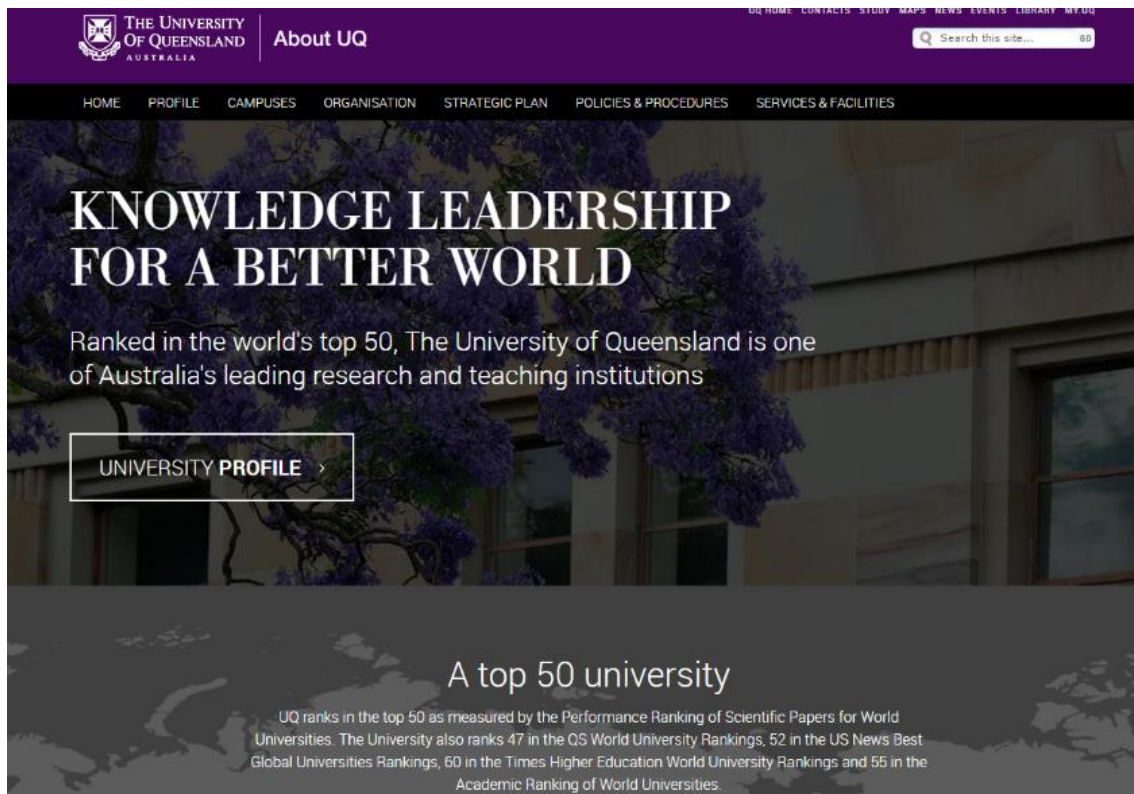


Figure 2. A snapshot from the University of Queensland website's “About Us” page, describing itself as a leading research and teaching institution and a world knowledge leader.

Bringing students with us—and with other teacher-educator researchers.

In the café, Liz continues to discuss the difficult balance of getting students on board the political train. She says, “A different approach was necessary, in terms of getting a better balance between sharing my experiences and making sure that I can bring them into the space in a way that doesn’t intimidate them. So, I’ve been trying to think about what kind of strategies might we use—the course structure, the assessment, the content, the activities, the readings—how can we do that in a way that doesn’t compromise the decolonial sentiments, but in a way that brings people with us, not turns them away.”

This careful balance between interrogating coloniality and supporting students reminds me of Galman, Pica-Smith and Rosenberger’s (2010) examination of their own teaching practice in an anti-racist teacher education course in the United States. Galman and her colleagues undertook the difficult work of challenging the ease with which they/we can slip into a place of complacency, privileging a sense of white comfort and avoiding confronting white students. They recognised the importance of tenderly working with students in a pedagogy that seeks to aggressively question the racialisation of education. It strikes me that this is not something that we are taught to do as teacher educators, yet it is one of the many things we are trying to prepare the student teachers themselves to do as they enter their own classrooms.

Aveling (2006) is another teacher educator who has come back to reflect on the ways she teaches students to question and critique their own racial identities, recognising the threat to psychic safety that this process can cause. When Aveling first started teaching courses in *Aboriginal and Multicultural Education*, some students found the course “too threatening”, “too politically correct”, or hostile against White males. Engaging in a reflexive process of self-evaluation, Aveling sought to improve her own praxis and ability to bring students into a place where they were better able to question and interrogate their socially constructed identities, “hacking at the roots of their identities” by bringing into question the ways in which whiteness is implicated in racism. As part of her curricular approach, Aveling discusses the importance of “back-filling” knowledge around Australian race relations and supporting critical reflection to develop attitudes, but admits that the “skills component” of how to transfer these understandings into school classrooms falls to the wayside due to time restraints. There is perhaps a tension here with how to teach pedagogical practice, particularly when—as teacher educators—most of us are all too familiar with the objection-phrased-as-question “Why can’t you just tell us how to teach Indigenous students?” As Aveling suggests, teaching against the grain will continue to cause discomfort—and not just for students, I think to myself.

For O’Dowd (2010), bringing students into the space with her required a focus on ethical positioning as a pedagogical tool. In her first year of teaching *Aboriginal Culture and History* to pre-service primary teachers at a rural university, O’Dowd was met with similar comments from students as Aveling: the fear of being labelled a racist, a perceived requirement to be “politically correct”, as well as a perceived irrelevance of the subject matter. In a second iteration of the course, however, O’Dowd asked the students to undergo a process of critical reflection framed by positioning themselves ethically. Students were to consider the implications of their own views in terms of justice for the other, for a community, at a national level and an international level. Bringing themselves into relation, and considering how they as individuals were connected to broader social frameworks, caused the students to view the course more positively.

Hook (2012) also reflects on the ways in which we prepare tertiary students to teach Indigenous Australian Studies, and sees theory (specifically Critical Whiteness Theory) as a tool to allow non-Indigenous students to work and learn constructively within an Indigenous Studies space, rather than feeling “blamed”. I smile to myself, thinking of another hooks (1991, p. 1) moment: “I came to theory because I was hurting”. I too agree that offering students theories as tools to see the broader constructions of social structures can provide a non-threatening way to look at the social first, before locating themselves within those structures.¹²

¹² Another tertiary educator who has written in this field (albeit not in education) is Nicoll (2004). For Nicoll, a continual focus on the relationship that each person in the classroom has with Indigenous sovereignty provided a framework with which students could better understand the performativity of their own subject positions.

Heightening student awareness about racism without also providing some hope for social change is a prescription for despair (Taylor et al., 2009, p. 280).

Know What I/You/We Teach

Liz flicked to the next slide, and a drawing came up, with the words “knowing”, “doing” and “being” interlinked with arrows (Figure 3). “What I would like to take you through now is a map of the areas we will cover in this course. Each week we will meet here for a one hour lecture, and then move to your tutorial groups, where you will have a two hour workshop. So we will be working with the ideas on this map in both lectures and workshops.” Liz paused to let the students digest this idea. “If you have a look at the map, we can start with being—this is thinking about who we are, where we are located and with whom we are in relation. One of the ways we explore this in the course is in the reflective learning journal, one of the pieces of assessment.”

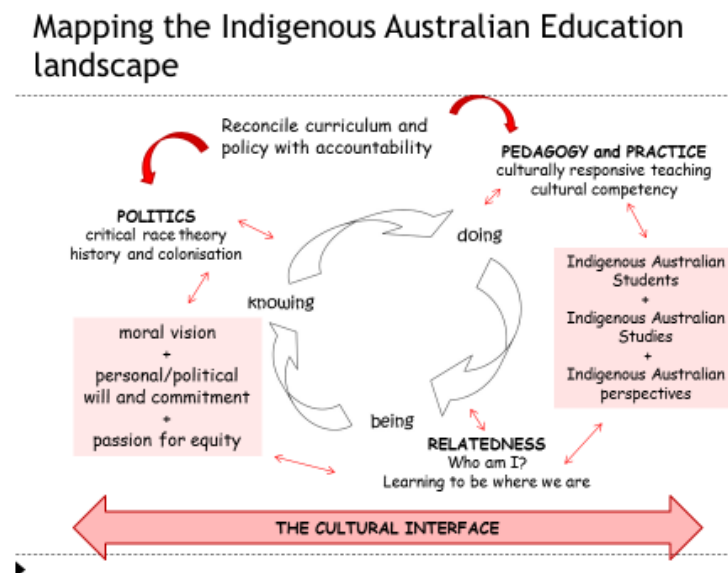


Figure 3. A slide from the PowerPoint presentation given in the introductory lecture EDUC2090 © Mackinlay

“Part of our work in doing will be working through different schools of thought on working with Indigenous students—particularly around what it might mean to be culturally competent, or culturally responsive.” Liz continued. “But in addition to knowing who you will be teaching in your classrooms, we will also cover history and colonisation, Indigenous knowledges, think about representation, and cover different pedagogical frameworks throughout this course. It’s important to *know what you teach.*”

Praxis—the shift in focus from Indigenous knowledges to pedagogy.

In the café, Liz looks me in the eyes and speaks frankly.

“No wonder the course had all of these little splits and cracks, because right from the word go, we hadn’t enacted that relationship between theory and practice,” she admits. “There was a conflict in what we were saying we were doing about Indigenous ways of doing, being and knowing and relationality.”

The relationship between theory and practice is one we come back to time and again in the course. Students are asked to engage with Lampert’s (2012, p. 82) definition of *praxis* as “the practice of teaching that is based on reflection...a commitment to human well-being, the search for truth, and respect for others”, reflecting a Freirean mixing of reflection and action in order to transform social structures (Freire, 1970/2005). How might we combine our social justice ideas with our work in the classroom, and enact our beliefs?

“You know, we haven’t always taught the course this way,” Liz reflects. “Even in 2013, before you started teaching but when some of the journals you are looking at were written, we weren’t necessarily thinking as much about our pedagogies as praxis. What I needed to get better at, as a university lecturer, was how I could make my practical experience as a teacher working in primary schools relevant for other teachers. In Indigenous Studies I was never asked to talk about my teaching practice—I wasn’t used to having the conversation with becoming teachers about how you teach these things. So now we’ve been quite creative and thought a lot about how we translate theories and ideas about pedagogy into practice. We use the tutorials as a space for students to try things out, actually do some practice.”

“I think the students find the frameworks beneficial: many write in their final journal entries that this is what they have found most useful, the pedagogical frameworks. It gives them something tangible to work with. And I know that in a report that Aileen Moreton-Robinson did for AITSL (Moreton-Robinson, Singh, Kolopenuk & Robinson, 2012), only a quarter of education courses focusing on teaching Indigenous students and studies looked at pedagogy, which they suggested was a problem: there is no evidence to support the claim that teaching Indigenous Studies results in better educational outcomes for Indigenous students, as teachers don’t necessarily know how to transfer this knowledge into classroom teaching practices.” I pause for a moment before continuing. “I think it’s important that we offer students something tangible that they can take into the classroom, such as Yunkaporta’s (2009) 8 Ways of Learning and Uncle Ernie Grant’s Djirrabal Holistic Framework (Grant, 2002). It’s a big leap from discussion of centralising Indigenous knowledges into being able to apply knowledges in the classroom. And I think for many of the students, having a couple of frameworks in their toolbox is a turning point. We spend the first few weeks setting up theories such as

the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007), and then we bring in some examples of Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing and teaching coming together.

“And whilst we’re on the topic, you know what I think is really important? That we provide our students with a way to see Indigenous peoples as active agents of knowledge (Nakata, 2010), as constructors of theories and knowledge frameworks. I think one of the easier ways to meet the policy requirements of embedding Indigenous perspectives is to teach history and humanities from an angle that recognises that colonisation was not a one-way process of Europeans finding an empty continent and settling here. I think that is a concept that most students get and understand as problematic. But to really give Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing priority in our curricula is to engage with the types of things Nakata says: ‘We need to story our place in the world first and foremost as a people of knowledge’ (2010, p. 56). Whilst Nakata is speaking to Torres Strait Islanders, I think as a non-Indigenous educator this concept is incredibly powerful in terms of how we position knowledge and pedagogical frameworks in the classroom.”

Teaching and learning activities.

I think back to 2014, the first year I taught in the course, and the information I gathered by accessing learning materials from the 2013 Blackboard website. Each week’s teaching and learning activities flash through my mind; the complexity of a course reflected in short snippets as I remember.

The learning maps
Framing our work
Establishing safe spaces

Histories of racial
inferiority-fear-assimilation
A PEARL exploration

The cultural interface
Lived experiences; A
location of inquiry

Race and racism
Made to matter
Revealing white privilege

A guest speaker
Discusses her identity
Experiences of schooling

Deconstructing colonial discourses
The “real Aborigine”
Questioning re/presentation

*An Indigenous philosopher
Knowledges and worldviews
Land and law*

*Unpacking current debates
Pearson, Sarra, which
gap needs closing?*

*Our guest speaker
Introduces EATSIPS policy
Personal professional political*

Each week's themes guided the types of teaching and learning that took place in lectures and tutorials, with tutorials having a strong focus on critical guided discussion between/within the tutor as facilitator and the students. The activities, lectures, and discussions that we work through were all closely linked to the official and unofficial aims of the course—the wants that we have as educators to reconcile our ways of knowing, being and doing within the Indigenous education landscape.

Course aims and objectives.

EDUC2090 aims to
prepare you
initial teacher educators
work effectively, appropriately
across the landscape
of Indigenous Australian education.

Two major areas
your work, as teacher
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
and teaching of
Indigenous Australian Studies
linking directly with
Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

We aim to
make space for
privilege Indigenous voices, perspectives
systems of knowledge and pedagogy
integral to practice

Three important concepts
respect relationships reconciliation.

On top of this
know yourself
know your world
know your students
know what you teach.

Theoretically grounded
within critical pedagogy
critical race discourse
the aim of encouraging
you to consider
power and possibilities
to make a difference

We will ask you to
continually reflect
upon your positioning
your relation to
Indigenous Australian peoples
to critique, question and discuss
the kind of teacher
you would like to be.

In the café, both Liz and I are momentarily paused, both in our own worlds. Glancing at my watch, I realise how the minutes have ticked past. “So you were saying that you have had to work on a different approach to help bridge the gap between university and classroom practice?” I prompt Liz.

“Yes,” she replies, “and I was saying this requires a consideration of the different elements of the course, and making sure these parts work to what the course wants. So in a way, we can think of the learning objectives as what we want as an outcome for students—at least formally, institutionally.”

“Of course,” I said, wondering when I had last read these.

“We have five explicit objectives. The first is to *engage with and understand theoretical underpinnings and debates, curriculum and policy frameworks, and pedagogical practices which make up the landscape of Indigenous education in Australia today* (The University of Queensland, 2014). So when we talk about the theories, pedagogies, and policies that we work through in the course, that’s this content aspect. Getting to know the lay of the landscape, you could say.”

“You know,” I say, “the longer I am involved in this course, the more important I find Nakata’s writing around the Cultural Interface as the foundational concept on which our work is built. We are working in a knowledge terrain where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges are introduced and there are tensions and clashes as these come together, moving around each other and interacting. For example, we teach about (and through) concepts of two-way education, where Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges and languages mix together, like salt and fresh water, but do not become one (Marika, 1999, as cited in Bat, Kilgariff & Doe, 2014).”

“You’re talking about the knowledges from Ganma, located in Yolgnu Country in the Northern Territory?” Liz prompts.

“Yes, exactly,” I reply, reminding myself of the importance of place and ownership of knowledge frameworks. “And perhaps the recognition of this interface speaks to another one of the objectives, to *understand and reflect upon Indigenous Australian education as located within broader educational frameworks and contexts*. The Cultural Interface becomes a way to theorise how Indigenous knowledges, perspectives and experiences are part of a broader, complex and contested landscape. And then all of these experiences occur alongside/within policies developed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous government workers, mixed together with CRT, a theory that comes out of North American legal scholarship and originally focused on African Americans’ experiences of a society where race is normalized in both institutions and everyday experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1998). There are tensions here: CRT was developed to advance African American’s civil rights, and does not explicitly recognise how colonisation shapes our lives, and particularly the lives of Indigenous peoples (Brayboy, 2005). But thinking about our work as taking place at the Cultural Interface provides an avenue to think about how these theories and practices might sit together, even with the tensions and inconsistencies. And the focus on understanding our own standpoints and experiential knowledges reminds us that there are limits to our own thinking (Nakata et al., 2012): for the non-Indigenous students in our cohort it is impossible to know what it’s like to experience the world as an Indigenous person, and vice-versa—although Indigenous students probably have a better understanding, as their experiences provide a point of analysis from which they can make sense of non-Indigenous Australia.”

Liz takes a sip of her coffee before responding. “Well, seeing as you mentioned standpoints and positionings, that’s a third learning objective: To *understand and continually reflect upon your professional, political and personal positioning and practice as an educator in relation to Indigenous Australian students, education, peoples and culture*. As you know, one of the first things we ask students to do in the course is to reflect on who they are: to think about how they are positioned in society in terms of race, class, and gender; to consider their values and beliefs. Mezirow (2003) writes of critical self-reflection and an examination of our habits as part of transformative learning. However the critical reflections we ask students to engage in go beyond examining their own assumptions and expectations; instead, we ask them to consider what standpoints they inhabit.”

“You mean standpoints as in feminist standpoint theory (Collins, 2003; Harding, 1993; Smith, 1990)? And building from that, Indigenous Standpoint Theories (Foley, 2003; Nakata, 2007)?” I ask.

“Yes,” Liz says. “The standpoints and positionings which we each inhabit can also be seen as locations from which critical inquiries are undertaken and situated knowledges produced”.

“It’s interesting that you bring up that idea of situated knowledges,” I say. “I was re-reading Haraway’s paper on situated knowledges and partial perspective the other day, and what I read this time—that I hadn’t really noticed before—was a focus on responsibility and ethics. Maybe it’s because I’ve been reading Levinas (1989) and that’s making a difference in how I read other work. Haraway

(1988) suggests that understanding how we are positioned within structures of power is important because those partial perspectives ‘allow us to become answerable for what we learn how to see’ and recognise the violence that is always implicit in knowing (p. 585). When Haraway suggests that ‘positioning implies responsibility’ (p. 587), I think it’s because when we—as educators and researchers, as well as the students—position ourselves, we are unable to ignore our relationships with each other.”

“And so the reflective learning journal becomes an apparatus through which students can think about this positioning.” Liz says. “And I want to bring in here the idea that the course is structured around Indigenous ways of being, doing and knowing. So part of that is understanding your place in the world, where you are located and how, how you are grounded in particular, with people, with place. The reflective learning journal is a moment where you are explicitly asking students, I wanna put you in that space of being. What does it mean to be in this learning place with these people in this moment? Take a look at yourself in relation to everyone. You might remember in that article, Haraway (1988, p. 585) also suggests that it can be difficult to see one’s self: ‘Self-knowledge requires a semiotic-material technology to link meanings and bodies’. Each week we provide the students with a question to frame their thinking around their relationships with Indigenous students, people, culture and education (although, we didn’t have these questions in 2013, the first year of journals you collected). At the moment, the reflective learning journal is the best mechanism that we have, that I can think of, to do that. It’s not perfect, as we know, it creates all kinds of issues, particularly around the anxieties that some students experience in being asked to respond quickly to content. But I think it does create a space where whether they like it or not, we’re pushing students into that place to really think about their positioning.”

I reply, “I think that speaks to some of the other points too. I know there is an objective around learning to *present in writing, discuss in person and demonstrate your learnings, understandings and positionings as an initial teacher educator in relation to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and in the context of Indigenous Australian Studies.*” I pause to reflect on this for a moment. “So this objective I suppose speaks directly to that idea of writing, but also brings in the idea of learnings and understandings: The reflective learning journals are not solely a place for students to discuss their positionings, but we also explicitly ask students to bring in their new learnings and understandings, that ‘what’ we teach and the ‘what’ they will teach.”

“Yes, and we ask them to *demonstrate a growing capacity to work effectively within the Indigenous Australian education landscape.* There is the transformative element that suggests students will be continually growing and changing in their abilities.” Liz says.

“But there’s also an element of professional practice in there,” I say, thinking aloud. “The idea of working effectively requires us as a teaching team to think about how we support students to make

that shift into pedagogy. It's important not just 'to know', but for students to know what they teach. Which takes us back to that idea of making space for Indigenous knowledges in the classroom, and doing this in relationship with student teachers."

Know My/Your/Our World

"Do you know what one of my favourite teaching and learning moments is?" I ask Liz, smiling in anticipation. "Do you remember that video we show in the first week to talk about reflective writing? I love that analogy of the pensieve from Harry Potter." We both laugh, thinking back to that moment in the lecture theatre:

*In the theatre
Performing knowledge sharing
Producing knowing students
The film begins.*

*Glimmering silver streams
Siphon Dumbledore's thoughts*

*A stone basin
Swirls with memories.*

*"One simply siphons
The excess thoughts
And examines them
At one's leisure"
A silver stream
Sifting students' memories
And piercing recollections
Poured into journals
"Easier to spot
Patterns and links
In this form"¹³.*

*A little description
Sure, that's needed.
But step back
Write the experiences
In your world
What moved you?
What moves you?
How will you
move differently now?
Do differently now?
Teach differently now?
Knowing what you know
Knowing what you don't know.*

¹³ Rowling, 2000, pp. 518-519.

*The students pause
Silence permeates the air.*

The reflective learning journals, as pensives to collect students' thinking and writing around their work as educators on the Indigenous education landscape, constitute a fundamental aspect of the course, and of my research. For me, the journals represent a source of data, a way to look into an in-between world connecting the students and myself as teacher-researcher. For the students, they represent a continual assessment task, written in each week's tutorial in the last twenty or so minutes. In 2013, the journal was one of four tasks of assessment, worth 25% of the students' final grade. In 2014, the assessment weighting changed as only three tasks were included. The journal was worth 40%, to reflect the amount of time that students spent writing and to increase the students' perceived importance of this task. The impact of grading on students' writing of reflective learning journals is still unknown to some extent, with researchers and educators taking different opinions as to whether journals should indeed be assessed: "How can you mark an individual's own development?" asks Sister Therese Craig poignantly (Dillon, 1983, as cited in Moon, 1999). Yet the arguments for assessment reflect my own thoughts for the need to assess: pragmatic students might not see the value in writing journal entries and choose to spend their time on other assessment if not assessed; and the focus provided by assessment can help students to better develop their own reflective practice (Moon, 1999, pp. 92-93). I think back to the blurb that we give students as the task description:

Reflective learning journal: A reflective learning journal is a personal record of your learning experiences. It is a space where you can record and reflect upon your observations and responses to situations, which can then be used later to explore and analyse ways of thinking and being in specific educational contexts. At the end of each workshop, you will be asked to complete a weekly reflection on issues raised in the lecture, the weekly readings and the course as a whole. You will be given a weekly reflection question to guide your reflections. Your reflective learning journal will be handed to you at the beginning of each workshop and collected by the tutor at the end of each session. You will complete a total of TEN weekly reflective learning journal entries. (EDUC2090 Electronic Course Profile, The University of Queensland, 2014)

Our conversation turns to grading and the difficulties of working within the confines of university guidelines. As I speak, I become aware of how much my research writing has influenced my teaching and how I approach working with students. I suggest to Liz, "I think I've let go of there being an outcome. I think I came in wanting students to 'get somewhere' in particular by the end of the course. I think that's been the thing that I've let go of, thinking that there is a learning outcome by which we can measure students."

"Which I guess we're forced to do," Liz responds. "Because we have to have a criteria sheet, and we have to give it a grade. We're forced to look for an outcome, a particular kind of outcome. That

is something that's always going to be problematic, because it's hard to determine where you want people to go.”

I think about the guidelines we do give the students in terms of where to go, and the ways we measure where they have gone. The four criteria by which they are assessed for example: their *ability to respond to the week's topic*, indicating some form of knowledge and content, but also their ability to *reflect* by applying new theoretical knowledges and concepts to old memories; to get outside themselves by thinking about multiple perspectives; and to bring their learning into future teaching practice by coming up with creative solutions to the issues raised. We ask the students to (and evaluate them on their demonstration of) *integrate weekly readings, and lecture and tutorial materials* into their writing to support ideas, add depth and richness to their reflections, and reflect upon their understandings. And of course, writing—the students' *articulation and organization of their ideas* also comes into question, with reference given to the idea that flow is required to develop insight. And then in the end, we grade the students on these four criteria across a 7-grade continuum (common in Australia, ranging from 1 “Major fail” to 7 “High Distinction”, with a 4 constituting a “Pass”). Moon (1999) writes of the importance that assessment criteria are linked to the purpose of a learning journal, rather than standing alone. As much as possible, these criteria are designed to encourage the students to write through new knowledges and theories without prescribing what or how to write. Instead, the focus is put on depth and the ability to use new ideas to think about students' own understandings and experiences.

As if reading my mind, Liz comments, “It's probably quite a challenging assessment item, because we're asking students to write differently, not asking them to tell us what we want to—although they keep telling us that we only hear—they've gotta write what we wanna hear. But if people really take on board the idea of reflective learning, critically reflective learning, it's a good piece of assessment.”

My chest tightens as I imagine myself writing about reflective learning journals, my years of positivist-approach psychometrically-sound quantitatively-oriented psychological research training kicking in like instinct—no matter how much I feel I have moved away from this way of re/searching the world. Do I need to define reflective learning journals? Do I need to give an exhaustive review of the existing literature on this topic? What construct am I operationalising in my research? It is a sentence from the abstract of an old journal article, promising a “systematized approach...that provides students with a tool to enhance both their thinking and motivation to learn” (Beveridge, 1997, p. 33), that brings me back into myself once more. A systematised approach could serve to recategorise students, defining what is “desirable”. As Brookfield (2009) writes, critical reflection “is not an unequivocal concept rather a contested idea” (p. 296).

Instead, I think about what it might mean to engage with critically reflective learning and wonder how far back to follow these traces of thinking—back to Dewey’s reflection? Mezirow (1998, p. 1), for example, differentiates between reflection that “enables us to correct errors in our beliefs and errors in problem-solving”, and a more critical reflection that “involves a critique of the presuppositions on which our beliefs have been built”, a reflection of premises. Critical reflection results in a change in the way we pose problems, a paradigm shift. Brookfield’s definition of critical reflection emphasises the critical, reminding us that as engaged educators, we must focus on uncovering and challenging the power dynamics and hegemonic assumptions that shape our work in this space as well as the society around us; asking “whose interests are served”.

“It’s interesting to think about how the reflective learning journal might make this critical reflection possible,” I respond. “I’m thinking here of Moon’s (1999) four bodies of theory of learning journals.” Speaking that word, bodies, evokes a scene in my mind. I giggle to myself as I think about four bodies of theory meeting up to chat learning journals.

The four bodies of theory on reflective learning journals meet in a bar.

Based on Moon’s (1999) elucidation of the ways in which journal writing might lead to learning.

The three writers sat at the old oak table, sipping on their drinks and staring at each other in the dim light as seconds ticked past on the clock. *Favourable Conditions* was an old face in the club, his wrinkles showing years of research. He wasn’t the most philosophical of the group, and could barely be called a theory, however the club always renewed his membership because he was pragmatic and his ideas always seemed to make sense. *Reflection* sipped on her Screwdriver. She was a process-oriented type of woman, who focused on being in the moment. Having worked across different fields, Reflection knew her value of contributing to professional practice as well as personal development.

Across from Reflection sat *Metacognition*, the psychology of education professor. Metacognition spoke a lot about evidence bases and the empirical research that he had read. Variables was his favourite word, and he was confident that his models reflected patterns in students’ learning. And finally, like leaves caught in a gust of wind, *Writing* showed up, her long cloak fluttering as she took a seat at the table and ordered a macchiato. She was as hard to pin down for a conversation as for a definition, eluding researchers whose words could only get close to her, but never grasp her in her entirety.

“I’m sorry everyone!” Writing announced, catching her breath. “Let’s begin.”

Metacognition swallowed his mouth full of whiskey, and began. “So, we’re here to discuss how it is that reflective learning journals promote learning,” he said, used to directing the conversation. “There is a lot of evidence to suggest that writing journals can increase learners’ metacognition, which is of course important for learning.”

“Metacognition?” Writing questioned.

“The higher order thinking or executive processes we use to think about how we think, how we cognate,” replied Metacognition. “Thinking about thinking”.

The others nodded at Metacognition to continue.

“When learners write, they might be thinking about person variables, task variables, or strategy variables. So they could write about how they are going about their learning, what it is about the task that is difficult or needs to be learned, and then how they will go about learning this.”

“I agree with you,” said Reflection. “And I think that what you say makes sense for thinking about how journal writing relates to broader learning, particularly of content. But all of these variables are speaking to an awareness of one’s self and one’s learning, and writing this awareness into a journal is a process of reflection. Reflection is inherently epistemological, asking us to interrogate what we know about the world and the assumptions on which this knowledge is built (Mezirow, 2003). Writing a journal can help learners to move away from a surface learning that reflects Piaget’s concept of assimilation, taking new knowledge and fitting it into our cognitive schemas. Instead, a deep learning, where we attempt to learn the meaning that is intended by the teacher and accommodate or change our cognitive schemas to fit this new information, might be achieved. It’s a bit of a paradigm shift.”

“What about the feelings that are raised when students write?” asked Favourable Conditions.

“Definitely,” said Reflection. “Emotions can be an outcome of reflection, whether or not this was the purpose of the reflection. But it can be scary for some learners to let this emotion come into their writing, particularly if you consider that they have often been taught that emotion has no role in education.”

Writing spoke up. “I agree with the learning journals helping change the way we look at the world,” she said, “but I’m not so sure it is about attempting to learn the teacher’s intended meaning. A constructivist approach would suggest that we can never truly understand somebody’s else’s thoughts, but that the discourse that is spoken and written might create a world in between the journal writer and the content, an in-between space.”

“I like that idea!” said Reflection. “An in-between space created by reflecting on the stimulus.”

“Yes, but I think as well that this writing process, the sitting there with pen in hand or fingers on the keyboard; writing words as a way of knowing. Language creates a particular reality (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005). As we write, we slow down our thinking, and focus our attention. And often the words we have written take us to a new place that we didn’t know we were going to go. Which could help to explain those unintended emotions as well.”

The others sit in silence, recognising how often they had started a sentence, that made them think about an old situation or concept in a new way. Thinking about their thinking.

Finally, Favourable Conditions piped up. “I know I can seem a bit dull,” he started, but the writers shook their heads, rejecting this idea. Favourable Conditions put down his cup of straight black coffee and continued. “I think I recognise a bit of myself in all of you. Journal writing can help students learn because journal writing creates a good context for learning. Writing, what you were saying about slowing down, and focusing: these are important practices for learners who want to think more in depth about an idea. Learning journals can provide space. And thinking about one’s thinking; well, a

learning journal can help students to take ownership of their learning, and is an independent practice. And I asked you, Reflection, about emotion, because it relates to a broader definition of learning, one that takes into account the whole person. But do you know what I think might be one of the most important conditions that learning journals provide for learning?"

The three writers shook their heads in anticipation. Favourable Conditions put his coffee cup down and leaned forward on his elbows, shoulders hunched conspiratorially.

"The lack of structure. Students hate it, but it challenges them. To be able to deal with ill-structured situations (King & Kitchener, 1994) requires critical thinking, and deeper thinking. It requires an engagement with ethics and premises about the world. It requires not always knowing where one is writing towards. There are no easy answers, just a puzzling out of the issues."

I shake my head and try to pick up my train of thought. "So there are all of these different ways in which writing in a journal can promote learning. But I think it's important that journals written over the course of a semester—well journals can allow for progression over time as well. You don't reach where you finally end up on that first day." I pause and look down at my watch. "But Liz, I'm aware of the time. I know you said you were meeting Claire to go running today."

"Just before we wrap up," Liz says, "I would like to comment on one last thing. If you're challenged by the ideas—well, that's why you're here. University should be challenging regardless where you sit. Anyway..."

"Yep, you've gotta go," I respond. "To respond though, this teaching and the learning that students undertake—I think it's couched in a learning curve. It's better to have that challenge happen now when the students have a supportive teaching team with them. Although I—all of us—am far from perfect."

As Liz and I pick up our bags and I grab my phone, ready to turn the recorder off, Liz adds one last comment: "And just to remind them, that we're all...it's all...we're all becoming. It's never a done deal."

Back in the Lecture Theatre

I come back to Liz's voice as she explains the last part of the map to the students.

"All of these ideas are built on the foundation of what we call the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007). We will be coming back to look at this idea in Week 3 or 4. Martin Nakata is a Torres Strait Islander and he wrote in his thesis about his family's experiences of colonisation and the "knowledge" that was written and constructed about them. For now, how you might conceptualise the cultural interface is as an intersection of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems: everything that we teach, and our experiences of education, represent particular ways of knowing, being and doing. And an idea which we will also come back to is the corpus: "that body of knowledge...that is produced

by others ‘about us’” (Nakata, 2007, p. 7). The about us refers to Indigenous Australians, or more specifically in Nakata’s writing, Islanders. So one of the things we will do in this course is speak back to the corpus by including Indigenous peoples’ own writings and voices into the conversation about how we should teach Indigenous students and studies. And on that note, it looks like we are almost out of time. If you have any questions about your tutorial allocations, please come and see me now. And for everyone else, the teaching team”, Liz gestured towards the group of us sitting in the front row, and we all turn to smile at the students, “and I look forward to seeing you in your first tutorials this week. You’ll begin writing your first journal entries there! As one last parting idea, I really want to take us to the notion of a ‘location of possibility’ (hooks, 1994, p. 207). No matter how you are feeling about being here, I’d like you to think about how classrooms may not be paradise, but they remain locations of possibility, depending on how we choose to perform ourselves, different kinds of knowledges, teaching and learning, and relationships. Thank you everyone—we’ll see you in tutorials.”

It’s funny, I think to myself, how the course resembles in so many ways this thesis, an illustration of what is to come, like the dust jacket on a hard cover book. The two are hopefully entangled and both ever shifting and becoming, impossible to pin down. The key concepts that guide the students’ learning also guide my writing: an attentiveness to the complexity of working in a cultural interface where our experiences and knowledges are governed and limited by our subject positionings; the importance of praxis and incorporating our theoretical and social beliefs into the ways that we do and know and write; a decolonial approach that seeks to delink from colonial ways of knowing that have previously inflicted epistemological as well as physical violence on Indigenous peoples. Yet this decoloniality must remain under scrutiny, remembering that decolonization is not a metaphor (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Instead, an uncomfortable reflexivity (Pillow, 2003) asks us to continually question what our work might achieve and where it might fall short of the ideas of decoloniality; even as we continue to fight for spaces for Indigenous knowledges to be included in school and university curricula and begin to reveal the geo- and body-politics of Western colonial knowledges (Mignolo, 2009) that have governed knowing, being, doing and teaching in education systems. I wonder if the same could be said for the reflective learning journals that the students write. I’m not sure if this work—both this teaching and this thesis—could ever truly be considered decolonial. I’m not sure decoloniality can ever truly exist within the academy. However, having come face-to-face with Indigenous friends and family, I—in my entanglements with people, words, and matter around me—am moved towards a more ethical positioning, a teaching/writing/research praxis that attempts at least to delink from colonial systems of power, even if I am always becoming.

Chapter Three

Coming to Writing

As a breeze brushes over my face, I close my eyes and let the warm air flush my cheeks. It is the end of winter, which in Brisbane means more than warm enough to sit outside and enjoy the temperate touch of the sun. In front of me on the table there is an almost empty coffee cup, a notebook, and a pen. Stapled and highlighted printouts of articles peek out of my bag. Beyond the veranda of the café, river *binken*¹⁴ swim in the lake below, their muddy olive shells only just visible through the murky water; their small heads and tiny eyes peeking out to watch the passerbys and bask in the sunlight. From the balcony, I can't see the turtles, but knowing they are down below the surface brings me a sense of feeling at home.¹⁵



Figure 4. The view of the lakes at the St Lucia campus, University of Queensland.

Source: Author's own.

¹⁴ *Binken* is the Turrbal word for turtle. Whilst the place now known as St Lucia and the University of Queensland was more likely inhabited by Juggera people with Turrbal people living on the north side of Brisbane, I have been unable as of yet to find an extensive enough list of language words for Jauggera; a stinging reminder of the legacies of dispossession and assimilatory practices that denied language.

¹⁵ This sense of feeling at home—of belonging—is a feeling conflicted and entangled with the knowledge that this is, was, and always will be Aboriginal land. As Moreton-Robinson (2003a) pointedly reminds me, my sense of belonging as a White Woman is predicated on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, and my white body marks me as able to belong.

The rich tang of roasted coffee fills the air as the café lightly bustles in its normal morning state of being. Black wrought iron chairs dot the veranda and evoke a Parisian presence across the backdrop of blackboards advertising the Vietnamese menu in brightly coloured chalk: a reminder perhaps of the ongoing influence of a long-gone French colonial administration in modern day Vietnam, or maybe a meaningless coincidence. Young men and women with white shirts and black aprons deliver coffees and sandwiches to tables between lectures and tutorial groups. As I sit on the veranda overlooking the lakes, I keep turning away from my reading to listen to snatches of conversations. Two women in earthen coloured smocks sit at a round table for two and discuss flights across the world. Sitting at the long brown wooden tables are students slurping up bowls of *phở* whilst they read lecture notes and scroll through news feeds on their laptops. Men in suits hastily talk business and drink coffee in the sunlight, before hurrying away again. Postgrads drink the same coffee in the same sunlight, but linger much longer, enjoying lively discussions with colleagues away from the confines of their desks and their labs.

I turn back to my computer and stare at the black, size 12, centred, bolded, Times New Roman letters staring back at me from the screen: **Writing, a Methodology**. Pressing enter twice, I take a sip of my coffee and unbold the text as I begin to type:

In this thesis, the main data source was the reflective learning journals of 17 pre-service teachers studying a compulsory course titled Indigenous Knowledge and Education. These journals were analysed to examine how the pre-service teachers came to position themselves in regards to Indigenous education, and how writing reflective journals contributed to this positioning.

Sighing, I stare at the screen despising the drudgery of the passive past-tense sentences. As if everything were already finished. As if research were a completed project—could be a completed project. As if such a method would be all I needed and need to say. I push my finger to the backspace button and watch the blinking placeholder race backwards through the text, words under erasure. After a moment's pause, the title disappears as well.

As I doodle away on the notebook in front of me, I feel the actors in the café slip into the background as I start to wonder what it is I am trying to achieve. Some form of methodology, I suppose. I am writing about writing this thesis, and the students' writing—I know that much. I am writing about the reflective learning journals that education students wrote as an assessment piece throughout the semester long compulsory course I team-teach in at the University of Queensland, *EDUC2090 Indigenous Knowledge and Education*. In one way, the course is designed to prepare pre-service teachers to demonstrate the AITSL National Standards 1.4 (broad knowledge and

understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds) and 2.4 (broad knowledge of, understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages) (AITSL, 2014). But the course is so much more, I think, words from my conversation with Liz (see Chapter Two) whispering in my mind: “wilful parts require wilful people; bring them into the space; splits and cracks”.

The Writing Women

On the bench next to me, a young student glances at her watch. Slipping a laptop into her backpack, she walks in the direction of the nearest library without looking back. A group of ten or so women race to the bench, laughing at their good fortune as they noisily let well-worn handbags fall to the ground and argue good-naturedly over who will let who buy whom coffee. I look curiously at the group, delighted for the ready distraction they provide, and wonder who this group of women are, and what they are doing sitting together at this café. A dissimilar congregation, the women are of different ages, dressed in different fashions, and as they laugh and chatter, I hear different accents rising and falling.

“That’s the question,” a sweet voice with a touch of gravel asks. “What does it mean if we call our work a ‘call to arms’? What can writing do if we ascribe to a qualitative manifesto; a commitment to social justice and a better world that pervades our work?¹⁶ ¹⁷What do you think Minh-ha?”

Writing, I think to myself, peeking furtively to the side. They have come to talk about writing. I know better than to eavesdrop, and briefly consider leaving, or putting in headphones to block them out. But I came (here) to know more about writing, and argue to myself that public conversations, much like published writing, are open to interpretation and use in the development of ideas. If the writing of our research inherently includes the autobiographical¹⁸, then how might these everyday conversations inform who we are as we do our research?

A woman with big round glasses and long black hair moves to speak. Black clothes drape over her body and her hair glitters with silver streaks. As she talks, I struggle to place her almost Californian accent. She addresses the first woman with a slight irritation as she speaks from her position: “Laurel, why are we using this language? A ‘call to arms’, a ‘manifesto’? Are these words not part of the ‘white-male-is-norm ideology’? I do agree though that we need to think critically about our writing and its relation to power, because if we write uncritically, our relation to writing ‘often proves to be one of domination’¹⁹. Both a domination over writing, and writing domination. Is this not

¹⁶ (Denzin, 2010)

¹⁷ I have chosen to use a different referencing style for this conversation, as to not break the flow as you are reading.

¹⁸ (Hastrup, 1992)

¹⁹ (Trinh, 1989, p. 6)

why we are to have this conversation today: as a woman writing, ‘it has become almost impossible for her to take up her pen without at the same time questioning her relation to the material that defines her and her creative work.’²⁰”

“When I take up my pen, I am seeking an engaged and embodied process to write back to coloniality. That ‘the personal *becomes* the political *becomes* the performative *becomes* the pedagogical *becomes* the passion...and does not promise to be neat—I have delighted in doing away with the ‘angel in the house’ (after Woolf 1974) that might predicate the writing to be otherwise.’²¹ But that angel stills darkens the room every time I take up the pen.” Hearing the reference to Virginia Woolf, I look over to the women and see my supervisor Liz speaking in the group. She winks to let me know that if I am happy to sit and listen, I can: she won’t draw any attention to me. I smile back and continue to sit doodling, losing myself in the women’s words, becoming-writer.

As the women continue to debate good naturedly, I start to put together some of the characters in the story. The woman who seems to be directing the conversation was referred to as Laurel: this must be Laurel Richardson, the prolific sociologist who has written dozens of pieces on creative writing practice. I first met Laurel Richardson in a supervisory meeting, when Liz suggested that if I was interested in writing as a way of knowing—both within the students’ reflective learning journals and in my own writing—I should read everything Laurel Richardson has ever written. The Californian-sounding Vietnamese woman is Trinh Minh-ha, the feminist film-maker and writer. My struggles with how to conceptualise difference in a way that did not exoticise and marginalise Indigenous peoples led me to Trinh Minh-ha’s concept of inappropriate/d others: a critical difference within. Some of the other women I saw sitting around the table I recognised from dustjackets and YouTube videos. The white woman speaking with an American southern accent is Elizabeth St Pierre, whose writing I had previously encountered, but really connected with as she spoke at the Australian Association of Research in Education conference that I attended in 2014. Her keynote speech pulled my concerns around the positivist research methodologies I had been taught in my undergraduate into clearer focus, suggesting “positivism’s desire is to predict what people will do, and then control them”²². Instead, St Pierre argued that method would always come too late, and that we could instead train ourselves to put theory to work to enable a more ethical type of inquiry²³. The African American woman next to her, a differently accented southern voice carrying her words, is bell hooks, wearing a bright orange scarf and her grey-black hair in thinning cornrows. I first met hooks in books, books such as “Teaching to transgress” (1994) and “Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope” (2003) that I

²⁰ (Trinh, 1989, p. 6)

²¹ (Mackinlay, 2015, p. 1438)

²² (my reflective learning journal, 2 December 2014)

²³ (a point also written in St Pierre, 2013; 2017)

still turn to when I feel the need to sit with one I have come to love for a while. An elegant slim woman with short grey hair, pale skin and striking dark eyes answers to the name of H  l  ne, and I figure, trying to place her in with the others, that she must be H  l  ne Cixous. Cixous and I first came together in the *Experimental and Alternative Writing Group* that I participated in at UQ, our first reading “The laugh of the medusa” (1976). Cixous and my friendship (for this is what it feels like when I read writing I love) continued into another reading group that we are running out of the School of Education, a group of research students and supervisors who are interested in feminist herstories and theories, the Laughing Medusas. Wearing old jeans and a weathered fleece is another white woman with short grey hair, an altogether different style, Donna Haraway. Donna Haraway and I met on the pathway that Trinh’s writing set me on, and I couldn’t wipe the grin off my face as I read “The promises of monsters” (1992) for the first time. Rounding out the group is Liz Mackinlay, my supervisor and teaching colleague, wearing another bright dress and her blond hair sitting in curls on her shoulder; heart-shaped earrings completing her outfit. “What are these women doing here?” I think to myself, puzzling at the appearance of such a group on campus.

Silence falls in the group as the women notice me watching them. “Writing, are you?” asks the woman who first spoke, the one with the sweet gravelly voice. She is a white, older woman with short brown hair and round glasses, an elegant shawl draped around her shoulders. Her eyes twinkle in a way that suggests a certain youth. Laurel, I remind myself.

I don’t feel quite ready to join the conversation, but force myself to respond. Will I ever feel ready to talk about writing?

“I’m supposed to be,” I say, as I smile back at her. “But I keep getting stuck about this idea of ‘writing a methodology chapter’. I know I want to write about writing—both my writing and that of the students in my class, the ones who’ve let me use their learning journals in my research. Our students write reflective learning journals as a way to come to know their worlds (see Chapter Two), and I am doing the same in my thesis: writing as a way of knowing, as an analysis, as a method of inquiry. But I’m not quite sure how to do it. It’s not as easy as using a nice neat structure of outlining a methodology, a method, how data were collected and then analysed. But I don’t think I want it to be either.”

“It’s no surprise that you feel an automatic urge to write with such a structure,” Laurel replies with a light laugh. “That’s how students, including myself, are often taught to write: that is, ‘not to write until we knew what we wanted to say, until our points were organized and outlined’²⁴. But when I thought about this, I realised that this conceptualisation of writing is a Man-Made one; ‘[t]hose writing instructions were themselves a sociohistorical invention’”.

²⁴ (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 960)

Betty leans in and offers me her hand to shake, introducing herself before she follows on from Laurel. “I find that when I sit down to write, what comes out is never what I originally thought I was going to write about. A lot of the time, the words I write are more accidental than intentional²⁵. ‘Coreadings of texts on entirely different topics, the discovery of a particularly provocative word as I skim the dictionary page for another, or the memory of a dream that displaces some truth to which I have become too attached’²⁶. All of these moments shape and change the text I write, and ‘any paper I have written could have been another paper quite easily’²⁷”.

“So, when you write, what you produce is not the text you set out to write?” I clarify.

“That’s right,” Betty confirms.

Representation

“So what is it that you are claiming to do in your research, if you are not writing up your interview data?” I ask, slightly confused. “I thought you had written in your doctoral research about older white southern women—did you not have to make some form of ‘original contribution to knowledge’²⁸ about the women you interviewed?”

“You know what I tell people who want to hear about the women I interviewed? I tell them ‘Go find your own older women and talk with them. They have stories to tell you that will change your life.’²⁹ My doctoral research was not about claiming to know the women I spoke with, rather about the construction of subjectivities. All types of data, including the understandings I reach through writing, fed into this inquiry. Yet I needed to challenge this idea that data—that *knowledge*—is something that can be ‘drilled and mined’³⁰ from Others for us to reconstruct and hand over to our readers. Or that I could ever represent the women in a way that is true to their subjectivities. I still want to write a story about the women, but this ‘writing will involve a politics and ethics of difficulty’³¹. I think this is a difficulty that might be accomplished by writing, but only through a different form of writing that I do not yet know how to do. Delve into this difficulty, and challenge yourself to ask: What knowledge are you producing? Under what assumptions does this knowledge operate?” Betty urges. “‘Even after the crisis of representation, we continue to present our participants to our readers on a silver platter for the sake of knowledge.’³² And if you engage in an ethics of difficulty, how might the possibility for an ethical encounter with alterity take place in writing?”

²⁵ (St Pierre, 1997, p. 409)

²⁶ (St Pierre, 1997, p. 409)

²⁷ (St Pierre, 1997, p. 409)

²⁸ UQ PhD Guidelines

²⁹ (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 971)

³⁰ (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 971)

³¹ (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 972)

³² (St Pierre, 2014, p. 7)

“What do you mean by the ‘crisis of representation’?” I reply, willing the warmth spreading across my cheeks to remain unseen as I realised how much I yet had to learn about qualitative and post-qualitative inquiry, and hoping the women wouldn’t think less of me for my questions. Studying psychology hadn’t prepared me for concerns about how we represent participants, and what these representations might mean. The furthest the conversation had gone was the teaching that we should say ‘participants’, not ‘subjects’, without ever questioning the conditions under which our participants took part. My initial education into what research might mean and might do was one that operated under positivist assumptions that crowded out the possibility for anything other than the Man-Made rules we were taught. Slowly, though, words were being tumbled and flipped, as subjects and subjectivities took on new meanings.

“In the crisis of representation, researchers’ representations of their research participants are questioned and challenged,” Liz answers, not at all perturbed by my question. “Some anthropologists³³ discuss how we can never really know the world of informants. In the field, both researcher and participant are objectified and become Other to their Other; participants are not transparent mediums through which other cultures can be studied, but are self-referential agents who create their own discourses and have their own motivations. In the end, the research that is produced is neither the world of the researcher nor of the participants, but is instead an in-between world. Our research stories are so deeply marked by this between-ness that there is no way to avoid the epistemological implications³⁴. We can never really represent research participants—only a new reality that is co-constructed in the field. And so instead of viewing research as an absolute, objective truth, we must recognise that ‘all truths are but partial truths’; and that a ‘slippage between the signifier and the signified in linguistic and textual terms creates representations that are only and always shadows of the actual people, events, and places.’³⁵”

“So the representations we make of the people in our research can’t claim to be a full representation of events that transpired?” I ask.

“That’s right,” Laurel affirms. “There are multiple ways that representations will always be partial³⁶. Our work will only ever represent a very limited part of the object of study. Of course, you yourself do not enter the research project as a blank slate. Perhaps more interesting and less obvious are the ways in which representation is structured through metaphor: in science, we often talk about strong theoretical ‘foundations’, or comment on why a ‘framework’ has ‘fallen apart’, implying that theory is, in fact, a building³⁷. These implicit metaphors orient and shape the types of knowledge we

³³ (e.g. Hastrup, 1992)

³⁴ (Hastrup, 1992, p. 116)

³⁵ (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2005, p. 125)

³⁶ (Leonardo & Allen, 2008, pp. 418-419)

³⁷ (Richardson, 1997, p. 43)

then produce, becoming the underpinning philosophical values, as well as directing the ways that we can then make sense of this data. That being said, rather than trying to avoid these metaphors I would suggest that we recognise the way our writing does always already use rhetorical and literary devices, whose power we cannot ignore.³⁸

“Speaking of power, I struggle to think about how I am going to re/present the students whose journal I am writing when I write my research. I’ve tried once in a conference presentation, and I ended up positioning my students as binary oppositions—‘good’ or ‘bad’, as ‘transformed’ or ‘not transformed’. The next time I saw them, I couldn’t even look them in the eye. My research self is not separable from my lived self³⁹. But what is my ‘research’ if I’m not analysing the students’ writing, if I’m not producing some type of finding about students and how they position themselves within Indigenous education?” Feeling flattened by this confession, I pause for a moment. “How do I weigh up the want and the need to produce findings in my research with not wanting to limit the people I work with in such categories?”

“Well, first and foremost, I would suggest to you that ‘Writing is never innocent. Writing always inscribes.’⁴⁰” Laurel responds. “And ‘all texts are power moves’⁴¹. A post-structuralist understanding of representation suggests that however you present your students—whether or not this is in categories such as good or bad, or if you find another way to describe them—you are inscribing a certain way of their being.”

“There is a paradox here,” says Betty, following Laurel’s thoughts. “When we write research, we aren’t really interpreting some type of pre-existent meaning in our data. Instead, the words we use to write about research are in and of themselves the ‘introduction of meaning’⁴². When we recognise that our words do not—can not—represent somebody’s subjectivity, we are then forced to recognise that these words and the meanings they inscribe matter.”

Donna traces her finger around the rim of a water glass, and speaks for the first time. “Writing does matter: ‘writing itself is a material process of thinking’⁴³.”

“I think this is the idea that I keep dancing around,” I say in response. “These inscriptions matter; they are real. Ink is put on paper, words are spoken at conferences, people’s thoughts are. These inscriptions make a difference.”

“‘Language is a constitutive force’⁴⁴” Laurel follows up with. “We rely on language to make meaning, and so our words make meaning matter.”

³⁸ (Richardson, 1997)

³⁹ (Richardson, 2001, p. 879)

⁴⁰ (Richardson, 2001, p. 879)

⁴¹ (Richardson, 1997, p. 49)

⁴² (Spivak, in Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 968)

⁴³ (Haraway, in Olson, 1996, p. 4)

⁴⁴ (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 960)

Responsibility and Ethics—Ethical Responsibilities

“So if our language makes meaning, then it also has the power and possibility to harm Others,” I muse. “How do I make sure I and my writing don’t fall into this trap? This takes me back to the problem of how I write about students in my research. Thinking about ethical representations is like picking up an entangled necklace, and tugging away at the knots—sometimes it just tightens the tangle further. Even when I consider writing down this conversation, some form of representation is inevitable. Do I describe Betty’s languid Southern US drawl, Laurel’s twinkling smile, Trinh’s round glasses? Through these representations, am I claiming to know you, or more to the point, to be *able* to know you? How do I write about anyone—living or dead—whilst constructing myself as ethical and in relation? How can I be true to who you are and the words you say? Is this even possible? I can ask Liz for her comments and her feedback on my representation of her, in the way that researchers might be encouraged to take their research back to a community for feedback on the ‘truth’ of these representations. But I think that if we are honest with ourselves, even at this stage, the ‘truth’ has already been inscribed in a certain form, and this form will dictate the changes that are made—people don’t stray too far from a given ‘norm’. And of course there is an issue around power—Liz may choose not to speak back to my representation of her, or might not feel that she can, if this is my text. The rest of you won’t even be given that option.”

Laurel speaks. “If we’re talking about ethics in writing, you might want to think about paying attention to the conditions of production: what privileges are enacted in the production/writing (for the two are entangled) of knowledge as a social practice? Who is allowed to take part in debates? And how do we take responsibility for the ways in which we bring ‘communities’ into texts?⁴⁵”

“In thinking about bringing communities and subjects into our texts, perhaps we can return to the idea of an ethics of difficulty,” Betty says. “Ethics is always already based on an ‘[en]tangled responsibility to the other’⁴⁶. There is no cognitive or psychological certainty in this move, no format or procedure to follow. Rather, real responsibility emerges when we no longer rely on rules to make decisions for us. Instead, I seek to write in a way that is worthy of those I encounter in my research and in my life. If we are no longer seeking to use words to represent, we can write ourselves into spaces which we wouldn’t have been able to occupy otherwise. I call this rhizomatic work, but you might want a different way of framing your writing work.”

Having listened for a while, I start to speak once again. “I like the sound of being entangled in ethical responsibility to the other. I’ve been reading some Levinas lately (see Chapter Four), and I

⁴⁵ (Richardson, 1997, p. 117)

⁴⁶ (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 972)

think he would agree with you—we are always in relationship with others, simply because we do not exist alone in the world. And being in relation immediately calls us to responsibility. But Levinas would suggest that any attempt of claiming to know the Other—including through representations—is one of epistemological violence; a drawing of you and your subjectivity into my own totalities. I get that you are saying that the aim of your inquiry work is not to ‘know’ others. But I’m still not sure on how to write about/through my students’ reflective learning journals, without fixing representations of the students and their teaching and learning.”

Liz says, “We have to question how the representations we write reinscribe coloniality, how they actively reduce others by claiming to know⁴⁷. Writing, and writing differently, is all to do with ethics. But writing can ‘seek to know while at the same time situat[ing] this knowing as tenuous’. As a white settler colonial woman, living, teaching and research with Indigenous peoples, I can use writing to interrogate my own race power and privilege that I hold. And so, if I am ‘I write autoethnography in this way because it is the only honest thing—the only ethical and moral thing, I know to do in this particular moment of being in which I find myself’⁴⁸. Autoethnography allows me to interrogate colonial ways of knowing, being and doing, by rattling and shaking the academy.”

bell speaks for the first time, responding to Liz. “Perhaps autoethnography is a response to difficulty of writing about a group one does not belong to. As feminists, we need to continue to argue ‘against the notion of a definitive work or the very idea of ‘authority’⁴⁹, as well as to consider how our work may unwittingly ‘be used to reinforce and perpetuate domination’⁵⁰. But there are possibilities in writing. ‘I write...to bear witness to the primacy of resistance struggle in any situation of domination...; to the strength and power that emerges from sustained resistance’⁵¹.”

“Writing is for me an entanglement,” Minh-ha says to me. “A writing *for* the people, *by* the people, and *from* the people is, literally, a multipolar reflecting reflection that remains free from the conditions of subjectivity and objectivity and yet reveals them both.”⁵²”

“Our reflections are all entangled?” I ask.

Minh-ha replies, “I write to show myself showing people who show me my own showing. I-You: not one, not two.”⁵³”

There is a moment of silence before one of the women who has not yet spoken, H  l  ne, whispers in a husky voice, echoing the responsibility that the writing women spoke of in why they write; a responsibility that could not be denied. “Writing.” she murmurs, “a way of leaving no space

⁴⁷ (Lugones, as cited in Mackinlay, 2015)

⁴⁸ (Mackinlay, 2015, p. 199).

⁴⁹ (hooks, 1989, p. 45)

⁵⁰ (hooks, 1989, p. 43)

⁵¹ (hooks, 1989, p. 8)

⁵² (Trinh, 1989, p. 22)

⁵³ (Trinh, 1989, p. 22)

for death, of pushing back forgetfulness, of never letting oneself be surprised by the abyss. Of never becoming resigned, consoled: never turning over in bed to face the wall and drift asleep again as if nothing had happened; as if nothing could happen.⁵⁴”

Hélène’s words tumble through my thoughts. How often have I sought to console myself in texts, seduced by their proposed certainty about the world’s workings? To not be resigned, to not be safe, to no longer be sure that nothing had happened—perhaps this is what Betty had meant by being an “ethics of difficulty”: to write to not become resigned to the nation-state of Australia’s relationship with Indigenous peoples; to bear witness in my words to the harm that has been and continues to be caused by a coloniality that stomps its boots over Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. The same coloniality that reveals its disdain for Indigenous peoples, accidentally letting slip that old colonial logic of Indigenous people as being less than human when it leaves black men and women to die in gaol cells at a rate five times higher than their non-Indigenous peers⁵⁵, or calls a football player a porkchop for speaking out at being called an “Ape” and “King Kong”⁵⁶, and cannot provide justice when an Aboriginal teenager is mown down by a motorist⁵⁷.

Creative Analytic Practice

Remembering these recent acts, I say, “Perhaps this is how I write my research: not to create totalising representations, but instead to write back to a coloniality that has inscribed Indigenous peoples into fixed positions, always known and never knowers. A decolonial writing that remembers the relationships I always already hold with Indigenous peoples and the pre-service teachers I teach, and that there is a need to underpin these relationships with questions of ethics (see Chapter Four). A more tenuous writing, perhaps.”

Laurel starts to speak again. “That’s the main difference between fiction and science writing—‘the claim that the author makes for the text’⁵⁸. One of our friends Wanda suggests that this might be the issue with reflexivity: it’s often ‘accepted as a method qualitative researchers can and should use to both explore and expose the politics of presentation and represent *difference* better’. In fact, she would ask ‘how do we do representation knowing that [we] can never quite get it right?’⁵⁹

“Think about how you might tell your reader about this conversation. If you write it in a creative way—we could even call it Creative Analytical Practice⁶⁰—the words you write do not claim to exactly represent events transpired, and you and your reader will be in agreement on this point.

⁵⁴ (Cixous, 1991, p. 3)

⁵⁵ (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2015)

⁵⁶ (Wu, 2016)

⁵⁷ (National Indigenous Television, 2017)

⁵⁸ (Richardson & St Pierre, 2007, p. 961)

⁵⁹ (Pillow, 2003, p. 176, emphasis in original)

⁶⁰ (Richardson, 2000)

Your writing will be ‘partial, local, and situational, and our selves are always present...but only partially present because in our writing we repress parts of our selves as well’⁶¹. Liz was telling me that you have been playing around with rewriting some of your students’ journal writing as poems,” Laurel says, smiling at Liz. “Well, ‘constructing research material as poems does not delude the researcher, listener, or readers into thinking that the one and only true story has been written...Rather, the facticity of the findings as constructed is ever present’⁶².”

“Excuse me, Laurel,” I interrupt, “this is one of the ideas that I have been concerned about, in terms of ethics. What are the ethical implications of representing research data, my students, in poems? When the students consented to be part of research, I’m sure they didn’t have in mind that I would be presenting their words poetically, that I might play around with taking words from different students and putting them together as if they were one. Am I misrepresenting their ideas? I feel in my gut that playing with alternative forms of representation might be more ethical, but I’m not yet sure why, and I feel this is a question that needs to be asked.”

“Think back to those anthropologists we discussed,” Laurel answers. “As a researcher, you can never really present the world of the students you teach and learn with, but instead, the world that is constructed between you in the doing of the research⁶³—in both the writing of the journals and then again in your writing of research. To not claim absolute truth is a textual move, but as what I see as a more ethical move. Your students have given you consent for you to present their words and interpret these, to make meaning of them. Is this not what you have come here to do?”

“You know,” Liz joins in. “You’re not the first one to ask these questions. One of Laurel’s friends, Carolyn, has written quite a bit about the ethics of writing others’ stories. She is speaking specifically about autoethnography, but I think there might be some important ideas here for you. For Carolyn⁶⁴, using fiction and composite characters can be a way of protecting the identities but also feelings of those we write about. She is very attentive to the tension between protecting the people in our writing, and the need for some form of ethnographic transparency and a commitment to writing about the communities we are researching. Some scholars have looked at personal forms of storying our research and found it wanting; claiming the only honest thing is to leave the personal out of it, and focus purely on the field work and some object under examination⁶⁵. I want to push you to be brave though, and think about how story can help us to understand social and cultural experiences through

⁶¹ (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 962)

⁶² (Richardson, 2001, p. 879)

⁶³ (Hastrup, 1992)

⁶⁴ (Ellis, 2009)

⁶⁵ (Delamont, 2009)

analysing personal experiences⁶⁶. Question how stories can be used as deeply theoretical⁶⁷, as ‘truths that won’t stand still’⁶⁸”.

“As a way of talking back⁶⁹,” comments bell.

“Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes about stories as a decolonising methodology for Indigenous researchers, stories that connect story and story teller, past and future, generation with generation, land to people⁷⁰.” I muse. “For Smith, story as an alternative research/writing approach exists outside of colonial ways of knowing, and allows some transfer of power to the story teller, representing diversities of truth.”

Continuing, bell says, “For black women, ‘[stories are] not solely an expression of creative power; it is an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless’⁷¹. When I was growing up and began teaching, educational systems taught writing, thinking and talking that moved away from the personal, saying that this was incompatible with the analytical. But stories give us a way to identify and connect, engaging those who may otherwise have felt alienated by our work ‘(especially [for] those of us whose familial backgrounds are poor and working-class)’⁷². If we are committed to ending class and race domination, we need to write our work in a way that does not position ourselves as superior knowers.”

“Think about, then, how using different, alternative ways of presenting our research might allow us to be *more* ethical,” Laurel says, to sum up the conversation. “Poems have the capability of reducing the distance between the “I” and the “Other,” and between the “writing-I” and “experiencing-I” of the writer⁷³ ‘When I move deeply into my writing, both my compassion for others and my actions on their behalf increase’⁷⁴.”

“That sounds almost Levinasian (see Chapter Four),” I reflect. “A way of representing the Research Other that reduces the distance between myself and them, but doesn’t claim to fix the Other into a solid position. It doesn’t enact violence through claiming to *know*. And at the same time, writing, the type of critical writing that Minh-ha was talking about as I arrived, calls us into responsibility: to question structures of domination that are created through writing.”

Minh-ha responds. “We have been taught to write with clarity, to clearly express our meaning. But ‘nothing could be more normative, more logical, and more authoritarian than...the (politically)

⁶⁶ (Ellis, 2004)

⁶⁷ (Brayboy, 2005, p. 426)

⁶⁸ (Pelias, 2004, p. 171).

⁶⁹ (hooks, 1989)

⁷⁰ (Tuhiwai Smith, 2009, p. 146)

⁷¹ (hooks, 1989, p. 8)

⁷² (hooks, 1989, p. 77)

⁷³ (Richardson, 2001, p. 887)

⁷⁴ (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 967)

revolutionary poetry or prose that speaks of revolution...in the well-behaved, steeped-in-convention-language of “clarity”.⁷⁵”

I think about this point—can a conventional academic language, developed in a tradition that insists that a clear expression can reflect an external world with no mediation⁷⁶, ever do anything but? To continue writing research in these traditions would be to pretend the world was fixed, that I could know others and their subjectivities. Instead, a creative practice which always makes it clear that its truths are partial and its representations constructed might be able to avoid this trap.

As if Minh-ha was following my thoughts, she says, “They will tell you things like ‘Obscurity is an imposition on the reader. True, but beware when you cross railroad tracks for one train may hide another train. Clarity is a means of subjection, a quality both of official taught language and of correct writing, two old mates of power.’⁷⁷ Instead, ‘tie/untie, read/unread, discard their forms; scrutinize the grammatical habits of your writing and decide for yourself whether they free or repress.’⁷⁸”

“And so,” Laurel sums up, “In this way, creative analytical practice may be useful for you—when you are no longer bound to the idea of representing the truth, CAP can free you to write in different ways. And thus we can answer Wanda’s question about never being able to get it right: ‘There is no such thing as “getting it right”, only “getting it” differently contoured and nuanced’.⁷⁹”

What Might Writing Do?

Betty moves to speak once again, “Once we trust in a world where we live and breathe theory, we ‘trust that something different will come out of this radical, experimental empiricism which nobody knows’⁸⁰. And then you can start to ask a different question, a much more interesting one. If we move away from the idea that writing’s only purpose is to represent and signify meaning and knowledge, we can instead ask ‘*What else might writing do except mean?*’⁸¹”

The woman who had whispered about writing so as to never become resigned speaks first. “I shall speak about women’s writing: about *what it will do*. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal.’⁸²”

As H  l  ne falls silent, exhausted by this expulsion of emotion, bell answers, saying, “As a writer, I seek that moment of ecstasy when I am dancing with words, moving in a circle of love so

⁷⁵ (Trinh, 1989, p. 16)

⁷⁶ (Richardson & St Pierre, 2006, p. 968)

⁷⁷ (Trinh, 1989, pp. 16-17)

⁷⁸ (Trinh, 1989, p. 20)

⁷⁹ (Richardson, 2001, p. 962)

⁸⁰ (St Pierre, 2017, p. 4)

⁸¹ (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 969)

⁸² (Cixous, 1976, p. 875, emphasis in original)

complete that like the mystical dervish who dances to be one with the Divine, I move toward the infinite.⁸³”

“Some categorise this type of embodied pleasurable surging dancing writing as *écriture féminine*; ‘a language event’ that critiques and denounces academic discourse as the master’s tool, the instrument of phallocentrism⁸⁴,” Hélène suggests. “But I know it as ‘using our whole body to enable the world to become flesh.’⁸⁵”

bell responds, “‘We write because language is the way we keep a hold on life. With words we experience our deepest understandings of what it means to be intimate. We communicate to connect, to know community.’⁸⁶”

“‘To write is to become. Not to become a writer (or a poet), but to become, intransitively...it traces for itself lines of evasion.’⁸⁷” says Minh-ha.

“‘Writing is writing what you cannot know before you have written: it is preknowing and not knowing, blindly, with words.’⁸⁸” declares Hélène.

“I hear what you are saying Hélène,” says Laurel. “Writing is a method of inquiry.”

Tension saturates my jaw as I look out over the lakes and watch a pelican shaking water off its wings. The pelican floats across the surface causing waves to ripple and diffract, changing the pathways of the ducks who dive under the brown water. I look at the lakes to avoid looking into the eyes of the writing women. Allowing the women to look into my eyes would make me too vulnerable, too likely to crack apart like a plate smashing to the floor, too likely to fall into little pieces that can’t be put back together.

“I don’t think...I don’t know if I can write. I fill my time with other activities, I teach, I read, I discuss. And I read and I read and I read. The words I read, your words, are heavy with poetry, words that fly and take me into flight⁸⁹ like dust in the rays of sun in the early morning. And then I do nothing. I do not write.”

Hélène reaches over and clenches my wrist, her skin thin as paper but strong, not frail, not weakened by age. She clenches my wrist and forces me to look at her, to look into her dark eyes and to see the pain pushing forth. “‘And why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it. I know why you haven't written. (And why I didn't write before the age of twenty-seven.) Because writing is at once too high, too great for you, it's reserved for the great—that it is for “great men”; and it’s “silly”. Besides, you’ve written a little, but in secret. And it wasn't good,

⁸³ (hooks, 2000, p. 3)

⁸⁴ (Worsham, 1991, p. 82)

⁸⁵ (Cixous, 1994, p. 203)

⁸⁶ (hooks, 2000)

⁸⁷ (Trinh, 1989, pp. 18-19)

⁸⁸ (Cixous, 1993, p. 38)

⁸⁹ (Cixous, 1991)

because it was in secret, and because you punished yourself for writing, because you didn't go all the way, or because you wrote, irresistibly...not to go further, but to attenuate the tension a bit, just enough to take the edge off.'⁹⁰”

Her words are tinged with anger; an anger not directed at me, but at a world that tells women not to write. Her openness gives me courage to open myself to words. “I think writing *is* too high for me and too great for me. Sometimes I feel my heart pounding through my chest and my muscles quivering with anticipation—I type when I write because I can’t let the words fly fast enough when I write by hand. And then the Not Enoughs arrive; they order my heart to stop pounding and my muscles to stop shaking; the Not Enoughs march and chant in two-step in my mind and work their way through my body until I am paralysed. Not good enough, not clever enough, not poetic enough, not academic enough, not evocative enough, not moving enough. What might my writing do? My writing might write students into representations that suppress their subjectivities; might write Indigenous peoples into fixed colonial positions even as I think I write against these, I am scared to let myself fall freely into the abyss, to write differently, to let writing do something other than claim to know. If I define myself in discussing writing, what does it mean to not write?”

Hélène keeps holding my wrist and her grasp steadies me. She responds, “The only book that is worth writing is the one we don’t have the courage or strength to write⁹¹.”

“Is it worth writing re/search that doesn’t break your heart⁹²?” Liz asks.

Writing Our (Way) Elsewhere

We all sit for a moment, as I search for words to express the stuck place⁹³ in which I find myself writing. “You know, I look around and I see this ‘impossible but all-too-real present’⁹⁴. A world touched by coloniality, living in an invisible fog of whiteness that ever so slightly changes how we perceive that around us, towering sandstone buildings reinscribing myths of passivity on a daily basis, travel magazines declaring that you can ‘get to know the fascinating locals (and learn all about their cultures, often untouched by modern society)’⁹⁵. To use Donna’s own words,” I raise my eyes from my lap to look at Donna, who has sat quietly throughout most of the conversation, “it is a slough of despond.”

⁹⁰ (Cixous, 1976)

⁹¹ (Cixous, 1994, p. 32)

⁹² (Behar, 1996, p. 177)

⁹³ (Lather, 1998)

⁹⁴ (Haraway, 1992, p. 295)

⁹⁵ These are words quoted from an STA Travel brochure that I was leafing through one day at lunch, advertising a trip to the Northern Territory (Australia). It was a stark reminder that coloniality’s fingers are gripping deeply into the arms of Indigenous peoples.

Donna smiles kindly at me. “There are other places to go: ‘I am committed to skirting the slough of despond and the parasite-infested swamps of nowhere to reach more salubrious environments.’⁹⁶”

“Where is it you are going?” I laugh in response to this declaration.

“A place ‘called, simply, elsewhere’. And theory can work as a road map you know, can ‘provide the roughest sketch for travel’⁹⁷”

“So theory is the road map,” I offer. “A commitment to finding a more ethical relation with the Other, to delinking from the systems of coloniality that penetrate our knowing, being, and doing, and to inviting others along on that journey of learning. These theories might show the way. And perhaps that, *that* is what writing can do, other than mean. Perhaps writing is the vehicle that we travel in to get us there”.

“Not just any writing will work though,” Laurel states. “Writing may be a vehicle, but not every vehicle is fit to drive on the roads.”

“So how will we know which writing is good enough then? If I’m not talking about validity and reliability, how am I going to know if what I am doing is...well...any good?” I feel concern as I ask these questions. Undoing years of thinking and writing in a particular way has created tension and a sense of unease, as I lose my way of evaluating my own work.

“My friend Art would say that all this talk about validity and reliability reflects how we often worry too much about how we are judged ‘as ‘scientists’ by other scientists, rather than thinking about ‘whether our work is useful, insightful, or meaningful—and to whom.’” Laurel continues. “And we end up ‘preoccupied with rigor, but are neglectful of imagination’⁹⁸. So instead, there are a few questions you can ask yourself. For example, are you making a substantive contribution to our understanding of social life? Is your work aesthetically pleasing? Without needing to belittle the reader, is your work reflexive enough for the reader to make their own mind up about your point of view; about your ability to write what you do? Does it have an impact, and leave the reader to walk away and think differently?⁹⁹”

“These ideas seem so different to the normal ways of working.” I hear myself talk as I say these words, and start to rethink them the moment they fly out of my mouth. “Okay. So I suppose by even making this statement, I am defining one way of writing as ‘normal’, and another in terms of what it is not, by its alterity. And if social science writing is a sociohistorical construction, than criteria

⁹⁶ (Haraway, 1992, p. 295)

⁹⁷ (Haraway, 1992, p. 295)

⁹⁸ (Bochner, 2000, p. 267)

⁹⁹ (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 964)

are also a response to a social script, rather than the culture-free standards that they usually paraded as by those who write that social script¹⁰⁰.”

“There is no point in ‘appropriate[ing] their instruments, their concepts, their places, or to begrudge them their position of mastery.’¹⁰¹” H el ene says determinedly. “And do not try to understand “‘how it works” in order to “make it work”. For us the point is not to take possession in order to internalise or manipulate, but rather to dash through and to fly...Flying in language and making it fly’¹⁰²...” she trails off.

For a second, we are all quiet as we think through these last words. Suddenly, a pile of books drops onto the wooden benchtop, and the table looks up to see a seventh woman standing there. “I’m sorry I’m so late,” she sighs. “I’ve only just managed to get out of a meeting. Those scientists can talk for hours.” The woman sees me sitting at the end of the table. “Ah, you must be the new one! The one who wants to know about writing.”

I feel a bit uneasy as the women smile at me. Was it not just a coincidence that these women came to this table?

“Ailie, this is Karen,” Laurel says as Karen thanks the waitress for her coffee. “Karen’s a physicist. Pay close attention when she talks. Listen slowly.”

Diffraction

“Look,” Karen says, a large smile breaking out over her face. “I don’t necessarily have a lot to say about writing. My interests lie more in physics, in the quantum entanglements that make up the world we live in. But this might lend some interesting ideas for your writing. Tell me what your research is about.”

“Okay,” I start, feeling as if I have found myself in the strange circumstance of presenting my work to a stranger in an elevator conversation. “So I have been teaching in a course named ‘Indigenous Knowledge and Education’ for the last few years, together with Liz.” I smile at Liz as I say her name, and again she winks at me. Over the semester, our students, who are pre-service teachers enrolled in a Primary education program (for this project), write a weekly reflective learning journal over the 13 weeks of the course. As my research, I have sought permission from these students to use their journals as a primary data source, and have been reading closely through 17 of the 93 journals I am holding onto. I suppose I am looking to know more about how participation in the course, as well as the process of reflective writing, impacts who the students are becoming as teachers in the Indigenous

¹⁰⁰ (Bochner, 2000, p. 267)

¹⁰¹ (Cixous, 1976, p. 887)

¹⁰² (Cixous, 1976, p. 887)

education landscape: that is, who they are becoming when they teach Indigenous students, Indigenous perspectives and Indigenous studies. Reflective writing as a teaching and learning tool is useful for making meaning of the complex knots of thoughts¹⁰³; to make sense of complex and often ambiguous learning situation¹⁰⁴.”

“So you are writing about reflection, and its potential to effect change in becoming-teachers?” Karen summarises.

I nod.

“It’s interesting that you raise this, the concept of reflection.” Karen says, “Donna and I have been talking about how we can move away from reflection and towards a new way of thinking about writing. Reflection is in itself a metaphor, a visual optic that we use to make sense of the world we live in. Have you considered what other metaphors might make sense—perhaps the visual optic of diffraction?”

“What do you mean?” I ask.

The two women, Karen and Donna, begin to speak together, their speech act ever so slightly changing the direction each other’s words as they are called to response.

“Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction. A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the effects of differences appear.”¹⁰⁵

“Patterns of difference that make a difference.”¹⁰⁶

“Diffraction does not produce ‘the same’ displaced, as reflection and refraction do.”¹⁰⁷

“Mirrors reflect. To mirror something is to provide an accurate image of representation that faithfully copies that which is being mirrored”.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ (Holly, 1989)

¹⁰⁴ (Moon, 2006)

¹⁰⁵ (Haraway, 1992, p. 300)

¹⁰⁶ (Barad, 2007, p. 72)

¹⁰⁷ (Haraway, 1992, p. 300)

¹⁰⁸ (Barad, 2007, p. 86)

“Unlike reflections, diffractions do not displace the same elsewhere, in more or less distorted form.”¹⁰⁹

“Diffraction has to do with the way waves combine when they overlap and the apparent bending and spreading of waves that occurs when waves encounter an obstruction¹¹⁰...The waves are said to interfere with each other, and the pattern created is called an interference or diffraction pattern¹¹¹.”

“Another kind of critical consciousness...one committed to making a difference and not to repeating the Sacred Image of Same.”¹¹²

“It is a commitment to understanding what differences matter, how they matter, and for whom.”¹¹³

“The noninnocent, complexly erotic practice of making a difference in the world.”¹¹⁴

“It is about making a difference in the world; about taking responsibility for the fact that our practices matter¹¹⁵. It is a critical practice of engagement, not a distance-learning practice of reflecting from afar¹¹⁶.”

Donna says, “All of the concepts from this conversation are entangled: ethics, representation, conditions of knowledge, alternative forms of writing, what writing might mean...None of these concepts can stand alone without considering what the meanings that are constituted in relation with each other. But matter matters too—our bodies sitting in a communal space, the coffee cups we curl our fingers around. This matter intra-acts, as Karen would say, with our becoming-agencies. The table creates your sense of support, the racialised and gendered bodies teaching you that we can understand difference as a ‘critical difference within’, rather than ‘difference as apartheid’¹¹⁷—but that’s Minha’s writing.” she quickly follows with, smiling to her friend.

¹⁰⁹ (Haraway, 1997, p. 273)

¹¹⁰ (Barad, 2007, p. 74)

¹¹¹ (Barad, 2007, p. 77)

¹¹² (Haraway, 1997, p. 273)

¹¹³ (Barad, 2007, p. 90)

¹¹⁴ (Haraway, 1994, p. 63)

¹¹⁵ (Barad, 2007, p. 89)

¹¹⁶ (Barad, 2007, p. 90)

¹¹⁷ (Haraway, 1992)

“Another day, we will drink a coffee and I will talk with you about inappropriate/d others,” Minh-ha says to me.

“Thinking with matter,” Karen says, “allows us to see that knowing has always been predicated on an engagement with the material world. This is why I want you to think about in which ways you can write your research such that it will ‘highlight, exhibit, and make evident the entangled structure of the changing and contingent ontology of the world, including the ontology of knowing.’¹¹⁸”

“Recognise how the concepts that are often taken for granted are constructed,” Donna says. “Take your data—your research artefacts—and deconstruct how the singular narratives that are usually told about the world we live in are constructions related to power. How might pre-service teachers position themselves to Indigenous education? What is Indigenous education? What does it mean to teach and learn in this landscape? Position yourself in an ethical-political space of uncertainty¹¹⁹. Make space for the articulation of little differences.”

I must look confused, because Karen laughs gently in the way old friends do, and begins to speak again. “We’re getting ahead of ourselves. Let me take you back to some of the genealogical aspects of this idea. Do you understand what diffraction means in physics?”

“Not really,” I respond. “I would guess it’s about light vectors: reflection, refraction, diffraction. Am I on the right track?”

“The right track, yes,” Karen responds. “Diffraction, as a physical phenomenon, is a pattern of light appearing when it has been obstructed, or where multiple light waves have been superposed, one on top of the other. There are a few examples we can use to think through this. Let’s say you were to hold a razor—or another apparatus with a slit through it—up to a singular light source and photograph or otherwise map the way that the light hits a piece of paper. You might expect that the light waves would pass straight through that apparatus, a clear cut shadow appearing on the paper. But, on closer inspection, you would see that the light did not act as waves should, but instead bent itself around the apparatus as it passed through. Particles of light fall into the part of the pattern that should remain dark, and dark shadows appear on the outer of the apparatus lines. We might think of this diffraction pattern as an interference pattern—the differences that occur as we bend our way around interferences and obstructions¹²⁰. And the interesting part of this is that light is not the only physical phenomenon that acts in the same way when being passed through a diffraction apparatus: matter can also bend, ending up elsewhere to the lines of where it began.”

Donna chimes in at this point. “Entangled with her background in quantum physics and post-structural philosophy, Karen also folded in some of my writing around diffraction. I had been writing

¹¹⁸ (Barad, 2007, p. 73)

¹¹⁹ (Davies, 2014).

¹²⁰ (Barad, 2007, pp. 78-80)

about the tired old metaphor of reflection, how it can only ever produce the self-same. If we are looking for critical differences within, rather than taxonomical categories of difference, as Minh-ha was, then we need to move beyond a optical metaphor that just displaces the self-same elsewhere.”¹²¹

“I’m following along,” I say, tapping my finger on the table in front of me as I think. “I’m just still trying to work out what this might do for my research methodology—although I’m not convinced that’s what I’m calling it.”

“A visual metaphor of reflection is bound to the idea that we are separate ontological entities¹²², in representation,” responds Karen. “Bound to the idea that knowledge, knowers and the known are all separate beings. That we can stand apart and look at another, or ourselves, from a distance, and see clearly all that is entailed. If you think about how all matter is irrevocably entangled, then we (matter) no longer interact with each other (with other matter), rather intra-act. In fact, knowing and being cannot be separated from one another. Our acts of knowing are intrinsically connected with the becoming of matter in the world.”

“Karen, can you quickly recap what you mean by ‘intra-actions’?” I ask.

“Of course,” she responds. “Intra-actions are the ‘mutual constitution of objects and agencies’¹²³; a neologism that recognises that our agencies are constituted through our entangled relationality. Rather than having two pre-existing entities meeting, intra-action suggests that our existence is found in the meeting—that is when we become”.

“For me, intra-action is also about the little differences in our engagement with matter and with each other as matter, in our praxis, that count,” says Liz. “When my Yanyuwa family came to teach with me at the university, painting up with a-makirra (white ochre) became a moment of matter intra-acting, paint and knowledge intermingling with skin. Particularly for white students, seeing and feeling this white paint on their skin, with its epistemological and ontological properties, brought them to a different understanding of their own bodies, coloniality, and ethics¹²⁴. The students and the a-makirra both become through the intra-action of bodies and paint.”

“Or I remember that paper that Bronwyn Davies and Susanne Gannon¹²⁵ wrote,” I say, “revisiting their collective biography writing workshops. In those workshops, different people, stories, and the physical implements used to write these stories were all entangled, with writing emerging through the intra-active process. Davies and Gannon wrote this process as diffractive methodologies

¹²¹ This is the inverted pathway that I took to come to diffraction. A comment from a doctoral committee member led me to explore different writings on difference, taking me to Trinh’s (1989) inappropriate/d others, followed by Haraway’s (1992) writing on critical differences within that led her to write about diffraction as an alternative visual optic to reflection, and following on to Barad’s (2003; 2007) diffraction.

¹²² (Barad, 2007, p. 88)

¹²³ (Barad, 2007, p. 197)

¹²⁴ (Mackinlay, 2016)

¹²⁵ (Davies & Gannon, 2012)

having the potential to ‘enliven’ memories, and they are extended and enfolded into connection with material spaces and time.”

Entanglement and Matter

“So this idea of intra-action requires us to take a step backwards and think about what it means to be. Quantum physicists, at least since Niels Bohr, have understood that on an atomic level, the ‘things’—” Karen runs her hand on the table that we are sitting at, “—that we believe to exist as individual entities in this world are not individual objects. On an atomic scale, the boundaries between the air and the table, between the solid and the gas, are blurred. Where does the table really end? One does not exist outside of the other. Ontologically, this brings into question what it means to be in the world as individual subjects—we are quite literally entangled with the air and the matter around us¹²⁶. Our practices of coming to know are then boundary-making practices. We use different apparatuses—in your case writing—to make agential cuts, to make boundaries or differences, that matter¹²⁷. Discursive practices are then ‘ongoing agential intra-actions of the [material] world’¹²⁸—we cannot separate knowing and being, rather we work through onto-epistemology.”

“I love this idea of agential cuts,” I say. “If you think about a thesis as a boundary-making apparatus in itself, which demarcates what matters and what is excluded from mattering, I’ve had to make cuts along the way.”

Karen responds gently, “I would contest whether theses are conventionally diffractive apparatuses. Whilst they do demarcate what is allowed to matter, do they radically separate, or make connections and commitments?¹²⁹ This idea of a diffractive apparatus that folds ‘concepts’ into each other—cutting together-apart¹³⁰—is about an ethical engagement with endless productive possibilities, rather than a consolidation of what might be able to be known on a topic.”

I say, “All the more reason to write differently-within! It remains to be seen at this point¹³¹ whether a thesis written differently can be diffractive, whether this inappropriate/d thesis¹³² can generate connection and commitment, whether learning journals can do the same. But there were definitely cuts I made along the way, for pragmatic’s sake. For example, I chose to only use journals from students enrolled in a Primary schooling focused degree, when I could have also used Secondary students; I used a number randomizer to choose 17 journals to focus on—”

¹²⁶ (Barad, 2003)

¹²⁷ (Barad, 2007, p. 148)

¹²⁸ (Barad, 2007, pp. 148-149)

¹²⁹ (Barad, 2010, p. 266)

¹³⁰ (Barad, 2014, p. 168)

¹³¹ Which will be another time point altogether by the time you, perhaps one of my advisors, or examiner, reads this—a folding of time, where the future writing is written in the past, being read in the present: much like the journals were written in the past of the present in which I write this thesis.

¹³² (after Trinh)

“Why 17?” Betty interrupts to ask.

“Why 17?” I reply. “It seemed like a nice, non-round number at the time. I’m not sure there was much more to it than that. I split the data up into four time points when I was writing about it: the first few weeks of semester (Weeks 1-3; Chapter Five), the following few (Weeks 4-5; Chapter Six), whilst students were on practicum (Weeks 6-9; Chapter Seven); and the final weeks of semester (Weeks 9-13; Chapter Eight). Already in doing so I have taken an epistemological and ontological stance on time; namely that time progresses linearly, that earlier events will result in later events; the old cause-and-effect logic. This reminds me a bit of Connell’s writing on Western time.”

“And do you agree with this?” Karen asks. “If you are thinking diffractively about a semester of teaching, perhaps this cutting together-apart of time points might allow you to fold those four time points, and the types of writing that emerge from each, back-together. This cut could potentially be seen as that what I am calling an agential cut.”

“Well, this is one of the conflicts within myself, perhaps one of those moments that if I pay close attention to it, will reveal the intra-acting agents that entangle themselves to form my subjectivity. I do believe that earlier teaching makes possible later understanding and that students’ learning will progress over time. I can’t divorce myself from this time logic, as much as I might want to politically. And this research remains bound to the white colonial Australian degree program that EDUC2090 constitutes and is constituted by. The never ending tick-tock of the weekly clock pushes us to get through content, assess learning, give feedback, teach more content, assess again.”

Liz shakes her head, “It’s amazing what they ask us to do in 13 weeks!”

I smile, remembering our conversation about the course (see Chapter Two). “So this logic will also produce this research.”

“That might be the case,” Karen responds, “but remember that multiple understandings of time can exist at once. I would urge you to remember as you write that the past and the future are entangled with the now that constitutes ‘we’: ‘to address the past (and future), to speak with ghosts, is not to entertain or reconstruct some narrative of the way it was, but to respond, to be responsible, to take responsibility for that which we inherit.’¹³³”

“I’m just thinking through how this relates back to my own research,” I tap my finger on the table as I think through the connections. “My writing of and with the students’ reflective learning journals is not seeking to reconstruct a narrative of what happened throughout those two semesters of learning in 2013 and 2014, but to make connections with what the entangled ‘we’ do in our teaching and learning in the ‘present’—which enfolds the past and the future at the same time.”

¹³³ (Barad, 2010, p. 264)

“And to go back to your time points,” Karen responds, “don’t forget that these agential cuts ‘cut together-apart (one move)’¹³⁴. In the moment that we differentiate, we entangle, and connect two things. Your four time points that you use to present and re-present your data only come to be through their relationships with together.”

“So, the first few weeks of semester are produced through their relationship-difference with the latter weeks.”

“And then there’s also the matter and physicality of teaching work,” reminds Karen.

“Of course, our material bodies within physical classrooms constitute a community of learners, as well as students and teachers (at the same time as our subjectivities as students and teachers create the classroom). And then our wants and desires become an apparatus that I can use to follow words around, with different wants entangling and enfolding students’ words across different time points.”

“Do you want to talk about why you followed this word—to want—around?” Liz prompts me, reminding me that the women at the table may require a more careful introduction to the process I followed.

“When I first started writing with and through the journals,” I explain, “I continually became stuck in how I might be able to analyse the students’ writing in a way that didn’t claim to know, that didn’t represent them as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, ‘transformed’ or ‘not transformed’. And I started writing about what I was wanting from students (see p. 119). I don’t know where this piece of writing came from, but it grew and grew within me until it burst forth onto the page. So, the idea of complex and multiple wants became the framework which I used to read and write my way through the students’ reflective learning journals. I started investigating the etymology of the word *want* (see p. 118), and looking at different definitions: to want as to lack something desirable or essential; to have a desire to possess or do; a need to do something, ought to; and to wish or need someone or something to be present. Thinking about it now, even in the act of differentiating these definitions, cutting them apart, I am tying them together in the multiplicity of ways that wants manifest, and how wants manifest our subjectivities as educators within Indigenous education. And in terms of writing as a method of inquiry—” Laurel and Betty smile at me, “—it seemed appropriate to follow words around: the students come to know their own worlds through writing their reflective learning journals¹³⁵, I come to know my research and my teaching worlds through following this writing around, and seeing where my writing-responses and responsibilities then take me. At some point, I realized I was not just following words like ‘want’ around¹³⁶ but also following writing around. When ideas become entangled with writing as a material practice, patterns of difference—differences that matter—are

¹³⁴ (Barad, 2014, p. 168)

¹³⁵ (see Chapter Two)

¹³⁶ (after Ahmed, 2017)

created. The entanglement with materiality changes the form of our ideas, which are created and constituted through the act of writing.” I will myself to look into the eyes of the writing women (the-women-writing).

“We could see writing as a method of inquiry, as you name it, a boundary-making apparatus,” Karen thinks out loud.

We are all quiet as we think through this idea that might radically change our material practices of knowing. I open my mouth, shut it again, and then begin to speak once more.

“So to read and re-write pre-service teachers’ reflective learning journals through writing as a boundary-making apparatus, a method of knowing, is to follow the writing around as the diffraction patterns that are imprinted on our bodies and pages. The material act of writing is also an apparatus of diffraction: that idea that H el ene spoke about, that writing is writing what you cannot know before you have written. Writing happens ‘at the point where blindness and light meet’¹³⁷. This reminds me of a diffraction pattern with its blurred boundary. The entanglement, the intra-action, the moment of focus is in that point where blindness and light meet.”

Moving On

Trying to wrap my mind around this conversation, contradictory sensations of excitement and paralysis started to work their way through my nervous system.

“So what do I do now?” I ask, seeking guidance from these women who came with me to writing.

““Where does a committed woman writer go? Finding a voice, searching for words and sentences: say some thing, one thing, or not thing; tie/untie [your and the students’ words together], read/unread [the reflective learning journals and your own writing], discard their forms.’¹³⁸” suggests Trinh.

““[If you’ve] studied the theory carefully, [your] “methodology” will follow.”” Betty says in a reassuring voice. “Don’t ‘think about [your] studies using qualitative methodology and its grid of normalizing humanist concepts, many of which are positivist: “problem statement,” “research questions,” “research design,” “research process,” “interview,” “observation,” “data,” “data collection,” “data analysis,” “grounded theory,” “representation,” “systematicity.””¹³⁹ Instead, ask yourself, how would Levinas think about and study the formation of ethical relationships between pre-service teachers and this ‘regime of truth’ called Indigenous education¹⁴⁰? How would he see encounters with Indigenous Others as revealing a responsibility that always already existed? How

¹³⁷ (Cixous, 1994, p. 38)

¹³⁸ (Trinh, 1989, p. 20)

¹³⁹ (St Pierre, 2014, p. 10)

¹⁴⁰ (Vass, 2012)

would Barad understand the process of cutting the learning journals together-apart as producing commitments and connections?”

“When we pay attention to the materiality of our teaching and learning worlds, what types of relationships, with both each other and ethics, become possible?” I suggest, catching on. “How does thinking with Barad and Levinas create little differences in the types of teachers and learners we all are in the Indigenous education landscape?”

Betty smiles in response. “That’s it. And those words, thinking with—I would encourage you to ‘think with theory’¹⁴¹. Fold the theory into the data, the data into the theory, your researcher and teacher selves into both again¹⁴². Cut the data and theory and your writing together-apart, re-entangle these. Think/write with/through the generative potentials of theory, rather than following codes of interpretivist research methodologies.”

“Research can itself be diffractive, when it seeks to create commitments and connections, rather than closed off categories,” Karen follows.

Liz says, “Think through these commitments and connections, and what these might look like in your research with these reflective learning journals. You and I have spoken before about the importance of attending to language, and the pain words can create, a pain that entangles words with our bodies.”

I nod, these tough conversations part of my own entangled becoming.

“So in research, we need to think about how words can cut together-apart, or just cut apart. Remember that there is an imperialism, or a coloniality—a violence, perhaps—in limiting others by imposing our own ideas onto them. That is what alterity teaches us¹⁴³; this is how Others entangle themselves with our changing being. Words that suggest there is a possibility of defining and knowing Indigeneity, or acting as if your words had/have/will have no repercussions, as if you were alone in the world: that is to enact (onto-epistemo) violence¹⁴⁴. And coloniality has brought a legacy of not just ontological, but also epistemological violence to the settler colonial state of Australia—the convenient narrative of naming Indigenous people as non-people, as not already there, is the dirt on which the nation was built.” Seeing the haunted look in my eyes, the past/present/future folding themselves together, Liz smiles once more. It is a serious smile that carries the weight of her responsibility to both myself as becoming-researcher and to her family, and reminds me of my own responsibilities to those with which I live and work. “Big heart, clear eyes, can’t lose”.

¹⁴¹ (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012)

¹⁴² (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 10)

¹⁴³ (Diprose in Mackinlay, 2016, p. 166)

¹⁴⁴ (Rose, 2004, p. 13)

Afterwards

After this, the women pack their things together, stealing the last sips of coffee as they each came up to hug and kiss me good-bye, wishing me luck and promising they will stay with me as I write. As I arrive back at my desk, I find a copy of Barad's book (2007) lying there. A sentence catches my eye as I read through the introduction:

Writing is not a unidirectional practice of creation that flows from author to page, but rather the practice of writing is an iterative and mutually constitutive working out, and reworking, of "book" and "author"...entanglements are not isolated binary co-productions as the example of the author-book pair might suggest. (Barad, 2007, p. x)

I smile as I read these words—so Barad did have something to say about writing after all. Her words bring me back to my own writing. Writing about/with/through the pre-service teachers' learning journals as a way of knowing, the writing of this thesis, is indeed more than a one-way creation. Rather, this research is an entanglement of my own memories, teaching and learning experiences, encounters with books, encounters with the reflective learning journals *as* books, both in and out of the classroom. And entangled within this mix are also my advisors, friends and partner, the palms outside my office window and the stringybark eucalypts facing my apartment's balcony. Even the soothing clackety clack of my fingers finding the keys on the keyboard as I write constitutes me. And if I listen carefully, I can just hear the wind keeping me company and reminding me of my responsibilities as it moves through the fronds outside my window. All of these entities have been enmeshed in the becoming of this thesis-as-entity as well as myself-as-subject—whoever that might be. I can only begin to demarcate who I am becoming when I am in relation with all that surrounds me (Davies & Gannon, 2012).

To think of myself as always-already in relation to the human and non-human others around me and of my being being constituted through this relationship, means that I and the becoming-teachers with whom I work cannot teach/learn/write without responsibility. The responsibility warns me against the wants of a patriarchal white sovereignty (Moreton-Robinson, 2004a): the desire to create a radical separation between Self and Other, Subject and Object, Researcher and Researched, Knower and Known (as Indigenous people have often been constructed; Moreton-Robinson, 2004b), to want to possess knowledge, to conquer.

Chapter Four

An Encounter with Levinas

I close the photocopied book, ragged post-it notes forming a technicolour rainbow along the edges of the pages. After a morning of reading some of the works of Emmanuel Levinas (1969; 1974/1991; 1989), thoughts and phrases and philosophy swim around in my mind as I struggle to shape them into sentences and paragraphs and chapters and theses. The “face to face” (1989, p. 79), our “responsibility for the Other” (p. 83), “morality...as first philosophy”, the “radical alterity of the Other” (pp. 35-36). How on earth will I synthesise the thoughts and writings that span 60 years of work into the type of document which would claim to “know” what Levinas meant? Is such a piece of writing even possible? Instead, certain ideas keep fluttering around in my head. These are ideas that evolved and changed across Levinas’ life (Hand, 2009), not remaining static concepts that can be pinned down to a page and preserved in an airtight box, labelled with some categorical theme to stay the same forever more. These are ideas that at times refuse recognition, that are otherwise to what a theory or a philosophy should be (Hand, 2009). Willing to let Levinas’ ideas remain refractory to fixed conceptualisation, I think about how these are the ideas that speak to me most.

As I reflect on these ideas—the importance of respecting difference; the epistemological violence that is done to the Other; how coming face to face with the Other awakens an ethical responsibility; and how language provides a site to connect across difference—I wonder why it is I opened these books in the first place. I stumbled across Levinas’ name in a chapter of a book that I secretly felt was probably below the level I was supposed to be reading, whilst everybody else had their heads and highlighters buried in “Discipline and punishment” (Foucault, 1977). I was rifling through an introductory text of Indigenous Studies for pre-service teachers (Phillips & Lampert, 2005), and a discussion of Levinas brought to life the work I had been reading around decolonizing methodologies, and the violence in claiming to “know” Indigenous others in academic texts (Tuhiwai Smith, 2009). The ways that academic texts fixed representations of Indigenous peoples meant that the “researched” could not speak back.

At the same time, I was beginning to read through the reflective learning journals of the pre-service teachers who had undertaken the course *EDUC2090 Indigenous Knowledge and Education*. As I was considering how the students were positioning themselves as they wrote their places on the Indigenous education landscape, different types of stories began to emerge. Some stories revealed students trying to find a way to connect with the Indigenous voices and knowledges presented in the course and to find a way to work together. But in other stories, I felt uneasy about the way that students

appeared to assume a right to “know” everything about Indigenous cultures, and a belief that this knowledge would enable them to teach Indigenous students in a culturally safe way. What Levinas was able to provide for me was a framework to theorise our relationships as educators with the Indigenous Other—how it is that this right to write and know may constitute a form of epistemological violence, and what would an ethical relationship look like? Perhaps first and foremost, Levinas reminds us of the “ethical necessity of being in relation with the other” (Mackinlay, 2012, p. 11).

Reflecting on these Levinasian beginnings as I sit at my desk, I look at the clock and decide to take a break outside in the sunshine. I laugh quietly to myself as I think about a paper I read on the weekend: when one is a PhD student, there is always a need to justify sitting around (Markham, 2005). As I shut my laptop and get ready to go outside, I grab a couple of orange and black striped journals from the towering pile that lives in my cupboard. These journals hold within the treasured written words of 17 pre-service teachers enrolled in a Bachelor of Education (Primary). The students wrote their reflections across 13 weeks of Indigenous Knowledge and Education as an assessment piece, and entrusted their books in my research-care. In this treasure-trove, I hold the self-observations of students’ learning and their responses to our weekly questions that asked them to consider who they are, who they will teach, and what they will teach on the landscape of Indigenous education.

I make my way down our moodily lit black and grey striped hallway and outside into the open air. In front of our library we have a small courtyard, the air filled with the stale smell of smoked cigarettes but also with the chattering of birds’ songs as they theorise the day’s events. In some way, I am able to think differently when I go outdoors and can see the way the leaves move lazily in the wind. As Aunty Ruby—a close friend—once said to me (2013, personal communication), the types of conversations we have when we take time to first acknowledge the trees that look after us are different to the ones we have when surrounded by concrete and metal. I wonder if being outdoors counts when these sandstone buildings—these edifices of coloniality and privilege, built to serve the colonial elite (Marginson & Consondine, 2000)—tower over me. The words “knowledge”, “learning”, and “achievement” jealously guard the entranceway to the library, scrutinising those who venture inside to gain access to the truth that is “great” and “mighty”. What do these sandstone inscriptions say when Indigenous knowledges (e.g. Martin, 2008; Rigney, 2001) come knocking on the doors to demand their way in? How will the sandstone bricks react when we begin to question the production of all knowledges, Indigenous and non-Indigenous (Nakata et al., 2012)? Either way, I think to myself as I turn my back on them, even that sandstone at one point came from the earth.

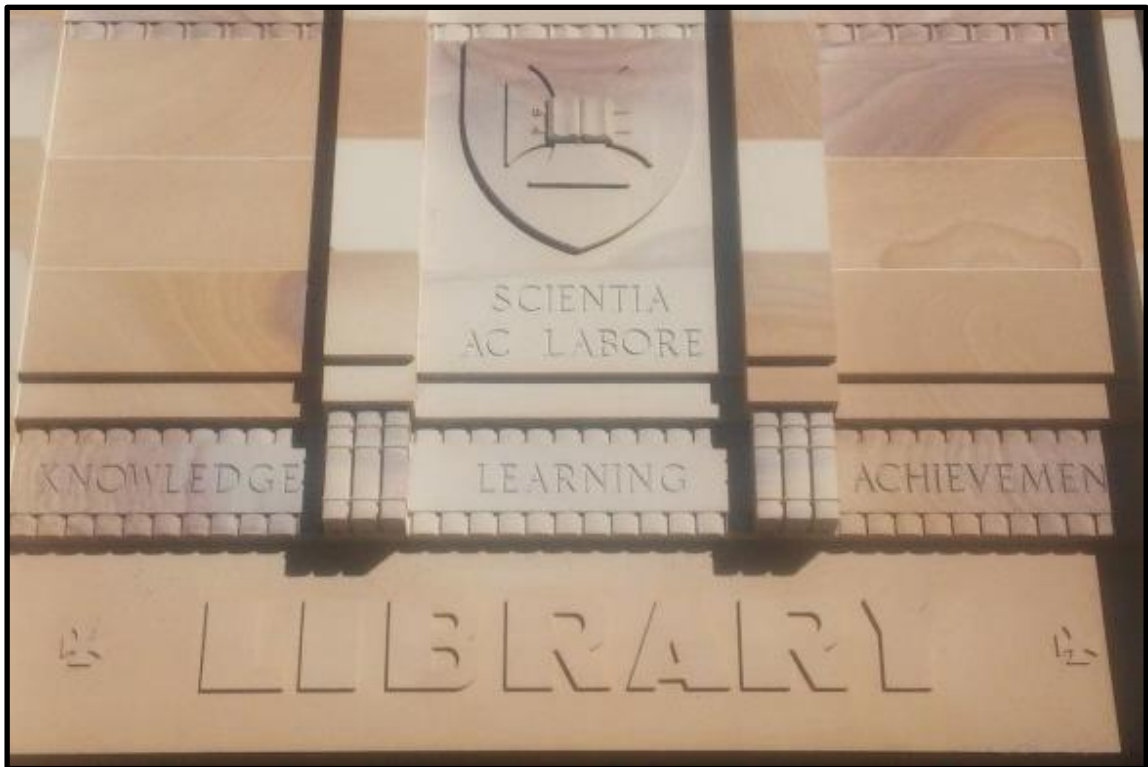


Figure 5. A photo of the library in the Forgan Smith Building, The University of Queensland. Source: Author's own.

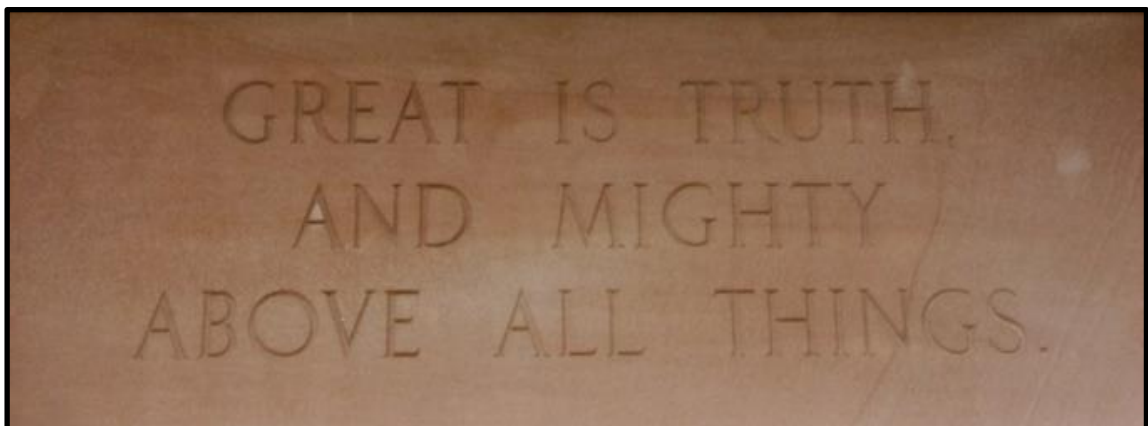


Figure 6. An entryway to the Forgan Smith Building, The University of Queensland. Source: Author's own.

I sit down and open the book carefully. A piece of assessment, but at the same time a window into a student's heart and mind. I feel mixed reactions when I look at these journals—a knot in my stomach as I recall marking, an apprehension at what attitudes and beliefs may be inscribed within these pages, a sense of privilege that I am allowed to share these students' thinking and writing. I look at the paneled carvings of an Indigenous man's head positioned between a native flower and a vegetable (see Figures 7 and 8), feeling my hesitation growing, before I turn back to the journal and

begin reading through the first entry of each students' reflections. We had begun the course by asking them what they were expecting to learn. As I put each journal down and pick another one up, different words and phrases keep repeating. As if animated, the data start to move around and reshape themselves into different formations in a way that “does not delude the researcher, listener, or readers into thinking that the one and only true story has been written” (Richardson, 2001, p. 879).



Figures 7 and 8. Carvings on the Forgan Smith building at the University of Queensland, positioning Indigenous people as part of a flora and fauna landscape. Figure 7 is listed in “Carving a history” (Office of Marketing and Communications, 2017) as friezes of a “choko”, “Indigenous head, male”, and a “waratah”. Figure 8 is described as a “custard apple”, “Indigenous head, adolescent”, “pawpaw”. I cannot help but get stuck on the clinical classification of humans.

Week 1 reflective writing question: Think about where you are right now—what are your expectations of this course?

Not too sure
what to expect
an open mind
an open-minded person
will be open

Willingness to learn
become more aware

awareness of culture
is the overarching issue
a deeper understanding
of Indigenous culture
a limited understanding
breeding our ignorance
needs to discontinue

I want to
become more aware
heighten my understanding
develop my understanding
broaden my knowledge
understand more about
them, their culture

Evaluate my position
value the prospect
discussions about difference
open your eyes
perspectives of Others

You cannot say:
“how do I teach Indigenous students?”

Face to Face with Levinas

Looking up from the book, I glance around the courtyard once more, resting my gaze on the creamy colour of the sandstone bricks that are streaked with burnt orange. What does it mean when a student seeks to know, to understand, or to become more aware? What is the importance of the relationship that pre-service teachers have with Indigenous Australians? Reading and re-writing the students’ journals reveals several elements in their thinking: a belief in the importance of openness, a desire to know more about Indigenous cultures, a tendency towards language that limits Indigenous Australians, drawing hundreds of cultures into a singular term of “them”. Yet at the same time, their words bring many more questions to the surface, propelled by some of the ideas in Levinas’ writings. What might it mean when students seek to “know” and “understand” more about the Indigenous “them”? What perspectives may arise in these discussions about difference? What learning might eventuate when students “open their eyes” and engage with the “perspectives of others”? These ideas

of the dangers of claiming to know, an understanding of difference, and the importance of being in relation with the Other seem to speak out to me once more.

Thinking about these questions, I become aware of a heavy-set figure lowering himself down beside me. Turning my face towards him, I see a man wearing an old-fashioned brown wool suit wiping his brow with a white handkerchief that he carefully tucks back into his jacket pocket his grey hair combed back from his face. He smells like old books, the leather-bound type found in the basements of libraries. A man of contradictions—stern but not unfriendly. I feel uncomfortable as I see him turn his face to me. I don't like being approached by strangers. Gathering up my things I move to leave, figuring I owe this old man nothing.

“But that's the point, isn't it,” he speaks in a voice that is quiet but clear, an unfamiliar accent concealing his origins. The words are spoken in the authoritative manner gained from years spent in classrooms. “‘My freedom does not have the last word; I am not alone’ (Levinas, 1969, p. 101)”.

“Excuse me?” I ask aloud, slightly bewildered. “Who is this man?” I think in my mind.

“‘The Other becomes my neighbor precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question’ (Levinas, 1989, p. 83),” he replies. Seeing my confusion, the old man exhales with frustration. Speaking slowly, he paraphrases himself in words I would use: “It shows itself to us, and I cannot but respond, because I cannot turn away” (Levinas, in Fryer, 2004, p. 42).

I cringe at the word “he”. It reminds me of the discomfort I experience when reading Levinas' work, the ubiquitous use of a universal “he” that signifies his standpoint as that of a man. What does it mean for me to be using theory from a white man, albeit one who has himself experienced the violence done to the Other, as a Jew whose family was murdered in the Holocaust (Malka, 2006)? What does it mean for Levinas' writing if it is grounded in his experience of life as a man, the signifier “his” constantly reminding me of this? Feminist (Smith, 1990) or Indigenous (Foley, 2003; Nakata, 2007) standpoint theories would suggest that Levinas' knowledge and ideas would be limited by his social position of a white middle-class male in a privileged societal position as a philosopher and academic, whilst also being extended by his experiences as an immigrant and a Jew. By using Levinas' work, am I continuing a tradition of engaging only in the thought and work of the “elite white men” (Collins, 2000, p. 251) who have defined and validated knowledge in the Western thought tradition—the “imperialist white-supremacist-capitalist-patriarchy” (hooks, 2003, p. xiii)?

Yet something in this old white man's argument speaks out to me, reminding me of the reflective learning journals that the students had written. Perhaps it is a rejection of the type of “disinterested contemplation” and “thinking through knowing, of seizing something and making it one's own” (Levinas, 1989, p. 76) that represents the historical approach to colonisers' relationships with Indigenous peoples (Tuhiwai Smith, 2009); a challenge to this Western knowledge system. This is

one of the topics that concerns Levinas (1989)—how the Western tradition of intellectualism is built upon the idea of knowing for knowing’s sake. Levinas’ apprehension of this type of disinterested knowing lies in what he sees as an epistemological violence that humans inflict on the Other, those who are different to them. By wanting to know *about* Others, rather than being-in-relation (Mackinlay & Chalmers, 2014), those who get to determine knowledge (those who are in power) are able to define what is known according to their own frames of reference, rather than those of the Others being known. In an analysis of the coloniality of power, Quijano (2000) discusses how the violence in knowing about people is a “fundamental epistemological question” (p. 220). According to Quijano, the concept of “race” was first created as Europeans began moving across the globe and colonising different geographical areas in the late 15th century. “Race” enabled the colonisers to create a hierarchy that allowed domination of “inferior” beings—the labour of those who were non-white was able to be exploited, as these “races” were deemed of lesser worth. The same system of coloniality was responsible for a rationalist system of thought; a system that categorised and classified people and things. In combining these two ideas, those of “inferior” “races” were seen as incapable of producing knowledge, and could instead only be known. “The ‘inferior’ ‘races’ are ‘inferior’ because they are ‘objects’ of study...they are not ‘subjects’” (Quijano, p. 220). Because these people deemed as “inferior” were “objects”, and not “rational” “subjects”, they could also be exploited for labour, linking the concept of knowing about Others with a violent exploitation.

As I sit on the bench, I think about what this may mean for the pre-service teachers whose journals I am reading. When students seek to know *about* Indigenous Others, instead of speaking with Indigenous peoples as subjects, they are unwittingly continuing in this tradition of objectifying Others. It is because this tradition allows us to dominate and to oppress that it is so epistemologically violent—as non-Indigenous researchers and educators, we continue to see Indigenous peoples as objects to be studied rather than agents of thought.

I am not the only one, however, who sees how this man’s thinking may be useful for understanding Australia’s responsibilities to those who inhabited and continue to inhabit this land for tens of thousands of years, to whom violence was and continues to be enacted. Wondering how to proceed with this curious gentleman sitting beside me on the bench, a few of these figures float to mind. Deborah Bird Rose (2004), an anthropologist whose work with people from the Yarralin, Lingara and Pigeon Hole communities in the Northern Territory (among others) informs her decolonial agenda and her ethical stance towards social and ecological justice (2004, p. 1). For Rose (2004), Levinas’ emphasis on the self as a relation (Levinas, 1996) allows us to consider how the ongoing denial of a violent history from some non-Indigenous Australians is a way in which violence continues to be enacted on Indigenous Australians in the present. As Rigney (1999, p. 112) writes, “Australia's colonial government, judicial system, education, and its knowledge construction factories were built

on the graves of Indigenous Australian systems, on the assumption that the ‘race’ of Indigenous nonhumans had no such systems in place prior to the invasion”, and many of these systems continue today, implicitly carrying these viewpoints. I read in Rose (2004) a need to question the premises and violent histories on which these systems are built, as non-Indigenous Australians continue to control these systems of social production (similar to that referred to by Mignolo [2011, p. 54] as the “colonial matrix of power”).

There are others, too, who have invoked Levinas’ thinking and words to make sense of relationships and responsibilities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. For example. Gannon (2011) sees in Rudd’s (2008) Apology the importance of the particularity, the self, as holding responsibility towards the Other; Sarra (2011), for whom Levinas’ obligation to respond to the face of the Other appears in the necessity of embedding Indigenous perspectives in the school curriculum; Diprose (2001), who invokes the necessity of bearing witness to and respecting cultural difference and give apology to Indigenous Australians for past and current injustices. Mackinlay (2012; Mackinlay & Chalmers, 2014) has also provided a detailed consideration of the ways in which non-Indigenous researchers have enacted violence through not-being-in-relation in the Northern Territory community of Burrulula. For Mackinlay, the disinterested colonial accumulation of knowledge for knowledge’s sake enacts violence by fixing Yanyuwa people in concrete identities categories, as the “primitive and lawless Other” (p. 73). Instead, Levinasian thinking can provide a blueprint for being-in-relation in research.

I think of these colleagues and friends as I turn to face the old man sitting beside me. For these academics, Levinas’ thought and writings have offered a new way of thinking about the relationship between the Self and the Other. He has offered an alternative to how an ethical relationship may look: a relationship that instead of seeking to know about Others, instead seeks to connect through dialogue. A relationship that respects difference and distance and the foreignness of the Other, instead of trying to distill difference into understandable categories or absorb Others into our own ways of being. A relationship that calls upon us to witness and to respond, not just to talk past the Other. I wonder why it is that these types of relationships that Levinas proposes are more ethical. How could they help inform our practice as teacher educators?

The old man breaks my reverie. “You know, Derrida (as cited in Cornell, 2005) once suggested that these writings do not ‘propose laws or moral rules...but rather the essence of the ethical relation in general’ (p. 159)” the old man says, seeming to follow my train of thought. “‘Ethics is the responsibility that we have towards the Other (Levinas, 1969). The self is always in relation (Levinas, 1996)’”.

Quietly, I consider the books I have read about Levinas’ life. When Levinas first began his studies, philosophers were beginning to engage with the idea of ontology (Malka, 2006), the study of

being and existing in the world. Levinas himself engaged with ideas of philosophers such as Heidegger (Hand, 2009), who were considering the importance of being-in-the-world in a way that first and foremost considered the nature of individuals. Yet Levinas provided a counter-narrative to a way of thinking that put the freedom of the individual above everything else (Slabodsky, 2014), subverting this Western individualistic thought (Moldanado-Torres, 2007). Considering the old man's comment about the Other becoming my neighbour, and how I thus hold responsibility, I wonder if this is what he meant: that to understand one's being in the world as an individual first and foremost overlooks the presence of others who are with us. Deciding to try out this idea, I pose a question to the man next to me: "The self is always in relation. We do not exist alone in this world. But what happens if we decide to ignore our neighbor?"

The old man replies thoughtfully. "When one puts the experience of the self first, everything else becomes understood only through one's own experience. I understand others only by drawing them into my frame of reference. I use themes and concepts—Jew, Indigenous, woman—to bring the Other into my own plane of existence, which we can call a totality."

"Do you mean the same type of totality that Tuhiwai Smith (2009) refers to?" I inject. "A totality that 'include[s] absolutely all known knowledge into a coherent whole' and can then develop 'classification systems, rules of practice and methods...to include what counts as history' (p. 31)?"

"Yes," the old man replies. "I totalise the Other by making him part of my own experience, part of this system of knowledge. But in doing so, he 'becom[es] mine' (1969, p. 46); I possess him. These classification systems and 'thematizations...are not at peace with the other but [are a] suppression or possession of the other' (p. 46). And in this way I harm the Other. I enact violence on him by using themes to reduce him to my system of knowledge."

"Why always 'him' and 'he'?" I interrupt unable to hold it in for any longer. "Is this incessant use of the male pronoun not just a eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation process (Collins, 2000)? For somebody who appears to want to subvert Western thought by prioritising relationality (Moldanado-Torres, 2007), you seem so entrenched in this male-centred worldview. Who are you to talk anyway?"

The old man sits quietly. I like to think he is considering my rebuke and asking himself why his man-made language filled with *hes* and *hims* and *fraternities* and *mens* 'forms the limits of our reality' (Spender, 1980, p. 3). But instead he answers, "Perhaps you should think for a while." I quietly pack my things together, not wanting to look him in the eyes. I don't have to listen to a thing this old man tells me. But as I turn to leave, I glance at his face, and his eyes speak back to me with tears.

A Story

As I reach my desk, I look at the biographies and readers lying around, from Hand (2009), Malka (2006), and others whose stories have helped me to understand who Levinas was and how his thinking originated. Reaching for one of these, I wonder if the story of his life might help to understand the moisture in the old man's eyes.

It begins and ends with books.

On January 12th 1906, an imaginably bitterly cold day with the sky grey and a biting wind slicing through air, Emmanuel Levinas was born to Yekhiel, a book store owner, and Dvora, a mother who read her son Pushkin and other literature. Surrounded by books filled with Russian words and stories, Levinas attended a school where he soaked in lessons taught in Hebrew by philosophers; absorbing the Jewish intellectualism of the town. Yet Kaunas was a town whose existence appeared to be in a precarious state of being, continually grasped upon by others; "each hope of emancipation was duly smashed by a succeeding domination" (Malka, 2006, p. 8). In Levinas' lifetime the town would be subjugated to Nazism and Communism, before experiencing independence once again. Perhaps in the same way the boy in the bookstore absorbed Russian literature, Hebrew lessons, and Jewish intellectualism, some of this fragile state of being was also absorbed.

A student's life in a precarious town.

Levinas unpacked his bags and looked around the small student apartment, tucked away up a cobblestone alley. Towers of books already threatened to fall down, despite the unpacked suitcases in the corner. Lowering himself onto the simple brown wooden chair standing before an unassuming desk, Levinas rifled through a dog-eared copy of "Logical investigations" (Husserl, 1901, as cited in Hand, 2009). In later years, "Being and time" (Heidegger, 1927, as cited in Hand, 2009) would gain the same dog-eared well-loved appearance, replacing Husserl's place at the top of the ever-growing pile of books. But for now, the year was 1923, and Levinas had left his home town and his family to move to Strasbourg. A provincial French town, Strasbourg straddles the mighty *Rhin* river that in different places cuts apart Germany, Switzerland, France and Holland. As one such town, Strasbourg has been occupied and by Germany at different periods of history (Hand, 2009). Strasbourg also existed in a precarious state of existence between different systems that wished to assimilate the town into their own ways of being.

In Strasbourg, Levinas epitomised the role of the eager student, attending lectures by Husserl and befriending students such as Maurice Blanchot, with whom he would sit with in ever-dimmer candlelight debating and philosophising. Some of these friends would stay with him for life; Blanchot even holding the responsibility of hiding Levinas' wife and daughter throughout the Sh'oah (having looked into the face of the Other, could there have been any other response?). As Levinas studied,

however, the impending rise of the German National Socialist Party and the calamity—the Sho’ah (the ,שואה the Holocaust¹⁴⁵)—that they would bring with them, had not yet reached its climax.

Not all of Levinas’ studies were in this provincial border town. Two semesters were spent in Freiburg in Germany, and Levinas brought back with him the work of Husserl and Heidegger, whose work on phenomenology became a starting point of much of Levinas’ own writing. Of course, we cannot separate the personal from the political: with the rise of anti-Semitism in the 1930s, Husserl, a Jewish professor, was banned from the Freiburg university library while Heidegger, a German Catholic, became rector of the Freiburg University in the same month that he joined the Nazi party. If Levinas saw these two philosophers as “contemporary teachers who made philosophy a living exercise” (Malka, 2006, p. 35), then their lives also informed their philosophies. In later work, Levinas would use Heidegger’s philosophy of being in the world as a starting point to show how understanding the being of the self as a foundation for philosophy violently ignored the presence of others. In the beginning however, as Levinas returned to the bustling halls of the *Université de Strasbourg*, Heidegger represented an exciting new way of contemplating phenomenology in philosophy, and Levinas’ translations of both Husserl’s and Heidegger’s work brought him attention from the French philosophical community.

Wanting to join the civic community of his adopted country, as well as the academic, Levinas applied for French citizenship. On the brink of the Second World War, this decision surely impacted Levinas’ fate in the Sho’ah. As Levinas finished university he began work as an administrator at the Alliance Israélite Universelle. Yet as Europe reached the brink of catastrophe, as a French citizen Levinas was mobilised as a military officer. If not for this event, he would have perhaps been one of the 76 000 Jews deported to concentration camps, of whom only 2500 survived. He may have been one of the 274 000 French and foreign Jews who were successfully hidden around France (United States Holocaust Museum, 2014). As we move eastwards towards Germany, Levinas’ position as a French-Jewish military officer entangled him within particular conditions of being.

A cold concrete room.

Five years of cold, hunger, hard labour, imprisonment.

¹⁴⁵ It is interesting to consider the words we use to describe the 11 million people killed by the German National Socialist Party in the 1930s and 1940s. The Hebrew word *sho’ah*, used by Jewish people to describe what is commonly known as the Holocaust, is a biblical word, meaning “catastrophe” or “calamity”. The Holocaust, on the other hand, is a Greek word, meaning “sacrifice by fire”. Perhaps choosing the Hebrew word rather than the Greek can be taking a decolonial option (Mignolo, 2009)—choosing to engage in the situated knowledge (Harding, 1993) of those who have been oppressed, rather than the same system of thought that produced the oppressors. Perhaps it means nothing.

Hass (2009), who translated her mother’s diaries from imprisonment in Bergen-Belsen, the Jewish concentration camp closest to Levinas’ prisoner of war camp, says that the Holocaust is an incorrect term: “It is as if something came out of the sky, from heaven, some disaster, a calamity, a nature calamity, and not human-made calamity.” Instead, Levy-Hass refers to it as: “The German industry of murder. Or the assembly-line of [mass] murder.”

Hass describes her mother as a woman of words, until the Sho’ah.

Levinas sat in the cold, bare room, thin grey light struggling to come through the cracks under the door. The room was coloured only by the red, white and black of a swastika flag hung on the wall and a brown *deutsche Igel*, the German eagle, who surveilled him with painted yellow eyes. Levinas reached around his neck to take off the wooden placard with his prisoner number carved into it and reached down under the concrete bunk beds, against the wall, to locate his pen and paper. As one of 66 Jewish prisoners of war in Stalag XIB, Levinas was protected by the Geneva Convention. Yet this was a place where Jewish physicians were the first to be sent to work with typhus victims without inoculation, and where the Jewish soldiers were separated from the other soldiers and sent to work in the freezing bare forests. His wife and daughter had been hidden in a St Vincent de Paul monastery by his old university friend Blanchot. This Levinas did not yet know as he sat in that cold bare concrete room. He would only learn his family's fate after the war was finished. Levinas also only found out that his mother, father, brothers and his in-laws had all been shot and murdered in Kaunas following his repatriation (Malka, 2006).

Using his placard as a desk, Levinas sat on the hard bunk and began to read through his writing. At night, the others sat and played cards. He surrounded himself with his friends, Hegel and Proust, Diderot and Rousseau; the books and words that kept him company throughout his time in Fallingbostal. In his mind, Levinas engaged in heated arguments and fiery debates with these philosophers as he worked in the forest, pulling a hand saw back and forth and back and forth. Books began forming in his head, taking shape with each quick-witted response and each pull of the hand-saw. Picking up his pencil, Levinas began to write, words falling out of his pen as his hand raced across the paper:

A free being alone is responsible, that is, already not free. A being capable of beginning in the present is alone encumbered with itself. (Levinas, 1947/1978, p. 47)

...

Myself and Others in Dialogue with Levinas

Sitting at my desk and considering Levinas' story, the dedication at the beginning of "Otherwise than being" (1974/1991) catches my eye:

To the memory of those who were closest among the six million assassinated by the National Socialists, and of the millions on millions of all confessions and all nations, victims of the same hatred of the other man, the same anti-semitism. (p. v)

My eyes drift down the page to the Hebrew inscription. Perhaps it is these strange letters, so utterly foreign to me, that read louder than the English translation. Levinas' knowledge, even though it may claim to be a universal philosophy, is ultimately informed by his experiences of being Othered, of

being a Jew; informed by the loss of his mother and father, informed by his years spent in the Stalag in Germany.

לוכר נשמת אבי מורי ר' יחיאל בר' אברהם הלוי.
אמי מורתי דבורה בת ר' משה.
אחי דב בר' יחיאל הלוי. ועמינדב בר' יחיאל הלוי
חותני ר' שמואל בר' גרשון הלוי. וחותנתי מלכה בת ר' חיים.

תעצבה

(Levinas, 1974/1991)

I walk back to the courtyard and am happy to see the old man still sitting on the bench. I sit down somewhat sheepishly, and hope I can pick up where we left off.

“What would happen if we choose not to totalise *her*?” I ask. “Can’t we just live and let live, so to speak?”

“But do you think that you are independent of this Other?” the man beside me questions, accepting my return without comment. “You are not alone in this world. Is it possible to consider an Other’s existence, without revealing the relationship between the I and this Other? ‘Self is not a substance, but a relation’ (1996, p. 20). This is how our relationships precede ontology: it is not possible to imagine the existence of another human without imagining the relationship between us, without imagining being in relation. As such, ethics and our relationship with the Other forms the most fundamental philosophy (1969, pp. 47-48)”.

“So if I ignore the Other, then I am denying this relationship. ‘Violence is acting as if one were alone’ (Rose, 2004, p. 14). Or as if a violent history had never occurred here in Australia,” I suggest.

“That’s right,” the old man says, a pleased look on his face.

I mull over this idea as I think back to the students’ reflections. “So what happens when one looks out from where she stands? When I come into relation with the Other? I mean, that’s what we are asking the pre-service teachers to do: to think about their relationships with Indigenous students and knowledges. But when I look at their words, it doesn’t seem that they are thinking about being in relation at all. They just want to ‘know’ more *about* the Indigenous other. Is there even a difference between wanting to know and being in relation?”

“To begin with,” the old man replies, “we have to consider who the other is. ‘The absolutely other is the Other...Over him I have no power’ (Levinas, 1969, p. 39). The Other is one so radically different to ourselves that we cannot bring him into our terms of reference: ‘The other cannot be totalized’ (p. 35). Instead, this other is ‘refractory to every typology, to every genus, to every characterology, to every classification’ (p. 73). The problem arises when we try to make the other less

different, more understandable. Even if we try to imagine the other as opposite to the same, to ourselves, then ‘a synoptic gaze encompasses them; they already form a totality’ (p. 53). Instead, we need to accept this ‘alterity, this radical heterogeneity of the Other’ (p. 36).”

“So are you saying that it is not possible to know the other?” I query. “What does it mean then when these students are seeking to know the other? I can understand how they are trying to find a way to make sense of the situation they find themselves in. Many of these students have never even spoken to an Indigenous person before. They are trying to make sense of Indigenous education through seeking knowledge.”

The old man sits quietly for a while. Feeling gauche in the silence, I am about to begin speaking once more when he says: “One of the greatest violences we can perpetrate on the other is to bring them into our totality, ‘the reduction of the other to the same’ (Levinas, 1969, p. 46).” As the old man sits with this thought, I remember my conversation with the writing women (see Chapter Three), and the reflection as an act of depicting the self-same on others. As Haraway once said (in Olson, 1996), colonialism itself is the ultimate attempt to produce the self-same on others across the world.

The old man continues talking.

“To know amounts to grasping being out of nothing or reducing it to nothing, removing from it its alterity’ (p. 44). This act of reduction is necessarily one of thematising: to understand the other, we rely on external themes and concepts. This thematisation negates the other by denying agency and alterity. If we follow Heidegger and let our governing philosophical principle be the sovereignty of the self, before our ethical responsibility to others, then comprehending another becomes an act of possession: whilst I acknowledge and affirm the other’s existence, this affirmation occurs only through ‘a negation of its independence’ (p. 46). That which we claim to know is freed of its otherness. But in freeing from otherness, we are ‘seizing something and making it one’s own’ (Levinas, 1989, p. 76).”

I think back to the last few months spent pouring over Levinas’ texts, highlighting and scribbling notes as I rewrite them through my readings (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005). This possession was a major theme that I had read in Levinas’ writings, as one of the ways in which we enact violence on the other. We try to comprehend and grasp, by reducing them to our same, by making them ours (Levinas, 1969, p. 46). The same to which Levinas refers is the world we inhabit as individuals, our frames of references, our totalities.

“Well, I can see within Indigenous Studies how concepts and themes can be used to totalise,” I reply. “The problematic concept of Indigenous education itself (Vass, 2012) creates a totality where all are defined by their Indigeneity or lack thereof. And in a context where government-funded special measures are introduced to assist disadvantaged groups, I can see how categories can be violent, like the binary of Indigenous and non-Indigenous. In fact, the whole Close the Gap campaign is based on this categorical binary, where “sickness=Indigenous” and “whiteness=health” (Pholi et al., 2009, p.

10). In this case, there is a ‘moral imperative upon Indigenous Australians to transform themselves’ (p. 10), to become the dominant category which is ideal. To be brought into the totality.

“And of course,” I continue, “non-Indigenous conceptions of Indigeneity regularly reduce hundreds of Indigenous language groups into a pan-Indigenous concept (Paradies, 2006), representing a way of reducing Others to a concept which can be grasped, understood, comprehend and known. Paradies would argue that this in in order to better control Indigenous peoples, which could be seen as a type of violence. In this encounter, the coloniser stands in opposition to the colonised in a picture painted by a non-Indigenous frame of reference. To consider Indigenous peoples as a plurality of language groups with different epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies would be to interrupt the colonisers’ gaze, and is refractory to totalisation.”

“Yes,” the old man replies. “Let us consider this act of knowing. I heard you asking yourself ‘What does it mean when a student seeks to know, to understand, or to become more aware?’” I glance up, surprised. I hadn’t realised I was speaking out loud as I read the students’ journals. He continues, “You must be weary of a ‘disinterested acquisition of knowledge’ (1989, p. 78), seemingly unconstrained by memory or by relationality. When we seek to grasp the other—the act of reaching out ach touching, seizing, bringing towards one’s self and making one’s (kn)own—‘nothing may remain other to’ knowledge (1989, p. 77). This type of unconstrained seeking to know others is ‘opposed to justice’ (1969, p. 45), is free in a Heideggarian sense.”

“So how can we move forwards? Is there a more ethical way to be in relation with Others?” I ask, already knowing the answer from my readings.

“Oh, but yes. We need to transcend the distance between us whilst respecting the other’s radical difference from ourselves.”

I think about the conversation so far. By positioning ethics as the first philosophy, Levinas has asked us to consider how we respond when we encounter the other. In the face of the other, Levinas sees an alterity that is so absolute in its otherness that it transcends our frames of reference—a difference that cannot be encompassed by our totality (1969, p. 194). The students’ reflections that I had read were at the start of the course, (for most) pre-encounter with Indigenous others. What would happen as they were brought into contact and became entangled with the voices of Indigenous thinkers, writers, and academics, through guest lectures, readings, videos and other class activities? How might such entanglements change the ways in which they/we came/come to know? How might studying these entanglements make more prevalent how we are in relation, and then in line with Levinas’ thinking, responsible to each other?

“You see,” he continues, “‘The Other remains infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign; his face in which his epiphany is produced and which appeals to me breaks with the world that can be common to us’ (Levinas, 1969, p. 194)”.

I respond, “So, to paraphrase, coming face to face with the Other, facing an Other who refuses to be comprehended or otherwise contained, breaks apart our totalising thought?”

The old man affirms my understanding. “Yet the absolute otherness in the face of the other leaves it naked and hungry, ‘destitute’ (Levinas, 1969, p. 75). Looking into the eyes of one so naked, we are called upon to respond. This is an expression that calls into question our totalities and our response can only be ethical”.

I smile knowingly, and open my bound photocopy of *Totality and Infinity* to a dog-eared page, reading out loud:

A calling into question of the same—which cannot occur within the egoist spontaneity of the same—is brought about by the other. We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics. The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics. (Levinas, 1969, p. 43)

I put down the book and contemplate this statement. Turning back to the old man, I say, “So let me get this straight. The response that the other supplicates of us is at the heart of the idea that ethics is the first philosophy: the ‘self is not a substance but a relation’ (Levinas, 1996, p. 20). And this is why acting as if one were alone in the world can be seen as an act of violence. And this denial of relationship and responsibility leads to a denial of others, a negation of their being (Rose, 2004, p. 13). I know for Rose (2004), the denial of the violent Australian past and the moral burden of this history is to enact violence in the present (Rose, 2004, p. 13).”

“Exactly,” he confirms.

“So the question will be how pre-service teachers respond to being asked to be in relation. Will they look the other in the eyes or instead ‘approach the other not to face [her], but obliquely’ (Levinas, 1969, p. 70)? Will they let the other speak for herself or continue non-Indigenous people’s control over the representation of Indigenous peoples?”

The old man interrupts me. “But you are forgetting an important part! The absolute difference of the face who speaks to us breaks the totalising gaze:

Language as an exchange of ideas about the world, with the mental reservations it involves, across the vicissitudes of sincerity and deceit it delineates, presupposes the originality of the face without which, reduced to an action among actions whose meaning would require an infinite psychoanalysis or sociology, it could not commence. If at the bottom of speech there did not subsist this originality of expression, this break with every influence, this dominant position of the speaker foreign to all compromise and all contamination, this straightforwardness of the face to face, speech would not surpass the plane of activity. (Levinas, 1969, p. 202)

“Well Australian academics like Diprose (2001) talk about this too,” I rebut, annoyed at his interruption. “If the absolute Other speaks to us with this originality of expression, then we

are forced to bear witness to the conditions that create suffering. If the students face an Other who is irreducible, if they let her speak, then this may initiate the type of reflective responses that we are wanting.”

“So when this process of self-reflection begins, what you are left with is an unavoidable responsibility towards the other,” the old man concludes.

“A response-ability (Barad, 2010; Mackinlay, 2015)?” I suggest.

“A clever idea. This responsibility is elicited when we look into the face of the Other and when s/he speaks to us. We are left in a state of ‘non-indifference’ (Levinas, 1974/1991, p. 41). The responsibility is the response demanded of us by proximity. But remember: the responsibility that is demanded by the face is not symmetrical: ‘what I permit myself to demand of myself is not comparable with what I have the right to demand of the Other’ (Levinas, 1969, p. 53). This asymmetry demands of us a response that is not reimbursed.”

“Yes,” I say, “Sarra (2011) draws on this asymmetrical responsibility to argue the importance of embedding Indigenous Studies programmes in all schools which allow the voices of Indigenous Australians to be heard and multiple histories to be included.”

“To build on this idea even further,” the old man continues, “this is a ‘responsibility that goes beyond what I may or may not have done to the Other’ and instead precedes our relationships (Levinas, 1989, p. 83).” The old man pauses for a second, to see how I respond to this idea.

“I think this is what Deborah Bird Rose (2004) was talking about when she draws on the distinction between guilt and responsibility in an Indigenous Australian context,” I point out. “I know this is something that a lot of our students struggle as they start to think about how they position themselves on an Indigenous education landscape. ‘I didn’t do anything’. And so Rose (2004) says whilst guilt is the burden that we may carry individually or collectively for specific actions or behaviours, responsibility is the burden of the Other’s vulnerability to suffering. A distinction is drawn between one’s own actions, and the human condition and living with and for others (p. 12). Rose uses the idea of a ‘guiltless responsibility’ (Levinas, 1989, p. 83) to link knowledge of Australia’s violent past with an ethics for decolonization. In this way, we can transcend the concept of ‘descendants’ guilt’ (Rose, 2004, p. 12) and instead be challenged to consider what responsibility we have as human beings who live in relation with one-an-Other”.

The conversation starts to change course as the old man begins to question me. “And how do you suppose we respond to this challenge? How can we connect with the Other whilst respecting difference?”

As we have danced about each other’s ideas in conversation, I have grown more confident in my understanding. “‘To speak is to make the world common, to create commonplaces’ (Levinas, 1969, p. 76)” I cite, with a smile on my face.

“Indeed,” the old man says, “Language is how the Other calls out to us, and how we can exist in relation without reducing the difference, the absolute alterity, between us. The face of the Other ‘summons me, calls for me, begs for me’ (Levinas, 1989, p. 83), and reaches across the distance between us. When we speak with the Other, he ‘is not under a category’ (Levinas, 1969, p. 69).”

“I’m not sure I understand how language can reach across the distance between us,” I answer. “How is it that what was before a violent epistemological act, a seeking to know, has now become an ethical relationship?”

“A good question.” The old man smiles. “In order to come together in these commonplaces, the I, your students, yourself, must first respond to the other by wanting to give.

In other words, language is spoken where community between the terms of the relationship is wanting, where the common plane is wanting or is yet to be constituted. It takes place in this transcendence. Discourse is thus the experience of something absolutely foreign, a pure ‘knowledge’ or ‘experience’, a traumatism of astonishment. (Levinas, 1969, p. 73)”

I consider this idea. “So by the Other and I mutually reaching out to one another through language, I am able to experience something so foreign that whilst we connect, I cannot reduce the other. Her alterity is maintained,” I follow. The words which had seemed so confusing before start to make sense, and I eagerly continue, “So language is how we can relate to the other. When we listen to the expression of the other, we are able to be in a ‘commonplace’, ‘the very passage from the individual to the Other’ (Levinas, 1969, p. 76). But at the same time language can be used to suppress the other. We must differentiate between speech as discourse, and as a monologue. For example, the accounts of European traditions of thought where an individual’s being is constituted in reason: ‘Reason speaking in the first person is not addressed to the other, conducts a monologue’ (Levinas, 1969, p. 72). When this monologue approaches the other through language, it doesn’t face her, but instead looks her side on (p. 70).”

Again Rose (2004) comes to mind and I continue, “This is why ‘us’ and ‘them’ binaries are so destructive,” I add. “They form a totalising monologue and are related to structures of domination. The ‘us’ comes to mean reason, activity and presence, whilst ‘them’ is supposed to represent chaos, passivity and absence. This monologue is self-totalising, only including what can be accommodated into its own narrative. The type of communication refuses to open itself up to dialogue, or to receive feedback, and this is where power lies: ‘in the ability not to hear what is being said, not to experience the consequences of one’s actions, but rather to go one’s own self-centric and insulated way’ (p. 20).”

The old man acknowledges this statement with a nod and just a hint of a smile, before asking, “So what will this mean for your research?”

“Well,” I pointed out, “When I was reading those journals before, only one student considered the importance of opening their eyes to the perspectives of Indigenous others. The others all seemed to

be concerned about some type of knowledge about Indigenous cultures, which you have said ultimately comes down to ‘possessing’ the Other by trying to understand them (Levinas, 1969, p. 46). So perhaps I will have to consider along the way whether some students are starting to engage in conversation with the voices, perspectives, and knowledges of Indigenous others, rather than a monologue. If they are able to transcend Rose’s (2004) monologic binaries of ‘us’ and ‘them’. I think perhaps some of the students may blatantly refuse to look when the other faces them and speaks, remaining resistant. I know other educators have experienced these resistances before (e.g. Aveling, 2002). But other students may think they are listening, whilst ‘insisting that others, if they appear at all, appear as they are constructed by [the] monological narrative’ (Rose, 2004, pp. 20-21)”.

“So it appears you have a starting point to go back and read more journals,” the old man concedes.

“I’m not sure,” I confide as I start to pack my things together, “I think I can begin answering the question that I asked before: what is the difference between knowing about others and being in relation? The first seeks to reduce others to our own frames of reference, to totalise, whilst the second reaches out to others, engaging in conversation whilst respecting a difference that we may not understand. But I still have so many questions. How will I know if students are engaging in the type of language that ‘lays the foundation for a language in common’ (Levinas, 1969, p. 76)? What about the silences in their texts, ‘whose weight acknowledges this evasion of the Other’ (p. 195)? What of Dussel’s question to Levinas in 1972: ‘What about the fifteen million Indians slaughtered during the conquest of Latin America, and the thirteen million Africans who were made slaves, aren’t they the other you’re speaking about?’ (Dussel, 1999, p. 126). What about the hundreds of thousands of Aboriginal Australians who were killed (Harris, 2003)? How do we begin to decolonise Levinasian thought and what might it mean when his ethics ‘remains tied to a certain type of meta-physics’ (Drabinski, 2011, p. 3)? What about...” My voice trails off as I look up to see an empty bench beside me.

A Dreaming

That night, I tossed and turned, in fitful dreams and restless sleep.

When my eyes feel the blood pulsating pumping direct from the heart line to the optics I am looking into the face of the Other. I look beyond the horizon, beyond the distance that separates us two, an abyss dug into the earth-soil by possessed things, tools for isms, colonialism, imperialism, Aboriginism, hundreds of years of Western thinking spent digging the abyss out shovel by shovel. An abyss was created by abbotts and Abbotts, distant from the dirt, an Enlightenment that is frightening in its writeousness as it writes into being the universal laws of truth. A writeousness that writes research

that w/ri/ght/es reductions to themes. When I stare into the abyss, the trauma of themes seeps out of the colonial wound, and I see the ghostly bones of those who did not escape the destructive force. And as I move my head back towards the sun a dark fractured trace remains on my cornea as my eyes readjust. Freedom consists in knowing that freedom is in peril, but pearls that let us remain indifferently indifferent may be perilous. The dissonance of cognition starts to lead us down the path most travelled least exposed to imminent danger, yet the trace remains. The face's truths scratch as the wind throws dirt in my eyes, irritating me so that I must respond, and she begins to speak to me. I begin to leave my place of indifference, move towards the face, towards the Other, a trail of perilous pearls of knowledge.

What if I try to pull her towards me across the abyss? If I claim to know the Other, to be knowledgeable of her, to be able in my knowledge to traverse the abyss between her and my same, I draw her into my same and she stumbles and falters into the abyss at the edge of my horizon. Her body falls face down into the cracks and fissures, maimed by my skinny desire that captures her as she catapults into this abyss of Western thinking, and I am left standing but not upright, not droiture, power and freedom as the first philosophy.

Instead of pulling, I turn to face her as she calls out to me across the abyssal thinking that divides us. She calls out to me and when I turn my face to meet hers, she imposes herself, I cannot remain indifferent. I move towards her as she speaks to me, the words lingering as the wind carries them across the abyss between us. I can no longer reduce her into a theme. Instead I move towards her as the traverse transforms, no longer one of abyssal thinking but now one of radical alterity. Her words make the world no longer what it was: at home with myself on my side of the abyss. Instead, her words make the planes on which we each stand common and in community: connected yet radically separated. I reach out to her, but I cannot touch her. I cannot draw her towards me. My desire no longer skinny but the thick, full insatiable desire of a wave that draws in more of my same as I am carried towards the Other, a wave that grasps at the particles of sand and dirt on the shore but never quite touches her.

The woman stopped writing and let her mind drift back to the

question scribbled on the scrap of paper in front of her. The pile of journals beckoned her, and as she picked one up, all types of data intermingled and entangled themselves in her mind—dreams, memories, conversations, teaching and learning encounters, the act of writing itself. Her feet planted firmly on the university office floor, but head and heart elsewhere, the woman returned her hands to the keyboard to continue writing.

Chapter Five

The First Weeks' Wants

In which the students and I write our expectations and apprehensions of the course; entangled Wants and Lacks and Knowing are explored; and Boundary Street is investigated
(Weeks 1-3)

To want.

Middle English: the noun from Old Norse *vant*, neuter of *vanr* 'lacking'; the verb from Old Norse *vanta* 'be lacking'. The original notion of 'lack' was early extended to 'need' and from this developed the sense 'desire' (Google Definitions, 2016).

To lack something desirable or essential.

Example: you shall want for nothing while you are with me

Lacking: Expectations

I gulp as I observe the teetering tower of orange and black striped journals threatening to spill across the cream laminate table. The yellow walls of the teaching room are adorned with whiteboards that stretch almost from the ceiling to the floor; the grey and red speckled carpet reminds me of corporate offices. Outside in the hallway, young voices float past speaking of weekends and upcoming assignments and missed lectures and family dinners. Carefully steadying the stack of journals before me, I remove a handful from the top and trace my fingers over the pages as I gaze and graze through them. The slight roughness of the paper and the pages and pages of scrawled hurried writing transports me back to lessons in this room, a dozen or so students sitting expectantly in front of me for the first tutorial. Neither they nor I knew quite what to expect from this course when we began—the type of knowledges we might encounter, the kind of discussions we would have and how the conversations would play out. I spread the journals I hold in my hand across the table and count them—17 x 48-page faint ruled orange and black Olympus exercise books, containing precious words written down in classes like jewels to be treasured. Never telling the whole story, non-innocent textual stagings (Richardson, 2001, p. 878), the reflective learning journals nevertheless hold glimpses into the partial-staged-worlds of students learning and unlearning and thinking and writing about Indigenous education and the roles they will take up in the field. I can't help but *want* to read and consume the journals, to become part of their worlds and know what is inside, no matter how partial and staged. I *want* to read the journals to fill the absence of understanding I have—an understanding of how pre-service teachers make sense of their positioning and their roles in relation to Indigenous education, a field that for most is as yet unexplored, unthought-of, and unknown.

While I know that the journals will never allow me to truly enter the worlds of those who wrote them, they may enable access to a world created between the students, the course and myself; a world we make real in our writing (Hastrup, 2004, pp. 116-117). In this world, students begin to share comments that reveal a little bit about who they are. These peeps that I see as I study the journals help me to feel a connection to those who wrote them. Despite the pseudonyms that I come to recognise the students through in my research, just a few words help to build part of a picture. Zac, the only male student to have written one of the journals I am now using, writes that he is “older than most in this course, went to school in the 80s”. For other students, such as Ivana, their own cultural backgrounds constitute an important part of how they view the world. She writes “My own background and upbringing has made me see a lot of different perspectives. Coming from a closed, conservative Muslim background, I’ve always been subjected to racial comments”. Several of the students draw links between the places in which they live and their contact or lack of contact with Indigenous peoples. One of the journals, written in a neat careful hand, belongs to a student who I know as Felicity. She says, “growing up in an inner-city suburb of Brisbane, I have not had many opportunities to communicate with Indigenous Australians”. Her thoughts are echoed by a student named Macey, who despite being “raised in Cairns where there is a strong Indigenous presence” comments, “as far as education goes I do not know as much as I wish”. For other students, such as Eleanor and Carly, growing up in close contact with Indigenous people meant that they were relatively self-assured that they had more knowledge and understanding of Indigenous people than others in the course. Eleanor writes that spending her youth in a remote town with a large population of Indigenous people meant that she was “likely to be more aware and understanding of the culture and ways of Indigenous groups, in comparison to many of my peers...Many of my friends, peers and people I know in Broome are from Indigenous backgrounds”. Similarly, Eleanor writes that she “grew up with many Indigenous Australians and as a result, finds some of these topics simple and straightforward”, going on to write about the guilt she feels for what her ancestors have done, her despair at her peers’ lack of knowledge, and her own privileged position in the university. I stop reading and grow as still as a statue, frozen by these words as I start to think about these two students and their relationships with Indigenous friends. Did contact with Indigenous peoples make these topics straightforward?

I think of my own experiences, and how the more contact I have with Indigenous peoples, the less straightforward it has become. An uneasy state of reflexive praxis, an uncomfortable knowing of my own subjectivity and relationships (Pillow, 2003) might best define this state of becoming. My relationship with Aunty Ruby, a Mununjali/Gubbi-Gubbi Elder comes to mind, and the utter confusion and despair that I felt and continue to feel about this friendship at different stages. I was and remain aware of the ability of this relationship to be seen as one of cultural authentication, perhaps in the same way Diane Bell is argued to have with Topsy Napurrula Nelson in the 1990s; claiming friendship in a

way that conceals unequal power relationships (Ahmed, 2000; Bell, 1990, 1994; Moreton-Robinson, 2000, 2003b). This friendship was one that grew from a connection my father had running a nature lodge, and Aunt Ruby's generosity in agreeing to work as a "cultural guide" with me—unpaid and unrecognised work. But more so, Aunt Ruby's work with me is more than just the generosity I saw, but instead the *gunyahji* she has for me—the responsibility she acquired when agreeing to meet me that she would be responsible for both my wellbeing as well as the ways in which I teach my students, and the words I write in my research. At the time, I couldn't quite understand this sense of responsibility from which she was unable to look away. These conversations grew into a friendship, but one that is always framed by our situatedness as black and white women living in Australia and by the histories we carry with us, made different by our ages and our social locations. We embody these histories; Aunt Ruby carrying with her the weight of years of racism, a childhood defined by relentless family activism driven by the determination that something must change, the experience of mothering Indigenous children in what she often describes as an unwelcoming environment. My friendship with Aunt Ruby is one that allows me briefly into her world when she so chooses, but my understandings are always still my very own—influenced by my own white, middle-class, Catholic upbringing. Her revealing to me some of her world did perhaps help me to be more aware of and understand Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, and this was her goal—Aunt Ruby is an educator, and she sees her role as passing on her own ways of knowing, being and doing, informed by tens of thousands of years of unbroken cultural evolution. But the more I thought I understood, the more I became aware that I could never really know her world; that the more Aunt Ruby shared, the more complex and crooked the pathway forward became.

With a start, I find myself staring at the pile of journals in front of me, I shake my head to refocus and continue reading, tracing my finger across the words on the pages. Two of the students in my handful wrote about having moved from overseas. They both claim little understanding of Indigenous issues, but are able to draw on their home countries to try to make sense of the Australian context. Regina writes that being from a southern African country, "it is hard for me to be able to relate to the Indigenous people. However, the separation between the African and 'white' people is very similar to the relationship between aboriginal and Australian people". Caitlyn, a North American student, writes that she "didn't learn much about Aboriginal culture, but in America we did have (and currently have) a dark history and similar issues with Native Americans". I think about how both Caitlyn and Regina were using their own experiences and understandings of histories between Indigenous peoples and colonisers to begin to make sense of the Australian context. Would this geographical, psychological and political distance give them the ability to think through what was happening in Australia, in a way that non-Indigenous Australian students struggled with, I wonder? Talking about race and racism and the privileges reaped from a history of dispossession and oppression

was difficult for many. Would the two international students consider how they too were benefitting from the colonisation of Australia, even as more recent arrivals?

As I hold the words that the students have written, I am aware that my reading of the journals is a reading of my own wants for them as an educator as well as a researcher. The state in which I assess the students as entering the course reflects the aspects of the literature that I deem most relevant to my work in this space. For many of the students, a clear introduction of themselves as people inhabiting multiple and varied social locations was lacking in their first few entries. Perhaps they didn't *want* to write their identities; perhaps it did not occur to them that their social locations would so deeply impact the way they travelled through this course. One person who did clearly outline his own social and cultural location in that first week was the one Indigenous student who had given me permission to using his journal as part of the writing of this thesis. His first words in his journal outlined his social position as "a proud indigenous man who has almost completed a Bachelor of Education and my community could not be more proud of me". This introduction of himself reminds me of Moreton-Robinson (2000, p. xv) discussing protocols for introducing oneself to a new group of people: "to provide information about one's cultural location, so that connections can be made on political, cultural and social grounds and relations established". This introduction of students' cultural location was a step that most non-Indigenous students did not take. Then again, perhaps the students were just in *want* of more time to write.

According to Google Definitions, the word "want" is derived from the Old Norse word "vant", the articulation of a lack. I sure was lacking when I started on this research journey. I wanted to "do something worthwhile". I wanted to use my intelligence for the "good of humanity" or something like that. I'm sure I wasn't quite such a zealous do-gooder as I sometimes make myself out to be, falling into the trope of "mercenaries, missionaries or misfits" (Price & Price, 1998, p. 18). But constituting part of my motivation was the idea that I could address some sense of injustice, a lacking and want of justice that I saw around me. I thought I could contribute to a greater project—what this project was, I was not sure. But I'm not sure what I saw as wanting from the education system when I first began—Indigenous people? Non-Indigenous contributions? I was blissfully unaware, lacking in my knowledge of all of the work going on in the different times and spaces that were entangled in the world around me. I was unaware of the work done by Indigenous academics and community members over decades, critiquing the mainstream representations of Indigenous peoples (Langton, 1993), working for the cultural safety of students (Bin-Sallik, 2003), fighting to decolonise research methodologies (Tuhiwai Smith, 2009), and carefully considering how best to incorporate Indigenous knowledges across the university (Nakata, 2006).

And then as an educator, there are all of the things that I do want students to know. "But I thought knowing was violent?" a voice mocks in my mind. I want them to know all of the things that

are as of yet lacking in their understanding of the society in which they live (and I am reminded once again that this is my own determining of a lack, a want; my own construction of the students as lacking, pulling them into my own totality. I am reminded again of St Pierre's *ethics of difficulty* as I try to write my way out of this space, and wonder whether my honesty in acknowledging these perceived lacks—one on the many conditions under which this thesis is written—might help). Not all of the students come into the course lacking in this knowledge; or some of the students know some of the histories and contemporary presents. But for most of the students, the types of lessons offered in the course are new and confronting.

I *want* students to know about the history of Australia, and not just the history that starts in 1770. I *want* students to know that Tasmanian colonisers were asked to walk across the island in a line and shoot Aboriginal people on sight, to know that Truganinni's body was hung up and shown as the prized trophy of the Colonial Project with soft museum lights¹⁴⁶, to know that Boundary Street demarcated the borders where Indigenous people could not cross after dark¹⁴⁷. I *want* students to know that Indigenous students were kicked out of school at the whim of white parents, that they were schooled only to act as domestic servants. I *want* them to know that Indigenous children were taken from their families. I *want* them to know that this place commonly known as Australia is not just a one nation-state with six states and two territories, but that under the borders drawn with straight rulers on a map are hundreds of countries and languages and ways of knowing and ways of being in the world. I *want* my students to know the answer when I ask, "What country are you from?" I *want* them to know that this always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

As judgmental as it may sound, and I'm not sure I can avoid evaluative statements as much as I would like to avoid them, many of the pre-service teachers come into the course in *want* of...well, something hard to define. Re-reading the first entries in the journals I have in my hand once more, I notice that when students were writing about their locations, they were also writing about contact with Indigenous peoples in their everyday lives. Felicity has "not had many opportunities to communicate with Indigenous Australians", whilst Macey has had "few meaningful experiences with Indigenous culture". Zac writes that he had "little contact with aboriginal kids when I grew up. I remember nothing of indigenous education at school". Caitlyn and Regina, the two international students, had also written about the lack of contact. What is it about this interpersonal contact—or a wanting thereof—that might drive students to write about their relationships? Linger in my memory are

¹⁴⁶ Truganinni was a Palawa (Tasmanian Aboriginal) woman living in the 19th century. During her life, she travelled around Tasmania, convincing other tribes to work peacefully with the colonial government. After her death—and expressly against her stated wishes—her body was illegally exhumed and placed in the care of the Tasmanian Museum. For years her bones were shifted between storage and displays. Labelled the "last full-blooded Tasmanian Aboriginal", her death was seen to represent the 'extinction' of Tasmanian Aboriginal people (Bravo, 2015).

¹⁴⁷ 'Boundary Street' refers to multiple streets in the inner city of Brisbane, Australia. I and the students write and explain more about Boundary Street later in this chapter: see Desiring: PEARL and Boundary Street, (p. 126).

university lectures on Allport's *Interpersonal Contact Hypothesis* (1954), suggesting that under "effective" and framed conditions, people with prejudices can learn that "others" are more like "themselves" than "they" might have realised. Levinas, however, would be wary of this strong pull to bring others into one's totality. I move instead towards Diprose (2002) instead, and her writing on Levinas. Our physical presence creates a sense of intercorporeality, disturbing our gendered, raced and classed social bodies. Diprose (2002) argues that it is this disturbance brought upon by our bodies that causes us to think and reminds us that there is always already a trace of the other within us; that there is a "nonvolitional, intercorporeal production of identity and difference that precedes and exceeds both contractual relations between individuals and practices of self" (p. 75). Perhaps this journal writing was a trace of the disturbance that the students writing the journals had felt at different moments of their lives when bodies intra-acted, a reminder that bodies defined as "Aboriginal" and "non-Aboriginal" only exist but are also given meaning in their together-apartness (after Barad, 2014). Other students wrote less about their relationships (or lack thereof) with Indigenous Australians, and focused more on their *lack* of knowledge of the history of Australia. A student named Sarah had "never realised how white people treated the Aboriginals back in the day". After the "video of the 13-year-old girl making a racist remark to an Indigenous player during the Indigenous round of AFL" was played in the lecture, another student called Natalie "didn't understand the reason and history behind why that word was so offensive" when the girl called the Aboriginal football player an ape (Crawford, 2013).

Mitigating this judgement is my recognition of how little I knew of all of the things I wanted students to know, before teaching in the course myself four years ago, or undertaking my own research into these issues in the last few years. The apprehension I felt in that first week that I taught in the course was somewhat driven by a recognition of the lack of knowledge and experience I myself had in this area, and a concern that I perhaps shouldn't be standing in that classroom as an imposter, impersonating somebody who should be there. A little bit of this apprehension returns to me at the start of every semester. Whilst I often questioned my own right to research in this area as well as to teach, I can't recall ever being asked by a student or a colleague why I was considered qualified to teach in this area. I'm not sure what I felt I was in want of, what type of educator I would like to be. An ex-school teacher? An Indigenous academic? A white university educator with years of experience working with Indigenous communities? Would I somehow know more if I inhabited any of these social locations? And what burdens may these locations bring with them? Authority can be conveyed through lived experience; and more importantly, I see it as the right of Indigenous peoples to determine what they view as lacking in classrooms—what they want students to know, rather than what I want students to know. To give this decision-making power over is to work towards sovereignty of education. This is not to discount Indigenous academics' position in a social location where authority is afforded through lived experience, but a university system that privileges those with formal Western education over

other community members who may hold expertise as educators in other ways—“the Academy can only recognise and reward that which it knows” suggests Hart (2003, p. 12), an Indigenous teacher and academic who has managed university-based Indigenous Studies units. Additionally, Indigenous academics and community members who participate in the university system are often devalued and re-marginalised by the institutional privilege of the system under the guise of promoting Indigenous studies (Fredericks, 2009). Yet while Indigenous academics may be perceived as “ideally placed to teach Indigenous ‘content’”, Bond (2014, n. p.) suggests “maybe other academics need to carry some of the intellectual burden”. Indigenous academics teaching Indigenous studies are working with deeply personal accounts, the business becoming riskier and a source of stress (Asmar & Page, 2009). For myself as an educator, words such as Bond’s are a call to share responsibility. Whilst my personal accounts come from a non-Indigenous standpoint, and will never replicate the lived experiences of Indigenous academics as a source of knowledge (Nakata, 2007), I can work with students to share other experiential knowledge gained from my own position.

What other privileges did I have teaching in a course entitled “Indigenous Knowledge and Education” as a young, white, non-Indigenous, middle-class, able-bodied, cis-gendered, heterosexual, teacher? The conversations in my classroom, whilst carefully navigated, were safe topics for me to discuss. My whiteness and the safety it afforded me in the classroom was a topic I was aware of whilst teaching. Picking up my coffee to take another sip, I knock one of the journals to the floor. Bending down to retrieve the fallen book, I recognise my own hand-writing, and pick up my journal that I had written in class as the students wrote their own entries. Flicking through, the word ‘whiteness’ caught my eye. The coffee cup placed securely in the middle of the table, I start to read:

I make race with my colleagues and students in the way I talk to them as one of them. I assure them that I have the same white middle-class background as them, that I shared the same lived experiences, that I knew where they were coming from. I assure them that it is okay to be white middle-class, because I do feel it is important to find a common point of connection to move forwards from. But our point of connection is in our whiteness, in the way we dress and the way we talk...Am I not just performing my whiteness so that these students will like and trust me? How does this play into the dangerous business of whiteness and race-talk? Am I failing to interrogate my own Whiteness in my teaching practices, just as Galman, Pica-Smith and Rosenberger (2010) discussed? Or am I establishing a careful relationship, a basis from which dangerous talk can happen? (my journal, September 26, 2014)

Reading back on this reflection¹⁴⁸, a flush spreads across my cheeks as I think about how I wrote myself into being as I wrote my social world (Richardson, 1997, p. 137). My assumption, as a

¹⁴⁸ This paragraph, my commentary on my journal, was written two years after the passage was included in this thesis, which was a year after I wrote in my journal in our writing time during a tutorial class. The past folds itself into who I am

teacher, that my students were white and middle-class, my collapsing of all difference into a category where others were more like myself. Was it not this type of community built on shared experience that Levinas was critical of (Diprose, 2002, p. 168)? A projection of my self-same onto those around me, defining what it meant to be a pre-service teacher and disregarding the critical differences within ourselves that constituted each of our subjectivities?

In reflecting on her own experiences as an Indigenous academic in Indigenous Studies, Bond (2014, n. p.) writes, “[p]erhaps it is easier to talk about the ‘native’ when the ‘native’ is not present”. Even in a course such as Indigenous education, the university can remain a culturally unsafe environment for Indigenous academics who are asked to discuss difficult issues with classrooms full of primarily non-Indigenous students. Race and racism become embodied and Indigenous academics become “disruptive, confrontational and confusing” for non-Indigenous students who struggle to reconcile their imaginary conceptualisations of how Indigenous people should be with their idea of the good academic (Bond, 2014). As Ahmed writes, the same bodies who create discomfort on account of their non-whiteness are the same bodies that carry the burden of making others comfortable, of trying to not stick out too much (Ahmed, 2012b, p. 13). Diversity workers are seen as diverse because their bodies mark difference, a difference that is used to determine who is to do the work of diversity. Standing as a young, white, non-Indigenous, middle-class, able-bodied, cis-gendered, heterosexual, teacher in that teaching space—actively capitalising on my points of connection—meant that my body was less disruptive and confrontational. In one way, I thought, this allowed me to quickly reach a position from which those risky dialogues could happen. But as I sit in the teaching room and think back now, I wonder in which ways I was and continue to reify whiteness and white authority as normalised in the classroom. My own practices often went and go unquestioned by the white students in the room, accepted as the way things are. An Indigenous teacher’s work would surely be held under a harsher spotlight. The entanglement continues.

As I had written these words in my journal, I hadn’t been quite sure whether I would be able to navigate these conversations around whiteness in a way that was respectful to both Indigenous people and the students. As Galman et al. (2010) suggest, interrogating whiteness and engaging in anti-racist practice in the classroom requires navigations that are simultaneously aggressive and tender. If I took seriously my role of an anti-racist educator, then I had to be sure to be cautious of students wanting to stay silent when conversations got tricky and the ways I might reaffirm this “white non-participation” (p. 230) in order to privilege the white comfort of silence. The want which is a lack transforms into a desire to stay silent and keep race-talk wanting, to not respond to the wants of those who insist these

writing myself into being now, and it requires careful and at times painful attention to that which we wrote ourselves into being at a different moment in time (my arms are shrinking back into my body as I type, resistant to experiencing this diffraction).

topics be discussed. And once students engaged in such dialogues—what if one of the students said something racist? How would I react and respond? Did I have the understanding and the skill set to guide the conversation to an educative dialogue without making the student feel too confronted? What if the students didn't say anything at all; the trepidation at conceivable confrontations keeping their lips pressed firmly together? I had seen myself in that kind of student. I was interested in Indigenous education, but not entirely sure of my position as a non-Indigenous educator; not quite sure how my motives would be seen or what these even were. I also saw myself in the students who were preparing themselves to engage in unsafe dialogues. As Leonardo and Porter (2010) describe, race talk must inherently be risky for white participants if this race dialogue is to be liberatory, “Or,” I think to myself, hooks (1994) coming to mind, “if the classroom is to become a location of possibility, a place to transgress current limitations. An elsewhere.” I smile as Haraway (1992) also comes to mind. If not, violence continues to be enacted upon non-white participants (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Tuck and Yang's (2012) words refuse to leave my thoughts: “Decolonisation is not a metaphor”. For race-talk in the classroom to be a decolonising practice, anti-racist practice needs to go beyond a social justice approach that fails to interrogate and displace colonised ways of speaking about Indigenous others. And in the same moment (cutting together-apart once more), white students also continue to be totalised into a pre-determined reproduction of what it means to be in the world, a pedagogy and epistemology of wilful ignorance (Sullivan & Tuana, 2007) defining their horizons. I pick up my own journal again and look to the entry on the very first page, and see in my own writing, as caught as it was/is in my totality, traces of commitment, connection and responsibility to de-stabilising together with students the walls that were built to hold us each in our places:

I hope they like me, but I hope they/we learn from our dialogues—more important than being liked. I think of the concept of a safe space, of Leonardo and Porter's (2010) paper that claims that race dialogue is ultimately an unsafe practice. I agree with Leonardo, I think that some of the most fundamental changes within myself have come from times when I felt unsafe, when I felt that everything I know about the world is no longer a certainty, but rather a learned (and taught) version of what transpired.

Needing: Difficult Knowledges

I think back to the wants that provide a way to think about both students' and my own experiences in the space of Indigenous education. My want of change for the students, my want for them to learn from “our dialogues”, and my want for the students' lack of knowledge to transform into something else, just as my own lack of knowledge had. How I wanted that want of knowledge to transform too, I did not quite know. What might it mean that students enter a course with such a lack of knowledge, I think to myself? Perhaps this reflects, as the one student who claimed prior

understanding suggested, the school system that has only recently begun to systematically embed Indigenous perspectives and train teachers to consider the same? But several students write also of the shame and embarrassment that they have not yet encountered this type of knowledge in their university degree. I wonder what contact instigates this embarrassment? The teaching team? The content themselves? Perhaps they come so face-to-face with their own lack of knowledge that they cannot help but respond with responsibility. What institutional willing (Ahmed, 2012a) keeps degree programs such as education in want of—lacking in—Indigenous perspectives; keeps universities the home that in order to let strangers in, wills them to lose some of their strangeness and to become more like the institution? If anthropologists and other researchers—including education researchers—are the inhabitants of the home (Ahmed, 2000), can the institution make space for Indigenous knowledges without “translat[ing] the foreign into terms we understand, but in some way that it still can live in the writing as the foreign” (Ahmed, 2000, p. 52)?

Thumbing through the journals, I think to myself “What students don’t lack is care”. I think back to how often the concept of resistance has arisen in the research I had read in anti-racist education: defiance and anger in such cases are the manifestations of not wanting to learn and resisting the course and the teacher (Aveling, 2006). I think back across four years of teaching in the course, over the hundreds of journals I have read as a researcher-educator, and can think of very few cases where students professed not to care or were angry at what we were teaching. Even when these stories are seen to represent only a “significant minority” of students enrolled in Indigenous Studies courses, as Hollinsworth’s (2016, p. 419) research suggests, a discourse around students’ resistance appears to dominate the research literature on university students undertaking Indigenous Studies or courses driven by an anti-racist agenda as a compulsory subject.

But a lack of care? No. Many of the students in their first journal entry wrote about the emotions that the course was already evoking. They referred to Australian history, the Adam Goodes incident, stories of racism, expectations of the course and reflections on the idea that this was the first time many had formal education around Indigenous Australia:

unbelievable
shameful ashamed embarrassed
guilt shocking
nervous confused confronting
overwhelmed
saddened anger frustration
daunting despair disgusted

Perhaps, I thought to myself, we need a new way to think about students who appear to struggle in courses such as Indigenous Knowledges and Education and other anti-racist programs.

Instead of categorising such students as resistant, despite all efforts, how else could we think-research-write about the students who push back to carefully-designed obstructions placed into their patterns of thought—the students who do not necessarily want what we as teacher educators want? How might the different patterns of thought that students follow through, either before or after being diffracted into different patterns by course obstructions, be linked to coloniality? How could thinking about the epistemic violence of non-Indigenous people claiming to know about Indigenous people allow for another way of understanding the struggles that students undertake in writing their positions on the Indigenous education landscape? I again think about Ahmed’s (2005) writing on the politics of bad feeling. Is instigating compassion and care in students enough to create change in our work as teachers, across all horizons of education? Even as that compassion and care might appear to allow a certain nearness to Indigenous peoples, the pain carried by Indigenous people through stories of exclusion, dispossession, genocide, removals may be taken on by non-Indigenous people, “an appropriation that transforms and perhaps even neutralises their pain into our sadness” (Ahmed, 2005, p. 74). This thought haunts me as I read through those first journal entries, the pages marked with words of pain and compassion as students slowly acquire some of the knowledge that they hadn’t held before. I myself had been saddened again and again by the stories I was told and had read. How might this pain approximate a violence of knowing the other, somehow supposing I could know their pain and thus transform it into my own? Could this pain and sadness—this compassion—become something other than an appropriation of violence, “sustain[ing] the violence of appropriation” (Ahmed, 2005, p. 74)?

Pedagogies of remembrance provide a way to think about how we might come to work with what McConaghy terms “curriculum knowledge...[that] is too much to bear” (2003, p. 11). How do we work with difficult memories “such that they become more than either merely information, or disengaged voyeurism” (Irena as cited in Simon, DiPaolantonio & Clamen, 2002, n. p.)? Traces of Levinas permeate this work. I find myself paying close attention to the geography of Simon and colleagues’ project: their paper on the pedagogy of remembrance emerged from a project on remembering the Vilna Ghetto—the Nazi occupation of Lithuania’s capital city. Something of a ghost lingers in both Levinas’ and Simon and colleagues’ writing; memories of the Holocaust. And the ghost that is one of responsibility upon coming into contact with others, with difficult memories. To engage in a pedagogy of remembrance is to curate a curriculum where we are unable to remain indifferent: that the experience with other memories impinges on our subjectivities in a way we cannot ignore (Simon et al., 2002). In the moment of being unable to remain indifferent, our becoming-agencies are entangled within each other. It is this entanglement as a teacher that reminds me to approach a pedagogy of remembrance with care. Perhaps this is another facet of an ethics of difficulty, I think remembering my conversation with the writing women (see Chapter Three), how to approach my teaching praxis by balancing responsibilities to multiple groups of people.

Desiring: PEARL and Boundary Street

Already in those early weeks, students were confronted with some of the painful unknown histories of which they are in want. The ghosts of Brisbane's colonial history impacted students in a way that moved them; left them unable to remain indifferent. In the first few weeks of semester, students in both cohorts were introduced to the PEARL workshop (Mackinlay & Barney, 2014a). I think back to my own experiences with PEARL, designed by Liz, the course coordinator (see Chapter Two). PEARL is a transformative learning program for Indigenous Australian Studies for tertiary education students. The teaching and learning packages were developed in conjunction with Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics from various Australian universities, working together with a reference group of Indigenous academics overseeing the process. As an inquiry-based approach, students using the PEARL packages to investigate a range of different topics with guidance provided by a facilitator. Clearly articulated political and anti-racist, anti-colonial agendas are translated into curriculum. PEARL can be seen as encompassing "political, embodied, active, and reflective aspects of this teaching and learning approach" (Mackinlay & Barney, 2014a, p. 33).

The particular pedagogy package the students partook in that first week had three stimulus that all considered boundaries—not that I think even I realised that the first time teaching in the course. A picture of the Tindale map¹⁴⁹, a photo of Boundary Street in Brisbane, a link to the Musgrave Park protests¹⁵⁰: all of these stimuli looked at different types of boundaries that did/do/will exist in an Australian landscape that incorporates Indigenous and not just Indigenous perspectives¹⁵¹. The boundaries between language groups, demarcated by a non-Indigenous anthropologist as static, yet challenging the conventional non-Indigenous thought that Indigenous people were nomadic. The street that segregated Indigenous and non-Indigenous people outside of the hours that Indigenous people were expected to provide domestic service (Police Towns Act 1839): a boundary patrolled by troopers cracking stock-whips; a boundary that separated those who were seen to belong from those who didn't.

¹⁴⁹ The Tindale map refers to the map drawn by anthropologist Norman Tindale that mapped hundreds of different nations' group boundaries (see http://archives.samuseum.sa.gov.au/tribalmmap/html/map_L2_C1.html, or <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia> for the commonly used Aboriginal languages map based on Tindale's original research). The map is a fascinating and contested artefact of knowledge production. Lyndon Davis, Gubbi-Gubbi man, tells a story to university students that Gubbi is a word implying a negative – as in "No, go away" – that was then recorded as the name of the group. Yet Tindale's work has been important in contesting the doctrine of Terra Nullius and that Indigenous people were nomadic, and that there was/is 'one' pan-Indigenous group.

¹⁵⁰ See <http://youtu.be/pT0hNpPAqZY> for the video that students use as a stimulus. Musgrave Park is a park in Central Brisbane. In 2012, protests were held when the Aboriginal Tent Embassy (a satellite of the Canberra Tent Embassy) refused to leave the park in order for the annual Greek festival to be set up. Musgrave Park has long been a meeting place between Turrbal and Juggera people.

¹⁵¹ The challenge of trying to contextualise these names is that they are the starting point for complex inquiries and it is hard for me to make an agential cut and tell you what is or isn't important to know. I've left so much out, and yet maybe you know more than I do, or have never heard of these places or ideas. If you haven't, I can encourage you to take on the same activity the students did, and start an open-ended exploration.

And thirdly, a park established on a traditional meeting place between different groups, hugging Boundary Street as well as the boundary provided by the river that hugs the land. A Tent Embassy that declared sovereignty. A protest where the sovereign embassy, rebranded as protestors, were evicted.

Opening one of the journals, I see the name Caren inscribed on the cover with a ballpoint pen. In Caren's reflection on the PEARL workshop, these confrontations start to arise. As Caren wrote, "Today we took part in the PEARL pedagogy and analysed 3 stimulus. One was a picture of Boundary St in Spring Hill." I think back to that day in the classroom, that teaching and learning moment:

*Boundaries
Drawn on maps
Erected along streets
Dividing city parks*

*A street sign
Brings together apart
Time space matter
People histories memories
Turrbal Jagera Colonisers*

*Students on laptops
Chatter and search
Boundaries drawn backwards
To the past
Writing forwards
To the future*

*Boundaries constructed
In maps streets parks
In tutorial classrooms
Encircling
Entangling
Demarcating
(if only momentarily)
students teachers histories
Indigenous and non-Indigenous
The boundaries cut
Together-apart.*

The students were asked to research the main issues the materials raised as educators and learners in terms of Indigenous Australian Education. What came out of this experience was difficult knowledges that moved the students to consider what they knew—or what knowledge was *wanting*—about histories and present day in the city in which most were living and in which many had grown up. The knowledges that the students encountered caused strong reactions in many students, especially

with regard to Boundary Street. Why Boundary Street? Perhaps because the Boundary Streets that encircle and enclose the city constitute landmark: several of the students attended the inner city private schools located along these boundaries that continue to demarcate access, and many others spent their weekends shopping or drinking cups of coffee in the cafes along these lines. The stimulus of Boundary Street seemed to and continues to provoke a desire to investigate further for students who use the PEARL package.

Turning my attention back to the journals, I think about this pivotal PEARL activity, one of the first confrontations students had with unknown knowledges; with a difficult pedagogy of memory and remembrance. Reading the reflections, the pre-service teachers' reactions to this little pearl of knowledge crystallise, changing my understandings of how pre-service teachers move through a pedagogy of remembrance. But the words also move me.

2. Image of Boundary Street, Spring Hill – an inner city suburb 2 kilometres north of the Brisbane CBD, Queensland.



Figure 8. A photo of Boundary Street as presented in the PEARL Package Number 1
© Teaching For Change, photo by Janine Roberts.

Unable to cross after 4pm or on Sundays

Never thought
about why Boundary Street is named that.
Never learnt
that Boundary Street was used
to separate Indigenous people.
Never knew
these things before.
Feel ashamed and embarrassed, a little silly.

I/we/they learnt about the history behind Boundary Street
and the significance it holds.
I/we/they were shut off
from the land
which in past history
was rightfully mine/our/theirs.
Disgusting that this happened
when this land was
and has always been mine/ours/theirs.
Makes me/us/them see how just how horrid
some white people could be.

It would be wrong to take it down
because Indigenous people would feel
as if I/we/they are trying
to erase the past.

I still remembered the reaction in my own tutorial group. In my class one student, a tall lanky boy from the country wearing rugby shorts and thongs, asked me if there was anything else he didn't know about. I assured him there was, and that I probably knew some of the things he didn't know, but was also unaware on many. At the time, I hoped that more confronting information would "lead to a discussion on why there is so much we don't know, or an eagerness to know more and find out what we don't know". The students were shocked, and ashamed and disgusted at not just what they learnt, but how little they knew. I sensed the class wanted to *find out more* and had *an openness to being disrupted* (my journal, August 5, 2014).

As I sit now in that yellow-walled classroom looking at the orange-and-black striped journals, I wonder about my own thoughts back then. I had appeared so sure that what was necessary was an eagerness to know. To care. If students could find out enough about the histories of Australia, and if I could evoke some form of emotive response in the students, an entanglement with the material practices of boundary-forming that had shaped and continue to shape Indigenous/non-Indigenous lives in Brisbane—well, I thought that this entanglement might constitute more decolonised, more socially just educators. But as I sit now in this room thinking back to Boundary Street, I wonder how Boundary Street might be standing in for a deeper history of pain. Ahmed’s writing on landmines and how they can be used to understand a *politics of bad feeling* comes to mind. Reflecting on the context of what it might mean for non-Indigenous Australians to construct for themselves an identity based on shame and feeling bad (in the context of reconciliation), Ahmed writes:

And yet, to make landmines the “cause” of pain and suffering is to stop too soon in a chain of events: landmines are themselves effects of histories of war; they were placed by humans to injure and maim other humans. The word evokes that history, but it also stands in for it, as a history of war, suffering and injustice. (2005, p. 74)

The students’ shifting selves at this point appeared to focus on the bad feeling evoked by learning about Boundary Street—the outrage that was instigated by learning about Brisbane’s history. But how did they translate this outrage, and was it standing in for a larger history of war, colonisation, suffering and injustice? Was thinking about Boundary Street stopping too soon? None of the students whose journals I held in my hand were able to connect Boundary Street or the Musgrave Park Tent Embassy to a longer history of colonisation, of which they were an effect. But was I being unrealistic in what I could expect, I think to myself? In those first few weeks, when students were initially moving from that state of lacking knowledge, experience, and contact, it would surely be unreasonable to expect that students were able to extend their new learnings around local histories and presents to a broader picture of colonisation. Or was it?

I throw the journals back on the desk, feeling frustrated, and then immediately felt guilty and picked them up again to form a neat pile. I know better than to treat the journals with a lack of care, no matter how frustrated I was with trying to think through the theorising of how we taught. The journals as matter intra-act with myself as teacher-researcher-learner, as well as the students as learner-teachers. The journals entangle us as teachers and learners within this space, a material act of knowledge production, constituting both the students as learners and teachers and myself as teacher and researcher. It is because of this entanglement that is part of the differential becoming of the world (Barad, 2007, p. 353) that the ontology of our knowledge production matters. It wasn’t the fault of the students, or the words that the journals held within, as much as that the writings might be the impetus

for my thinking and theorising and thus exasperation. I had to be careful to maintain an ethics of care and difficulty in how I treated these journals, regardless of the moments that I didn't *want* to.

Taking a deep breath, I think back to Ahmed's (2005) writing once more, and ask again, thinking: was Boundary Street stopping too soon? Should students be expected to connect a stimulus such as what they encountered in the PEARL package to the longer histories of "war, suffering, injustice"? I had and have a strong want for students to fill any wants of knowledge with heartfelt, rather than disinterested, information—to be moved by the pearls of knowledge that they found as they were researching. Ahmed (2005) asks us to consider how—for those who are not harmed by the event that triggers bad feeling—a politics of bad feeling can enable a move from away from feelings of personal guilt and individual wrongdoing to a more collective sense of shame. In doing so, certain others are asked to carry the burden of personal bad feelings. Indigenous peoples are asked to recount personal stories of dispossession, and the non-Indigenous nation unburdens itself of personal responsibility. In this scenario of Boundary Street, I could look at students as becoming the subject of bad feeling, focusing their shame and embarrassment on the treatment of Indigenous peoples, who become the object of this feeling. But Ahmed (2005) also suggests that to place bad feeling about Indigenous dispossession and oppression in the realm of the collective is to suggest "[t]his history is not personal" (p. 72). And for the students, their feelings of shame and embarrassment were personal: "*I feel ashamed and embarrassed; I feel a little silly*" (emphasis my own). These feelings were centered around not knowing the history of Boundary Street. In some ways, I feel that Boundary Street might be stopping too soon, giving the students a strong focus point on which to direct their feelings of shame; a historical timepoint that allows the students in the teaching space to remain safe from considerations of individual actions. Yet such a statement would not consider those very real feelings of personal emotion and responsibility that students appeared to experience as they entangle themselves with material histories.

I stop to think about the ways in which I myself am trying to understand the students, twisting and turning different possibilities and angles through my mind. Despite my conversation with the old man outside of the library (see Chapter Four), my own desire to categorise and evaluate the students burns through. Despite wanting to consider whether students' engagement with knowledge *about* Indigenous peoples could be seen as epistemological violence, I find myself trying to understand and define the students again and again.

And these wants bring me back to the beginning, to the moment of entering the classroom and picking up the journals, contemplating what it is I might be wanting, searching for, as I follow the students' writing around. Multiple difficulties entangle themselves, and I myself within them, and I within myself as teacher-researcher-writer-learner, through the writing of the first few weeks of semester. There is a difficulty in finding a way to (not)write *about* students; to respond to their words

and writing without making claims to a representation of who the students might be becoming. Such a knowledge claim would be an act of epistemological violence, a drawing of their interiorities into my totality (Levinas, 1969), a building of walls around what it means to be a pre-service teacher learning about Indigenous education. Yet at the same time, it is necessary to engage in an ethics of difficulty around interrogating the pre-service teachers' own words that might want to do the same. In those early weeks, the students wrote of a strong desire to know, to fill the lacks in their own knowledge bases. Is this desire to know what Levinas (1989, p. 78) might term a "disinterested acquisition of knowledge"; a continuing colonial mentality that seeks to know the other more in order to better control? Does it matter whether the thirst for knowledge is disinterested or not—surely all claims to knowledge of the other would fix that other into our own frames of reference, and thus, enact epistemological violence?

There is also the difficulty of entangling this research with our praxes of teaching and learning. Perhaps Boundary Street—even if it does stop too soon—and its pedagogy of remembrance provides an alternative type of knowledge. Instead of wanting to know the other, knowing one's self and the history of a place with which many (not all) of the students feel connected might expand one's totality, a differential becoming as part of the world in which they/I live (Barad, 2007). The difficult knowledge of past brutalities reminds us that the past is other to the present (Levinas, 1989), that the ghosts we carry with us who refuse to leave us to remain indifferent are a trace of the other. Having looked this other face-to-face, we are called into responsibility; called to respond (Simon et al., 2002).

Chapter Six

A Few Weeks In

In which the students and I start to find new Relationships with Knowledge; Race and Whiteness Crash into the Classroom; and Desire is Deliberated Upon.
(Weeks 4-6)

To want.

A verb.

To have a desire to possess or do (something); wish for.

Example: I want an apple.

Wanting the room to be empty, I peek into my old teaching room and smile to find it devoid of people. Nudging the door further open with my shoulder, I struggle to balance a coffee and water bottle on top of my laptop and the stack of journals. I had wanted sustenance before sitting down to read and write. Whenever I think about the discussions that my students and I had had in tutorials over the last four years of teaching, I am instantly transported back to that room with the fading yellow walls tinged with the white-blue glare of an interactive whiteboard. I look at the lectern that I had started off hiding behind in those first weeks of tutorials, half of my body safely hidden from view as I talked students through slides and activities. I worked out quickly that I hated standing behind that lectern, protected by a barrier, and instead started sitting at the table with the students, clicking through the PowerPoint be damned. I desired the types of conversations that needed to be respectfully face-to-face and body-to-body, wanted to look into their eyes instead of staring at the expanses of desks before me. Taking a gulp of the still-hot take-away cup, I let the smell of coffee take possession of my senses and shut my eyes to imagine myself in that room at another time.

A Desire to Possess

There are lots of things I have desired to possess or do along the pathway of this doctoral research. I have desired to possess a PhD. I have desired to be a good researcher. And along the way, I have desired to possess knowledge, to know more, to have access to a great and mighty truth. I don't know if it mattered to me *what* it was I wanted to know—I had a hunger to learn more about the world in which I was living. Perhaps I thought I could better navigate the world if I knew about it. Perhaps I just thought I would be a better person if I were more knowledgeable. Perhaps knowledge is for me “one of those impossible things characterized by Gayatri Spivak as that which we cannot not desire”

(Haraway, 1992, p. 296). Despite its problematics, knowledge may become “something we cannot do without, but can never ‘have’”. We must find another relationship to [knowledge] besides reification and possession.” Sipping my coffee once more, I think about Ahmed’s (2005, p. 84) work on feeling better—we must find another relationship with the knowing about histories of violence, instead of seeking to overcome the bad feeling this knowing creates. One that does not sustain the histories of violence through appropriating the pain of others, so that one can paradoxically feel good about feeling bad. I write these words from the position of a non-Indigenous “we”: as Ahmed (2005) suggests, Indigenous people are asked to carry personal and emotional knowledges of violence, where non-Indigenous people can wear this burden as part of a nation. Last week’s writing about Boundary Street soars through my head as I think about the types of relationships students were building with histories and difficult knowledges. They started to think about and feel particular emotions as they came to know these histories: disgust and horror. Yet these comments remained in the past tense. “Land which in past history was rightfully theirs”. “This land was and has always been theirs”. “Erasing the past”. What about the present, I wonder? What type of relationship would be less possessive of others’ pain?

Desires also play out strongly as a way of controlling Indigenous peoples. If to want is to desire to possess, then this desire to possess may be a way in which race and whiteness are performed in education: whiteness becomes a way of seeking to control and displace the will of Indigenous peoples. Moreton-Robinson (2004a; 2005; 2011) writes of the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty as a way of staking claims on Indigenous sovereignty. Operating through discourse, possessive logics work as a mode of rationalisation, imposing a white patriarchal will on Indigenous peoples and lands, who are seen by institutions as will-less. A possessive logic denies “what it cannot own—the sovereignty of the Indigenous other” (Moreton-Robinson, 2011, p. 647). My eyes flicker to the Levinas book tucked in my bag on the ground. Traces of Levinas’ thinking make their way into my writing and thinking about Moreton-Robinson’s work; both driven by a desire to bring another into one’s totality. For Moreton-Robinson, this desire is one of possession, for Levinas, the desire operates through an acquisition of knowledge. Levinas had also argued that it was impossible to know an other, and that to exercise total freedom from the position of an individual would be to deny others’ being (Levinas, 1969). This argument is at the heart of Levinasian thinking—ethics are derived from knowing/being that we are not alone in the world, and refraining from drawing Others into our totalities by claiming to know who and what they are. Moreton-Robinson, who draws on Derrida’s construction of sovereignty, seems to echo these ideas once more. The impossibility of white nations and peoples to know Indigenous people leads to an impulse to deny and refuse their being; an exercise of white sovereignty at the stake of Indigenous sovereignty; a further investment in the desire to control.

Where Moreton-Robinson suggests that possessive logics are driven by an underlying desire to “reproduce and reaffirm, ownership, control and domination” (2011, p. 647), I wonder whether possessive logics work in the same way to explain the students’ every day rationalisations of their learnings. It could be argued that to possess others’ pain is to continue a relationship of control and domination, where non-Indigenous becoming-teachers operate by dispossessing Indigenous peoples of pain. Some of the words the students have written in their journals suggest this idea. Carly writes, “I personally don’t want anyone to speak for me or categorise me and I believe that is an innate characteristic of human beings, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be no different”. Her words remind me of Ahmed (2012, p. 3): “One form of will seems to involve the rendering of other wills as willful; one form of will assumes the right to eliminate the others.” In willing herself to be uncategorisable, Carly wills away Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ right to define their own wills. Instead, she wills what they should be—to be no different.

But holding the journals and reading the words the students have written, I consider if possessive logic could be playing out in another way. I think back to conversations I have with students early in the course. Sometimes we begin to think and feel differently about a topic, but the words to express these new thoughts escape us. We are in want of new discourses to write, think, know, be and do our work in Indigenous Studies; a discourse that moves away from wanting to possess.

These thoughts around possession return me back to my thoughts on desiring knowledge. If you were to ask me where the desire for knowledge came from, I am not sure I could really answer that. And I am not yet quite sure what new type of relationship I am seeking with knowledge, or I am proposing students seek with knowledge. I just know we cannot not want knowledge, but we can never “have” it. To seek to possess that knowledge would be to reduce the strangeness of others to my/our own totalities (Levinas, 1969). Levinas’ writing could perhaps offer a different way to imagine a relationship with knowledge that refuses reification and opposes possession. This relationship would have to refuse seeking to know-categorise-define an other, so that we are able to understand and therefore control their being and will them will-less. Instead, what if we as teachers and students were to build a new type of relationship that reaches out into the unknown-ness, and begin engaging in a conversation that is written and spoken on terms we may not understand? This relationship would require us to let go of control, to enable that other who we could never really truly know to remain themselves in their alterity.

In the same way that I cannot not want knowledge, students also have their own desires. There are desires for their future classrooms, to be socially just educators, often characterised by doing the ‘right’ thing, although the rightness of is rarely defined. Bella says she wants to do “the right thing for myself and for the children” when faced with challenges from school communities. Reflecting on the

use of “‘race-neutral’ teaching strategies” in the classroom, Sarah wants to “help bring that problem...to an end”. The students also desire a different future and kindle a “hope that things can be different” (Ahmed, 2005, p. 84). They are perhaps trying to create a different relationship with our histories in the way that Ahmed (2005) speaks of. Reflecting on their future work as educators, Ivana writes that she doesn’t “want to be the type of teacher that believes that we should teach Indigenous Education through a white perspective and as though Aboriginal peoples were here in the past but not here today”. Ivana, who had already written about how her cultural background allowed her to see multiple perspectives, was able to critique the ways in which Indigenous education could be taught: from white perspectives or not. For Natalie, there was a desire to “instil in students the want to participate in the world around them and become active citizens helping to make life sustainable for everyone”. She desired to teach in a way that would make students desire to be active agents, to be intra-connected with those around them. Carly also desired to create change “in the way my students feel, view and understand Australia, its cultures and all of its people”. The pre-service teachers were beginning to entangle their learning of theory with the various wants and desires: desires based on particular sets of discourses, including the idea of teachers as architects of social worlds. Was this desire to create change any different to my own desires that I held for the students in my classroom? Surely, I think to myself, this is what I am wanting and desiring from the students I teach, as both an educator and researcher? An entanglement with a sense of responsibility for their future work and capacity to enact change; a commitment to doing other than how they themselves were taught. Yet more questions could be asked of ourselves as educators and researchers. When Carly wants to seek change, what type of change is it that she wants? Who gets to define the terms on which change occurs? Ahmed (2005, p. 74) challenges us to consider who is the “object of hope in the narrative”, the “agent of change”. In the students’ reflective learning journals, the future children are the objects of hope, changed by the pre-service teacher-becoming-future-teacher instigating and initiating new ways of thinking. Much like myself and the pre-service teachers I write about, I think to myself, struck still by the similarity. What right to define wills am I willing away in the writing of these words?

And sometimes, we may want something that denies how we want that want to play out. Ivana writes, “I just genuinely want my school kids to learn about Aboriginal and Australian history in a way that is completely transparent. Not in a way that I think. Not in a way that I want them to understand”. In this reflection, Ivana desires something that goes beyond her desire—she recognises that what she wants is not necessarily what she wants. Underlying this is a belief that there is a transparent way to teach history, a way that history “should be” taught. Sometimes we think in ways we don’t want, we don’t desire. Or is this instead a lack, a deficiency? If we have no other framework to think with, we are left to want in this way. Ivana comes to the realisation that her relationship with knowledge about Indigenous Australians is very much directed by these dominant frameworks. She writes that, “Asking

[my tutor] about her own personal experiences and what that meant to her made me realize I was thinking along social Darwinism way—even though I didn't want to and was appalled by the theory to begin with”.

With all of these desires dancing through my head, I lay my head down on the table to rest, making a pillow of journals. The coffee isn't working the way I had hoped. Perhaps a quick nap might help me clarify my thoughts. As soon as I shut my eyes, I drift off to another elsewhere that looked very much like here—an elsewhere that we may one day yet learn to see and build here (Haraway, 1992).

Race and whiteness crash into the classroom: A playlet written from students' journals and my own entanglements with the writing

The scene opens on a familiar yellow-walled classroom lit with downward lighting and the soft white-grey techno-glare emanating from the interactive whiteboard, used in this classroom, as in so many others, simply as a projector for PowerPoint slides. Groups of tables are clustered throughout the room with students scattered sparsely around these. The tutorial group is meeting following a lecture on the social construction of race, Critical Race Theory, and whiteness studies. Students are chatting but there seems to be a sense of unease in the air. Some students snack on sandwiches, others sip on smoothies or coffees. Some students (Caren and Macey) are missing from the classroom this week. The tutor, Ailie, arrives in the room juggling a display folder stuffed with lecture notes and readings, and a cardboard box filled with orange and black striped journals. She deposits her teaching materials onto the lectern and turns to face the class.

Ailie: *[speaking loudly over the sound of chattering students]* Just in the nick of time! Alright guys, can you please drag your chairs out the front and form a circle, whilst I get the Powerpoint up?

There is a hustle and bustle as the students push tables towards the walls of the room and pull chairs forwards. The circle that is made resembles more of a ragged oval. Meanwhile, Ailie inserts a USB into the computer and hurriedly opens up a prepared PowerPoint presentation, glancing at her phone to check the time. She then drags a chair over to join the group, and a few students smile as they move outwards to make space for her in their conversation

Ailie: *[sitting down with the group]* Thanks everyone. Okay, let's get started. The lecture today looked at the idea of race as a social construct, particularly in terms of whiteness studies and Critical Race Theory. You

might be asking yourself, just what is something like discussing race and Critical Race Theory doing in a nice field like education?

Some of the students laugh awkwardly, recognising the reference to the week's set reading (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Others stay silent, looking confusedly at each other. They don't appear to get the joke.

Ailie: *[continuing talking]* And what does talking about race have to do with Indigenous education? In the lecture, Liz *[the course coordinator, Chapter Two]* spoke about race as the elephant in the room—something we all think about but try not to notice. So this is our chance to talk about race as a class in a safe space. Remember as we talk, safe space means safe for other people in the room, as well as for yourself. We want to talk openly, but with care for each other. So, who wants to start?

There is a moment of silence. Some students meet each others' eyes, others look at the ground or off into the distance. Zac, a mature age student, clears his throat to speak and goes first.

Zac: [Well,] today's lecture on the idea of race as a construct of discourses, cultural processes and values, was quite confronting for me. The fact that the concept of race has no biological basis but is constructed through interactions of people, their cultures, nation and class structures.

Bella: [Yeah], I recognise that Liz spoke about this aspect in the lecture and recognise that race is a social construct, shaping cultures and is communicative, discursive and meaningful.

The metaphorical ice being broken, other students now appear eager to join in. They lean forward on their chairs and wait. Eleanor smiles and begins to speak.

Eleanor: Today's lecture on race was very interesting, I've heard of race as being socially constructed before, when I was studying social sciences. However I really didn't understand where they were going with it. I have always grown up with the understandings that race has something to do with everyone's biological make up. I'm not sure why exactly. Maybe it's because I never really thought about or maybe it's to do with my schooling and the covert messages I received.

Joanna turns to face Eleanor, a look of slight confusion on her face. She appears to be grappling with the idea of race as a social construct and trying to apply this to her prior understandings of race, picked up here and there, from family, media, classrooms, but never quite discussed explicitly and clearly.

Joanna: I'm fairly certain in Year 12 our modern history teacher informed us that Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders are not a race... So then I think... What is race? In the lecture it was stated that race is not a description—it is made in and through discourse. What does this mean?

Courtney: Race-construction [was] created by white people in order to separate themselves from others. [It is] used to judge those people unfavourably.

Eleanor: Race is something we have formed over time, it's not fixed. I think one of the things I picked up in the lecture especially was how often it is the "others" who make up the concept of race and the people who are put in the binaries have the opportunity to either reaffirm or contest it.

Leaning back in her chair, Courtney speaks half to Joanna, half to the class.

Courtney: But aren't we the human race? Genetically we're the same, why did we need to create a way to distance ourselves from others?

Ailie: So it's clear that you have picked up on that idea of genetic variability. In the lecture, it was discussed that genetically, the people that are seen to make up "different races" are actually the same, according to the Human Genome Project. In fact, the variability within these so-called "racial groups" are bigger than the variability between the groups. Statistically, this suggests that the groups aren't significantly different from each other. We are more alike than we are different (e.g. Smedley & Smedley, 2005). But going back to Courtney's question, why do we distance ourselves? Why and how do we make race—and make race matter (Knowles, 2003)—in our lives?

Renee: The term "race" is a very talked about topic particularly in Australia. Firstly I think the fact we say "issues" of race makes it out to sound as if it is a problem, which is very disheartening.

- Sophie:** Race allows for difference, unity and appreciation of one another's cultural beliefs, customs and traditions. It has also been at the forefront of segregation, genocide or ethnocide, and as an "excuse" to treat "the other" as a minority. Race helps to form our identity and place in society.
- Natalie:** [From the lecture], I noted that "race continues to be used as a 'taken-for-granted' category in both everyday and scientific discourse".
- Eleanor:** [When I said before that the people in binaries can either reaffirm or contest these binaries] [*A short pause whilst Eleanor formulates her words*]... This kind of scares me though because I'm not sure of how I act covertly. I know I need to look more carefully into the way I act and the subtle signals/symbols I send out daily.
- Ailie:** Critically reflecting about how the everyday actions that might seem normal to ourselves affect others around us is important. Are there any times in the past that you have acted in a way that made race matter?
- Ellissa:** [I can think of one]. My first memory of meeting an indigenous person was when an elder came to my primary school and showed us leaves on a tree that was like soap, and he cooked crocodile and kangaroo for us to eat. My secondary school was a catholic school that had a boarding house, and there were many Indigenous students that were boarders. I remember one of the first days of school in year 8 my friend and I had started speaking with an Aboriginal girl, and we were eating lunch. I can't remember the context of what I said, but it was along the lines of assuming that she mostly ate kangaroo and crocodile. She found this very funny, and she told me that she had never eaten either of those things in her life. I remember talking to my mum after school about it, and she thought it was very funny that I had assumed that as well. I remember feeling very embarrassed and worried that I had offended this girl by making this assumption. Looking back now, it makes sense that I would think that, as I was only twelve years old and I hadn't learnt much about Indigenous Australians, and had up until that day not built any relationships with Indigenous Australians.
- Ailie:** Ellissa, that's really interesting that you have reflected on why you made this assumption, something that could have been seen as a

microaggression (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). It can be easy for students to revert to the stereotypical representations if that is what is being taught to students. However this interaction may still have been hurtful for your friend, even if she found it funny at the time. How else might these stereotypes play out in schools?

Sarah joins in the conversation for the first time, speaking vehemently.

Sarah: I feel as though in schools that the stereotypes that come with the issue of race is what causes many problems for Indigenous students. I believe racism is one of the worst things on this earth, so the thought of students having to deal with it makes me cringe.

Natalie: [At the start of the lecture we watched] a video of the Aboriginal Human Zoos which taught racism as scientific knowledge. Although we now (thankfully) do not treat Aboriginal people like that there is still subtle everyday racism that occurs. To be honest, again I do not agree or think that it is at all acceptable that we had human zoos but I don't believe subtle racism is any way better. In some cases subtle racism can be worse because people don't even recognise how they are behaving and can pass it on to others.

Eleanor: For me I'm still struggling in defining racism. It probably sounds odd, but what I've been going over for a while now is, am I racist because I know the "othered" stereotypes or is based on what you do with that knowledge or how you act on your thoughts. So is a racist someone who has racist thoughts or does racist actions? Is it that level of a conscience which differs the two, that voice that separates the racists from the non-racists.

Ivana is fidgeting in her seat, looking slightly uncomfortable. Noticing this, Ailie calls on her, hoping she is not putting Ivana under the spotlight.

Ailie: Ivana, what do you think?

Ivana: I always thought that the mainstream Australian culture/society was a racist one. In daily outings I notice this more and more. People won't sit next to certain people on public transport or look at people in a particular way—this made me think of my own perceptions on how I view the

general public. Was/am I being defensive because I have been subjected to cruel verbal lashings from others based on my own background?

Ailie: I think Ivana's point is really significant. How we construct and perceive racism is very much dependent on the ways we are positioned by society, and thus our own personal experiences. How we are positioned by the concept of race in turn influences how we position race. What do you make of this proposition?

Several of the students shift in their seats. Bella looks up and speaks earnestly.

Bella: When I think about my position in relation to race in Australia, I consider it my responsibility as a citizen to treat everyone with the same respect that I would expect for myself in return.

Sophie: Race can empower or belittle the other. I must be aware of my position as a white female, who has lived a Eurocentric life this far.

Caitlyn: I have made race not a deciding or influential factor in my life.

Ailie: That's an interesting view point. Let's take it back to the whole group—do you think that all people are able to make that decision, to not let race influence their lives? What privileges might such an approach conceal? *[The group remains quiet, so Ailie tries another tact.]* This might be a good time to bring the concept of colour-blindness into the conversation. What did you take away from the lecture about this concept?

Felicity: Originally, I thought that being “colourblind” towards race was a positive and equitable thing. I can now see that it is important to embrace differences in order to appreciate different cultures.

Carly: [I think] there is a risk of adopting a race neutral colourblind view of Indigenous children to limit the impacts of exclusion or favouritism, however I need to remember that all children are individuals, regardless of race.

Ailie: What might that mean to recognise that all children are individuals? Does this negate their cultural backgrounds?

- Carly:** I should recognise and understand each child's cultural values when they are in my class, and have these ideas in mind, but not allow them to favour or dictate my focus. Try and create a level playing field in my class.
- Ailie:** Okay so level playing fields. This is a key point from the Critical Race Theory work that Ladson-Billings (1998) talks about in this week's reading. Recognising that our education systems are not set up as equal playing fields for all. What are some of the ways that you are understanding that this plays out for Indigenous Australian students?
- Carly:** I can see the education system in Australia as being discriminated by a certain cultural view. This group, "White Australian", tends to control and monitor educational reform, policy and curriculum; favouring this common view of what should be learnt.
- Felicity:** [And then there is] the idea that Australian schooling is based on a western model, which is incompatible with the home culture of many Indigenous students, is in fact a form of racism. Is it equitable to require all Aboriginal students to conform to white middle-class schooling?
- Regina:** One of the main points I picked up from the discussions was the underlying issue based around the fact that there still is a "dominant" culture that does not often suit minority. This reminded me of a quote in the Vass (2012) reading which stated "A kid enters the education system in Australia to be socialized in to the dominant norms of the master society, and if he or she does not learn how to play the system, or refuses to participate, then it is too bad".
- Zac:** I really identified with and acknowledged the ideas in today's lecture challenging the whole "race" notion and how racism appears now as indirect discrimination where values and policies might appear to treat all the same but still have a negative impact on some due to their racial, ethnic, cultural backgrounds.
- Ailie:** So it seems like this idea of a dominant, and in the Australian case, Eurocentric culture constituting a form of indirect racism (de Plevitz, 2004) has really resonated with a lot of you. [*Noticing Felicity putting her hand up to speak*] Felicity, did you want to add something else?

Felicity: Both Ladson-Billings and de Plevitz's articles discuss the idea that racism is embedded in the fabric of educational systems. By reading these articles, I have been exposed to the many facets of schooling in which Indigenous people are excluded. I think this is important for teachers to understand and be aware of when reflecting on the way they construct race.

Ailie: Alright, so again, in what ways is race constructed in the classroom?

Bella, Ellissa and Natalie all move to speak. Natalie and Ellissa gesture to Bella that she should go first.

Bella: The De Plevitz (2004) reading highlighted how race can be represented poorly within the education system, and without the provision of Indigenous community members informing education reforms in Australia, these children will continue to be viewed as in deficit. My role as a teacher, in relation to race, is to nurture all students within my classroom and ensure that race is never viewed in a manner that considers any child as 'lacking', rather students who deserve an education that is tailored to their needs and interests.

Natalie nods enthusiastically, and speaks next.

Natalie: Just because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do things different doesn't make it wrong. They know things and do things in a particular way for a particular reason which is important for others to understand. In the reading [last week], teachers had a deficit view of local culture and knowledge (Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009). This resulted in students fulfilling teachers' low expectations. Once teachers shifted their perspective and negative discourses to attitudes of accepting students for who they are, and being able to be creative in finding their own personal links with Aboriginal culture, students excelled. This is an important message for any teacher to remember.

Ellissa: I have worked with Indigenous Australians and have taught Indigenous children on prac, and I have Indigenous families at the OSHC [Outside of School Hours Care] that I work at. I am continuously trying to change the way I think when interacting with these people, as often my brain

automatically refers to the deficit way of viewing Indigenous people. This will be an ongoing thing for me until I am able to stop my thoughts from automatically jumping to the views of these peoples that has been perpetuated by our colonialist society.

Ailie: That's a really interesting comment Ellissa, and another honest reflection. This idea that views of Indigenous peoples are perpetuated by the colonialist society—how does this happen?

Courtney joins back into the conversation, straightening her posture and speaking plainly.

Courtney: Everything I hear about ATSI [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander] people is negative (i.e. news media) or tainted by white supremacy (i.e. white Australia policy)...I must be aware that my view of ATSI students could be unfairly coloured by the media/my society. Policies designed to assist ATSI students could be doing more harm than good (western POV [point of view]).

Ailie: So if non-Indigenous peoples'—such as myself and many of you—perspective of Indigenous people is mostly coming from a white media and society, what does that mean for how we make race, to return to the earlier question? What types of relationships do you have with race, and people of different races to yourself? Even in saying this, I am aware that I am falling into the trap of myself making race real again!

Felicity: I have grown up in a white middle class family in inner city Brisbane, attending an all-girls, religious, private school that had an Indigenous population of less than 1%. Therefore I have not been exposed to many Indigenous Australians on a personal level. I feel as though I am in no way a racist person, however, I have never explored race and whiteness in depth before this course.

Ailie: Anybody else?

Caitlyn: Growing up [in the United States] around numerous races and then suddenly moving here was a big shock, and in a sea of Western Faces, race has been re-made for me because I am more aware of the minorities in everyday life. It was not an issue before but now it is.

- Sarah:** [What do you mean?]
- Caitlyn:** My eyes travel and hesitate on photos of people with dark skin and I never did that before. I have reversed to be more sensitised.
- Ailie:** So is making race about sensitisation, about how salient race is to those of us who identify as being white?
- Ivana:** My own background and upbringing has made me see a lot of different perspectives. Coming from a closed, conservative Muslim background, I've always been subjected to racial comments. The power of language is fundamental to understanding and being aware of racial comments. I realized I would be on the defensive and making indirect comments.
- Ailie:** So Caitlyn, do you feel like your upbringing has helped you to see different perspectives?
- Caitlyn:** I go to school here at UQ as a domestic student, due to my citizenship. But I have lived in America for 18 years, so I walk around and navigate daily life with my accent sounding foreign. People second glance at me because my skin literally glistens in the sunlight and they stare openly at me when I speak. I'm not saying at all that I know what it is like for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people yet I do know what its like to have people treat me differently.

There is a soft but firm knock on the open door, and everyone jumps as if startled by a loud noise. A tall white woman pokes her head into the room. "Indigenous Knowledge and Education?" she asks politely, double-checking what she was already sure of. Ailie nods her head and the students murmur. Some of them look at each other puzzled, as if to ask what this woman is doing coming into their classroom. Others look vaguely annoyed that the woman would interrupt their class.

- Whiteness Studies:** Sorry to interrupt everyone. I was walking past and heard some of your conversation, and thought I might be able to add something to the conversation here. I can't help but notice that so far, you have been talking about race, but nobody has really been considering whiteness. That's not so surprising—after all, whiteness "refers to a set of cultural practices that

are unnamed and unmarked” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 1). Whiteness becomes a normative standpoint through which “white people look at ourselves, at others, at society” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 1). Whiteness is a structural location. But I think including myself into your conversation might give you another way to understand how race operates in classrooms as well a daily life. How does **your** race matter in your life?

Bella: I understand that my race shapes my identity in Australia and that it is my role to understand how race plays significant roles in daily life, at times fostering negativity towards others.

Joanna: I was talking to my manager the other day and we had a discussion about defining ethnicity. She was telling me about her partner debating that because of her skin colour and language her ethnicity is not Maori and we had this in depth discussion about how ethnicity goes beyond appearances—it’s in our blood and heritage.

Whiteness *[speaking gently]* But what about you, Joanna?

Studies:

Despite Whiteness Studies’ soft tone, Joanna looked stunned, as if Whiteness Studies had slapped her across the face.

Whiteness *[continuing]* You are talking about your manager, someone who you are

Studies: identifying as *other than* white, as Maori. What about how *your* race matters in your life?

Joanna remains silent. Whiteness Studies looks around the classroom, trying to meet each person’s eyes. A lot of the students refuse to look into her eyes, looking instead at the ground in front of them, or staring steadfastly at the wall. Other students look into her eyes, feeling the call to respond, but as of yet unable to formulate their response. Whiteness Studies tries again, gently.

Whiteness It might be useful for us to think about the concept of *white comfort*. How

Studies: do we as teachers and learners privilege the idea of white comfort in our learnings? For example, talking about race and racism, privilege and power, in a way that actually reinforces the privilege of those who benefit from race.

Joanna has a look of fear on her face, but swallows and starts to talk again. She appears determined to have a go at interrogating her own whiteness.

Joanna: So [reflecting] on myself and how/if I'm a participant in 'White comfort'. For one thing, in my home life I don't address racist comments being said, due to [a] lack of confidence to speak up and [a] lack of sufficient knowledge. What I mean by sufficient is I know their comments are generalized but I don't have the evidence to back it up.

Ailie: Joanna, thank you for sharing these ideas in front of the whole class—I know it can be scary to “out” yourself in this way. How are you thinking about white comfort as you move into schools as a teacher?

Joanna: [H]opefully in the school context I'll have more confidence to confront issues in the classroom and in the staffroom.

Ailie: It can be hard. I know I find it difficult to interrogate my own thoughts as well as things other people say. Even in a classroom like this, where we are openly talking about race and racism and the impact these have on people's lives, it can be hard at times to call people out in a way that is “aggressive and tender”, as Galman and colleagues (2010) say. But they raise a really important point too—we need to interrogate how we perform and privilege whiteness in our own daily lives before, or perhaps as, we can question others' whiteness. Because not engaging people in a conversation around race-talk, even if it seems to be a risky dialogue, can reinforce the same issues of race power. If white people don't engage in these conversations, then it becomes the burden of “Others”. As Jackie Huggins said to bell hooks in a radio interview, it's not Indigenous and black women's job to educate white people. White people need to educate themselves and each other first (Huggins, 1998).

The class is quiet as Ivana speaks. She is the only person in the room who has identified herself as not being white.

Ivana: After years of feeling the lashings of racial comments such as “rag head” I've been left with the feeling and idea that “All White Australians are racist pigs”.

After a moment's silence, a student ventures an opinion.

Felicity: Peggy McIntosh's statement that she was only taught to see racism as acts of meanness not as invisible systems, reflects my attitude before beginning this course.

Ailie: This article (McIntosh, 1989) was a key turning point for me as well. Starting to see that racism was much bigger than me, but that I as an individual benefit from the ways that race are made to matter. I too am racialised.

Felicity: Being a member of the majority class, I have sadly never stopped to consider 'white privilege'. After reading Peggy McIntosh's list, I felt upset that people struggle with these conditions on a daily basis, while we take them for granted. How is it that the traditional owners of our land cannot count on these simple conditions? In order to tackle this 'Invisible Backpack', it is important to acknowledge and openly discuss these privileges. I think that by acknowledging this power and privilege, we are about to address and redistribute this privilege more equitably.

Ellissa: I was also a bit taken aback when I watched the unpacking of the invisible knapsack video, as this really reiterated how I am a benefit of white privilege without even knowing it.

Courtney: The article of the daily effects of white privilege [was good.] Great points, really interesting perspectives. But classist overtones—if you are poor, or LGBTQA¹⁵², then these points might still not apply to you.

Ailie: That's an excellent point that you have raised there Courtney. When we think about whiteness, what we are really talking about is a system of oppression: one linked to a source of power. There are however hierarchies of oppression (Grosfuguel, 2003). It's also important that we think about overlapping systems and hierarchies: What if you are poor, and gay, and not white? How may these points apply to you then?

¹⁵² [(lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual)]

Whiteness You might find it useful to think about the idea of intersectionality:
Studies: intersecting oppressions of race, gender and class that foster contradictions (Collins, 2000).

The students in the room sat quietly, thinking about this idea, or perhaps letting it pass by them. When a student moved to speak once more, the conversation moved back to the lecture.

Natalie: Also in the past they believed and used “scientific knowledge” to suggest that it was okay to act that way, but even with the knowledge we have now as we know that it’s not okay to act like that, racism still occurs.
[Natalie curls her fingers and makes bunny ears to qualify the term “scientific knowledge”].

Zac: This highlights once again how white power supports white hierarchy, overlooking obvious human rights issues!!!

Moved by this outburst, the class sits with this thought, fierce looks of concentration crossing most (but not all) students’ faces. Ailie looks at her watch, and realises once again that the tutorial has slipped by like a leaf fluttering down from a tree, meandering, but gone before you try to catch it.

Ailie: Everybody, let’s start to wrap up. What did you think about today’s tutorial? How did you feel about discussing whiteness and race? We can go around the group and whoever wants to share can.

Zac: Well, I think there was a lot of discomfort and discussion about the activities in today’s tute. I think a lot of people are still thinking about what is the right thing to say in such a political and social subject.

Regina: After today I have understood that this “white supremacy” has the ability to “silence” those who do not “fit in” and it is the work of Critical Race Theory that tries to change this.

Renee: I feel very overwhelmed, so many questions and no right answers!

Felicity: Overall, this week has allowed me to honestly deconstruct my ideas on race and race relations. I think that this is an important practice to support the break down of race barriers in my future classroom.

Regina: I think I gained a clear understanding of the term “race” and after hearing everyone speak, it is clear that we are all aware of “the gap” between indigenous and non-indigenous students.

Courtney: [There are some] questions for me: How might my race position me in my class? [Will it lead to] student mistrust? How can I work to overcome this[?]

Eleanor: I think that today’s tutorial really opened up everyone’s minds because before we weren’t trying to step on anyone’s toes. Now we have acknowledged the anxieties we all have I feel as though we can push through and actually discuss the reasons why the Australian culture is so embedded with racism.

Ailie: Not being afraid to talk openly about race and racism is an important element of being able to begin deconstructing the values that constitute this nation-state. But we are seriously out of time my friends. You are all free to go! Can I just get a hand first to put this room back together?

Noise fills the rooms as the students start to gather their things and move the tables and chairs back to the “normal” classroom positioning. Ailie calls out over the noise and the students turn to the sound of her voice as they start to leave.

Ailie: Thanks everyone for another week of stimulating and entangling conversation. I know each week I walk away with so much to think about, through, and with, following our conversations. Don’t forget to email me if you have any questions during the week! See you next Wednesday.

Calling out with “bye” and “thank-you” and “see you next week”, the students file out the door on the way to their next class. Ailie thanks Whiteness Studies who is also leaving the classroom for now. Taking a deep breath, Ailie looks around the room and thinks to herself, “Well, that went okay”. She sits down to gather herself, forehead resting on her hands on the desk, all of a sudden feeling exhausted from the discussion. After a minute, she stands up, grabs her things and also leaves the room, switching off the lights as she pulls the door shut.

New Relationships

I wake up with a start, bemused at the way the students' words from their reflective learning journals had transferred their way into my imagination, much like lowering my face into a pensieve of other peoples' memories and thoughts. I smile as I think back to that teaching moment of Dumbledore's stone basin being an analogy for reflective writing (see Chapter Two). Being able to take a step back and look at what the students had written, and how I myself pieced these writings together, makes it "easier to spot patterns and links" as Albus Dumbledore, the headmaster of the fictional Hogwarts School of Magic and Wizardry (Rowling, 2000, pp. 518-519) says. I put pen to paper myself and write down the words desire, race, whiteness, wanting, possessing. How do these ideas fit together I wonder? I find myself adding the words "relationships" and "always already" to the list. This weaving together of ideas now reminds me of words I wrote in my own journal several years before: *I think I am still trying to convince some of these students that they are in relationship with "Indigenous Australia" whether they know it or not. I think that some might still fall into the idea that this course is only about teaching Indigenous students, not that they too are implicated* (my journal, August 19, 2014). I think in writing this, I was trying to get at that idea of a different type of relationship—one that is defined by parameters of "inhabiting a space outside the unfinished business of colonisation" (Ahmed, 2005, p. 78).

It is this week when we (the students and myself as teacher-researcher) start to begin paying attention to raced bodies that make up the becoming of the world. For Ivana, the materiality of race and racism is made to matter by others' avoidance of her body in public spaces; responding to the physical matter of her body and her clothing in a way that did not only suggest ontological closure in a Levinasian sense (Diprose, 2002), but also ontological violence through words like "rag-head". Caitlyn writes/spoke of her body responding to other/ed bodies, her eyes lingering in an almost involuntary pull towards otherness. Having moved to a place that she perceived as more white, it was the whiteness of the bodies that created a racial difference for Caitlyn, a difference that marked other bodies as other. This materiality of race, however, might be seen as another way of making race "matter" matter—for Caitlyn, whiteness was constituted by skin colour, rather than ways of being, doing and knowing.

In which ways do race and whiteness constitute a desire to possess, a want? The possessive logic of race and whiteness (Moreton-Robinson, 2004b), one that tries to claim what "other" is/what is other, reminds me of Levinas' grasp. For Levinas, a grasp is the embodied gesture of claiming the other, a reaching out towards alterity to bring it closer to one's self. To continue a performativity of whiteness that imposes a white patriarchal will (Moreton-Robinson, 2011) on Indigenous peoples and lands, would be to grasp at an otherness that coloniality cannot control.

I even consider momentarily whether exploring Indigenous Studies through theories of race and whiteness is another way of bringing a radical alterity closer to a white understanding of the world, and remind myself that racial hierarchies were constructed through coloniality (Lugones, 2010; Quijano, 2000). The powers and privileges that are granted by social structures to some bodies matter, and the matter of bodies makes up the coloniality of being. By teaching, learning, talking and writing about race and whiteness—entangling the matter and ideas into our teaching and learning practice—the ways in which this racial hierarchy has come to and continues to come to be are better revealed.

Chapter Seven

On Practicum

In which the students recount and rewrite their experiences on Practicum; Matter is entangled with Students with Schoolyards; I look at the Policy Landscape; and we consider what Should and Ought to be done in classrooms.

(Weeks 7-9)

To want.

A verb.

Should or need to do something. Required to be attended to in a specified way.

Example: You don't want to believe everything you hear

Synonyms: Should, ought, need, must

Entering the classroom once more, I open up the journals before I even sit down, eager to learn more about the pre-service teachers' experiences on their practicums that they undertook halfway through the course, more commonly known as "prac". For four weeks, the student teachers had taught across a variety of schools in the greater Brisbane area, and had been asked to continue their learning journals whilst they were gone, incorporating their experiences in their prac schools with the course content that could be accessed online through learning modules. "What types of stories have they brought back?" I ask myself, eager to see the worlds of schools through the eyes of students who, for the most part, are just beginning to think and write around what Indigenous perspectives might mean for their teaching praxis. How would the students view various efforts to embed Indigenous perspectives present in schools, or the times that these efforts were wanting? The National Curriculum (ACARA, 2010) stated that teachers *should* and *ought to* embed Indigenous perspectives, requiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives to be embedded as a Cross-Curriculum Priority (CCP). The National Curriculum requires that Indigenous perspectives be attended to in a specific way in the classroom. Yet researchers question the wording of the curriculum, particularly the ambiguity around when and how these learning points should be embedded: "send[ing] the message to teachers that they are not required to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being, knowing and thinking in any content that has been mapped" (Lowe & Yunkaporta, 2013, pp. 4-5) in the curriculum. In Queensland, the roll-out of Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives (EATSIPS) provided teachers and schools with a framework to recognise multiple knowledge systems that both clash and converse in the interface of daily schooling, creating a third cultural space (DET, 2011). Yet after two years, the 2011 evaluation found a third of schools had not yet begun implementing this policy (DETE, 2012), bringing to mind Ahmed's (2012a, p. 6) words that important is not just what documents say, but what they do, and what is done with them by governments and those in power.

All of these policy documents and reports and analyses paint the background in my mind as I turn to the journals once more. What would the pre-service teachers see happening in schools? How would they make sense of what they saw? What types of encounters might they have with Indigenous students, teachers, or community members? How would participation in the course change the ways in which the students engaged in their classrooms, and/or write about their experiences? How did the becoming-teachers position “Indigenous education” as wanting to be done as they encountered various agents, material, human and otherwise, in their practicum schools?

There were different ways that the becoming-teachers might see Indigenous education being performed in schools: in the physical environment and whole-school practices; in curriculum and pedagogy; in the interactions between teachers, students, other staff members, family members. And as the students’ learnings from the course became entangled with these classroom encounters—starting to put theory into action—how would the lecture and tutorial conversations and course materials intra-act with what students saw in practice? In lectures and tutorials, we had discussed together what ought to be done in classrooms, the students considering what they thought they should be doing as teachers. The movement into practicum classrooms provided an opportunity for the becoming-teachers to see how these ideas might or might not play out in practice/praxis.

In the Tutorial Room

I think back to that first time as we came back into the classroom following the four week break: we rolled our chairs into the middle of the room, pushing aside heavy white table and handbags and backpacks laden with laptops and books as we formed a circle. I took my place seated next to the whiteboard, and waited for the students to find their own places. Some of the students looked expectantly my way, whilst others stared at the ground. Yet more students chatted excitedly about their experiences on prac, their own school students who had excited or challenged them; supervising teachers who had left them alone with a classroom full of kids on their first day, as they raced off to finish a spot of photocopying. As we sat together, the chattering lapsed and silence took over, as the students waited for me to speak and to begin the process.

“Okay everyone, welcome back from prac.”

Many—not all—of the students smile at me.

“I’m sure there is lots you want to talk about, so we’re going to have another yarning circle.”

*Listening, not speaking
Sitting with words
Sitting with each other
Learning “Indigenous practices”
Through “Indigenous pedagogical approaches”
(A neatly summarised handout
from the education department
accompanies this lesson)*

*Listening, not speaking
Disrupting power relationships
Sharing appropriate knowledge¹⁵³
Building respectful relationships¹⁵⁴
Respect and reciprocity¹⁵⁵
A balanced inclusive ethos
A culturally safe method*

*Listening, not speaking
But students’ eyes
Drift towards me
Despite the circle
Still the authority
Why doesn’t
This feel transgressive?¹⁵⁶*

*Listening, not speaking
Until your turn
Learning to be
To watch, to listen
Bodies pulled together
Passing a message
stick, entangling matter
Entangling our stories*

As the students took time to share their stories from practicum, trying to disentangle what they thought ought to be done from what they saw happening in classrooms, I am brought to questions around what it might mean to do what we ought to be doing. Using yarning circles in our tutorial classrooms is at once explicit teaching and modelling of pedagogical approaches that the pre-service teachers could take away with them, and an integration into our own praxes of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. But as students speak, the shoulders and eyes that shift towards my own body matter, reminding me of the limitations to what I know how at this time to make possible, mattering in my making of knowledge of what it means to teach and learn on the Indigenous education

¹⁵³ (Dean, 2010; Kovach, 2010)

¹⁵⁴ (DET, 2010)

¹⁵⁵ (Sheehan & Walker, 2001)

¹⁵⁶ (Ellsworth, 1989)

landscape. Did the introduction of an “Indigenous pedagogical approach” allow my own teaching to transgress the boundaries of a Eurocentric Australian higher education classroom? It would be too easy to assume that a yarning circle that attended to the prescribed format surmised by fourteen neat dot points (“Dialogue Circles”; Queensland Studies Authority, 2010) could all of a sudden break down hierarchical structures in the classroom. The students still looked towards me as they spoke, rather than each other; and my introductory words betrayed the concept that this was a space where students could discuss what was most important to them. In the name of relevance, I had already as teacher shaped the way the conversation would follow, outlining how the yarning circle should be attended to. The hierarchy in the student-teacher relationship once again remained unbroken (Ellsworth, 1989). For the institution of higher education, and the university in which the students and I sat, was one which was deeply rooted in European colonial enlightenment traditions of thought, the names of the Western philosophers engraved in the wall alongside the motifs that relegated Indigenous peoples to the status of flora and fauna (see Chapter 1). We sat in a “knowledge construction factory built on the graves of Indigenous Australian systems” (Rigney, 1999, p. 112) and the coloniality of knowledge (Quijano, 2000) continues to reinvent itself through education systems. And indeed, my own reading and enactment of this pedagogical approach was filtered through the lenses of my own whiteness and middle-class upbringing; I could hear the claims to authenticity that I tried to make as I owned that whiteness to the students before beginning the yarning circle, discussing our guest lecturer’s principles of yarning circles.

How ought we as educators find balance amongst the competing tensions?

Sited within these tensions, the yarning circles that we facilitated several times across the semester held the transformative potential to become education as the practice of freedom, as had the investigation of Boundary Street (as discussed in Chapter Five). What began in the first week as an awkward and stilted conversation by the end of semester had turned into a more open and respectful space where at least some of the students felt freer to share the emotions raised by the conversation at hand. In one year, I think back, a young man in his early twenties cried openly in front of the class, a sudden wave of emotion swelling out of him as he reflected on how he had seen Indigenous students treated in the classroom. The yarning circle had had the power to overcome not just conceptualisations of classrooms as emotion-free places, but also transgressed what males “ought” to do in the classroom according to notions of traditional masculinity. And on that day, following the students’ four week break from university as they undertook their practicum, the yarning circle became a place for the students to make sense of and theorise their own experiences, theories they had learnt in class such as the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007) and Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998) entangling themselves with the students’ prior experiences and practice work on prac.

Yarning circles: A collective journal entry.

Today, we engaged in a yarning circle activity to discuss how we may feel about the course and our experiences in/with Indigenous education. Before it was my turn to speak I was so nervous, I had no idea what I was going to say. The yarning circle made me reflect on my time in this course so far—everyone’s ideas were out on the table. It was so simple, yet effective, and everybody was so respectful to one another. Not only did I learn a lot from what people had to tell about their experiences and pracs, but I also learnt the Yarning Circle activity.

I found the yarning circle a useful pedagogy to take with me into the classroom, across all subject areas. Truly embedding requires these pedagogical strategies to become interwoven throughout the curriculum, not just when engaging with Indigenous education, but as an effective teaching pedagogy whether it is with Indigenous students or not. Our guest lecturer pointed out that a yarning circle the way that we have seen it may not be the way that yarning circles are in the area you are teaching on. Find out what clan owns the land you are on and teach students about their traditions.

How I would talk about the Apology in my classroom of 20 prep students? A yarning circle—allowing them all a chance to speak, my kids would spend some time about what relationships to people mean to them. It gives all students a voice; forces them to think first; be considerate of others’ feelings, attitudes and views. I feel as though it will be beneficial in developing cooperation, communication, resilience, sharing and considering the perspectives of others.

After hearing what all the people before me said, I grew more confident in what I had to share.

In The Practicum School Foyer

Coming back into the now empty classroom, devoid of student bodies but traces of the tutorial encounter written into the journals, I look back to the books in front of me. Sitting down, I flip through the first journal, finding the glued in pages scribbled down in spare moments on prac, and begin to read. Only some of the students have written about their time on practicum—not all chose to reflect on the going-ons in their schools. What I first notice in the early entries from such students is an attentiveness to the physical environments around them. First impressions count, I think to myself, and if they count for the pre-service teachers, then they must also count for students entering the school grounds.

Renee writes, “I have been observing the environment (classes, school grounds etc). I’ve been looking for any sort of recognition, mention or inclusion of the Indigenous culture. This morning is Assembly. I was interested to find that inclusion was of a high standard. During the National Anthem all three flags (Aboriginal, Torres Straight Islander and Australian) were held by students. After the

anthem the MC (yr 7s) said that ‘we recognise the traditional land we are on’¹⁵⁷. This seemed to be a regular practice that the whole school was in habit of.” For Ivana, physical signs acknowledging Indigeneity were found in the foyer of the school: “I was surprised when I noticed the official letter of the Stolen Generation addressed by Kevin Rudd in 2008¹⁵⁸. It was displayed dominantly on a wall for all to see, framed in a gold frame”.

I think about what physical symbols of Indigeneity might mean in schools and public places: I encourage students to think about the physical resources they can use in their classrooms to recognise Indigenous peoples, and create an environment that might be more welcoming to Indigenous students. The EATSIPS guidelines (DET, 2010) also suggest that schools ought to be environments that “generate a sense of belonging” (p. 67) for Indigenous peoples, and that different visible representations of Indigeneity, such as flags, posters, and other visible signs, might make schools a more welcoming place for Indigenous students, families and community members. This sense of belonging is echoed in Ivana’s journal, where she continues by writing, “This was something special. Immediately, I believed that this must be a school that valued and respected its connection with Aboriginal students, families and caregivers. ‘There must be Aboriginal students attending this school’ was my first response.” Kowal (2015), in reflecting on the role of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country performances, flips this belonging: for non-Indigenous people, such reminders of Indigenous sovereignty creates an unsettling sense of not-belonging; a reminder that the colonial project was never finished.

Another student, Sophie, writes of her scepticism of such acknowledgements: “I wondered if the students and school community understood the significance of these or if it was an empty gesture. It seemed quite tokenistic and one part of me questions this with a somewhat cynical lens”. Cowlshaw (in Mookherjee, Rapport, Josephides, Hage, Todd, & Cowlshaw, 2009) defines the Apology as lacking in mutuality, an abject apology. Rather than being tokenistic, such movements (“seductive, feel-good strateg[ies] contrived and promoted by governments”; p. 358) are limited in their ability to be truly “open to the other” as Levinas might suggest. Perhaps Sophie also saw some of the limitations when she writes of “empty gestures”—I wonder if the gesture Sophie saw was a Levinasian *grasp*: a grasp that makes a move towards the Other to hold and control, “contest[ing] the independence of the thing” (Levinas, 1969, p. 198). By schools controlling gestures towards Indigeneity, without a further relationship to Indigenous people in their local communities—that is, lacking mutuality—these

¹⁵⁷ This statement refers to an “Acknowledgement of Country”, a practice that acknowledges Indigenous traditional owners of the area in which an event is held, as well as other Indigenous people present at an event.

¹⁵⁸ This letter refers to a motion moved in the Federal Parliament by the Prime Minister of the time. The motion, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, was an official apology to members of the Stolen Generations, Indigenous peoples who had been removed from their families by the state. A bill to establish a compensation fund as reparations was not passed (Burns, 2008).

gestures towards Indigenous recognition bring Indigenous knowledges back into a colonial system of logic, a colonising totality. But Levinas also reminds us of the resistance of the other: “The face resists possession, resists my powers” (1969, p. 197). By looking into the face of Indigenous others—by establishing that mutuality that Cowlishaw (2009) writes of—we as educators are brought into relation.

As EATSIPS suggests, such acknowledgements and recognition are just one aspect of transforming organisational environments; an example that fits into a larger model including professional and personal accountabilities, community engagement, and curriculum and pedagogy (DET, 2010, p. 13). Perhaps this broader model could be interpreted as emphasising responsibility, relationality, and incorporating Indigenous knowledges; moving closer to a Levinasian/decolonial model of practice. For Ivana and Renee both, their early recognitions of the potential for environmental recognition of Indigeneity were ultimately linked to classroom practices that they observed as wanting; that they felt should be attended to. Both students write of the lack of Indigenous perspectives in the classroom: “There is nothing in the classroom that recognises aboriginal culture,” continues Renee in that first week of practicum. “Not even in curriculum or pedagogy was there anything mentioned”.

Another way of thinking about the students’ observations of their schools is as an intra-action with matter. In the same way that our agency as writers becomes recognisable in the moment of the writing encounter—by interacting with pen and learning journal, or bodies and computers—it is in the moment of this encounter, the mutual entanglement between students and objects, that their agencies become distinct: the student becoming an active reflector, a thinker about their work in Indigenous education; and the material agents becomes meaningful actors, the flag no longer just a piece of fabric, but rather given meaning (to generate a sense of belonging, or inclusiveness?), and giving meaning. “Matter is produced and productive, generated and generative,” Barad (2007, p. 137) writes.

Ivana’s picture frame almost matters in the moment of the encounter, the material gold frame giving meaning to the discursive Apology (Rudd, 2008);

Agencies are only distinct

the Apology becoming distinct in the school foyer; the course and the task assigned to write reflections increasing awareness of such matter;

in relation to their mutual entanglement;

the gold frame a little difference that mattered in the pattern of writing that Ivana produced:

they don't exist as individual elements. (Barad, 2007, p. 33)

“This must be a school that valued and respected its connection with Aboriginal students, families and caregivers”.

In The Practicum Classroom

Sitting in the empty tutorial room, I continue flicking through the journals, not quite sure what it is I seek. Traces of responsibility perhaps, echoing Levinas' (1989) call that ethics is the first philosophy: if we recognise that we are not alone in the world, that we always already exist in relation with each other, then we are called to act ethically before concern about a freedom to be. For the pre-service teachers, whose journals I am reading, this might translate into a responsibility to support Indigenous knowledges in their classroom, to work in a more ethical, decolonial way with Indigenous students, having come face-to-face with pedagogies of remembrance, such as the difficult knowledge of Boundary Street (Chapter Five) and theoretical frameworks such as Critical Race Theory that asked the students to challenge their own desires to possess and control (Chapter Six). But having walked through the thresholds of their school foyers and assembly halls, and into classrooms, how might this responsibility translate into doing? How should or ought Indigenous knowledges be "done", according to these pre-service teachers?

The journals offer some ideas as to the encounters in the classroom that shape the students' thinking. I read these together, little snippets from each students' writing coming together to form a picture.

Renee

An Australian flag
hung in the back.

No sign of
Indigenous education no
mention of
Indigenous culture in
lessons.

My teacher: a
white middle-aged woman
mightn't feel comfortable
approaching the topic.

Sophie

A newfound respect,
my supervising teacher.

The unit was
Space and Universe.
The introductory lesson
of Aboriginal Astronomy
followed by discussion.

Sarah began to
discuss her family.
Her Grandmother is
an Aboriginal Elder.

She gained confidence
in reading, also
spoke about her
family, her culture.

Sarah had not
done this before.

Sarah had always
expressed 'shame'
about being Aboriginal.

Ivana

No Aboriginal students
in my class.
I didn't plan
or embed
Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander perspectives

(Even though it's
encouraged and expected
throughout curriculum
documents).

Asked my teacher.
She had no
Aboriginal students. Didn't
feel the urge
address the issue
in Prep year.

I could understand.
But what I
was learning at uni
seemed to make
more sense.

In many of the journals, the students write about their relationships with their supervising teachers as they think about their experiences during practicum. For Sophie, whose teacher had designed a lesson on Aboriginal astronomy, the embedding of Indigenous perspectives allowed her to

see first-hand the effects on one of the Indigenous students in her classroom, Sarah (a pseudonym given by Sophie). The next week, Sophie wrote about continuing the unit by reading the class “a story about the Dreaming¹⁵⁹”, and that Sarah continued to contribute to the class, sharing stories about learning culture with her grandmother. The coming together of the course, the supervising teacher, the particular unit and Sophie as a becoming-teacher created an agency in Sophie to begin embedding Indigenous perspectives herself, gaining experience in how she might work as a teacher in her future classroom. Sophie also brings into this encounter the Indigenous student Sarah however, writing, “It would have been interesting to see if this lesson was conducted in other classrooms, or if the teacher planned this lesson because Sarah is Indigenous” (emphasis in original). In these words, I read a questioning recognition as to the ways in which teachers perform Indigenous education in classrooms, as something for Indigenous students or for all students.

As Sophie continues, “all students are disadvantaged if these sorts of lessons are only taught when Indigenous children are in the class”. Tracing my finger across the lines of the journals once more, following the indentations that the pressure of writing has created in the paper, I see an encounter with the journal that has created new understandings for Sophie, her becoming-teacher shifting ever so slightly again: “This is something I did not reflect on until later”, she writes, beginning to ask questions around whose responsibility it is that lessons are taught that include Indigenous knowledges.

For Ivana and Renee, different types of classroom experiences were had: “0 embedding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives—so disappointing” (emphasis in original) writes Ivana, following her prac. For both students, reflections on the lack of Indigenous perspectives in their practicum classrooms were written into discussions around what ought to be done; an awareness of the requirement to embed Indigenous perspectives into curriculum. In Renee’s writing, the three flags from the assembly grounds become one lone Australian flag hanging in the back of the classroom; an encounter with matter that revealed the lack of Indigenous perspectives in pedagogical practice, regardless of the whole-school approach. For Ivana, it was the lack of Indigenous students in the classroom that signified to the supervising teacher that there was no need to integrate Indigenous perspectives, pedagogies or practices into her classroom—according to the teacher, nobody wanted these, nobody was left wanting. For the want of Indigenous students in the classroom, what was wanted to be done was no longer needed. Yet Ivana writes of the in-between space in which she finds herself, between wanting to understand the teacher’s comment that prep year was too early (if there were no Indigenous students who might want such tuition) and a move towards what she was learning in Indigenous Knowledge and Education, her university course.

¹⁵⁹ The Dreaming refers to place-based stories of creation that describe how the entities of the land came to be. The places and events within these stories are believed to have occurred many thousands of years ago (Harrison, 2011, p. 19).

What might Levinas think of this moment? In that moment of writing her journal entry, Ivana was drawn into relation with her supervising teacher, the students in her classroom, imagined future students, the conversations that had been had in her tutorial group and in lectures, the readings she had studied, as well as the known and unknown, told and untold histories that she carried with her: her own positioning as a non-white Muslim student who had experienced racism in the past, the perspectives that she found wanting in her practicum classroom as with her own schooling experiences. In that moment of writing, there was an undeniable necessity to recognise and support Indigenous issues, even when not in direct relation with Indigenous students in her classroom. Ivana had recognised that she was not alone in the world, that to act as if Indigenous peoples did not exist was—if not committing an act of violence—an approach that did not make sense. Her pull towards the need to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into her praxis was clear, with Ivana writing that “there could have been times where Indigenous culture and knowledge could have been embedded into the lesson”, providing an example for an activity that the class had undertaken. At the same time, she appeared aware of the ease with which Indigenous perspectives could be assimilated into a Western totality, drawn into the self-same: “would it have been just a ‘tick the box’ and tokenistic effort to satisfy the CCP?”

For these three students, reflecting on their practicum experiences in regards to their learning within the course brought them and myself to new understandings. First and foremost, I think to myself, it appears that their participation in the course had—at least for the women writing about their practicum experiences here—shifted in their constructions of school an inability to deny the face of the other, the ghosts of their learnings lingering with them. I debate momentarily with myself on this idea: of course the students write about Indigenous perspectives in their journals, I think; that is the task set before them. However being brought into that place of moment and reflecting, these women had chosen to write about how what was evident or missing in their classrooms; and, I note to myself, about their supervising teachers.

Both Ivana and Sophie write to the idea of incorporating Indigenous perspectives for all students, not just for Indigenous students, whereas Renee’s writing draws in the matter that constructs and constitutes a school. All of these students find themselves inexplicably bound up in relation with each other, an intra-active becoming of what they feel teachers ought to do in Indigenous education, in relation with their supervising teachers on prac.

In other journals, there are also moments where the pre-service teachers look to their supervising prac teachers to consider what they as becoming-teachers ought to do; and moments where the pre-service teachers consider what the teachers themselves ought to be doing, in the context of policies such as EATSIPS.

The teacher responded, “Oh, they do that [NAIDOC¹⁶⁰] in this town, but we don’t need to do it.”

[The Indigenous student] answered the question, however it was in his local Indigenous language. The teacher was familiar with the language—she chose not to acknowledge the correct answer. He was in further trouble for not speaking in English.

An Indigenous [student] asked a teacher “are you Black, miss?” and the teacher responded harshly with “No and that’s none of your business if I am.”

This interaction not only severed any relationship, but also painted ‘being black’ as negative and undesirable. After what I’ve learnt, this was a horrible interaction to witness.

This action expressed the idea that his mother tongue was wrong and not accepted.

This subject has enabled me to recognise how easy it is for educators to become too comfortable in their position.

There are also little moments in the journals that make me think about how the students are changing through their interactions with the course. Writing this sentence gives me cause to pause and think. If writing is a method of inquiry, then of course the writing of the journals—that moment of coming together in which a student’s agency as a teacher in the landscape of Indigenous education is created—matters. The moment of writing changes the students, as this writing changes me and how my own subjectivity is related to being a teacher-researcher-writer in this space. As the students reflected on their supervising teachers’ interactions with classroom students, they would first describe an experience, and then move on to analyse the experience themselves: how a response to a student could reinforce problematic concepts of racial and linguistic inferiority, or an evaluation of the ease with which teachers could become complacent.

Holding this last journal in my hand, I turn the small exercise book over to see the name written on the front—Macey. I flip through the pages again, coming to pause on another of Macey’s reflections. Macey had typed up her entries from practicum, long, flowing reflections on her time in the classroom. One reflection in particular grabbed me, and I was unable to look away from the questions it asked of myself as a teacher.

¹⁶⁰ NAIDOC stands for the National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee. In NAIDOC week, some communities and schools across Australia “celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples” (Australian Government, 2016).

Macey's Prac

During the week I was observing
a year ten social science class
learning about Indigenous homelands.
Studying Utopia in the Northern Territory.

There is a significant Indigenous population in the class.

It was interesting
to interact with the class
to learn their diverse experiences with culture and perspectives.

The Indigenous students' knowledge ranged
from those that had been to homelands
had families on homelands
To those who knew nothing at all.

The non-Indigenous students lacked any knowledge
of Indigenous culture or traditions.

One student
begged my supervising teacher
not to watch the ABC 'Utopia' documentary.
He was aware of the current outcomes for Indigenous Australian peoples.
He was an Indigenous student himself.
He was deeply saddened by these realities.

My teacher had not adequately prepared the students for
the 'statistics'
that this young white female teacher
was simply displaying on a whiteboard.

The 'statistics'
that would ultimately shape
the lives of the young Indigenous people
sitting in front of her.

The unit relied on
students understanding
a deep spiritual connection to land
for Indigenous Australian peoples.

The non-Indigenous students struggled extensively to grasp this concept –
Such a foreign concept to students from other cultures.

Some Indigenous students identified immediately
With connection to land.

Other Indigenous students
were somewhat stumped.

The teacher used “t h e y” and “u s”.

“Connection to land
is part of who **they** are.
It’s part of **their** spirit.
Their history.
Their culture.”

“**We** don’t share
the same connection to land”.

The language upset me,
many of the students in the room being Indigenous.
You are either part of ‘us’
or you are

one

of

them.

One Indigenous student still struggled with the idea
of an Indigenous connection to land.

The teacher suggested
“he might have had a more Western upbringing
and therefore a Western perspective”.

She then questioned the student’s Aboriginality
asking
“Do you feel you’ve lost your identity
because you **don’t have** a connection to land?”

*I gulp back bile
as I re-read these words
for what seems like the hundredth time.
Each time
I watch
as the disease of the teacher’s words
—a cancer—
attacks this student’s self.
eating away at who he is.
A strategic deployment of knowledge of the other.
A Trojan horse
visibly wheeled into the classroom
until the knowledge of others spills out
into his nervous system
wielding swords and words.*

A horrifying firsthand experience
where Indigenous Australian peoples
live in the complicated space
between Western academia and Indigenous culture.

This teacher
has misinterpreted this space.
Assumed a deficit approach
Assumed that the student
had ‘lost’ his culture.

This teacher
missed an opportunity to build on Indigenous knowledge
(one or two of the Indigenous girls
had extensive knowledge of Homelands)
Missed an opportunity to stimulate and promote
Indigenous knowledge
ways of doing
acceptance in the classroom.

I lay the journal back down on the desk and stared in the air in front of my eyes, urging something—anything—to apparate out of thin air that might shake the feeling of pain out of my heart. “Do you feel you’ve lost your identity because you don’t have a strong connection to land?” Every time I read those words, the pain makes itself felt anew as I felt the violence that a claim to knowing about Indigenous people might gouge out on a year ten student sense of self. Reading Macey’s story about this experience on prac and the observations she had made of the attempts of a “young white female teacher” to embed Indigenous perspectives into her classroom brought to life the tensions fraught in teaching **about** Indigenous people. This attempt, in a classroom where “the non-Indigenous students lacked any knowledge of Indigenous culture or traditions”, could be seen as an effort to embed Indigenous perspectives, to fill the vacuum that suggests the colonial project was ultimately successful through its silencing of Indigenous perspectives and voices. But the manner in which this knowledge was delivered into the classroom evokes Levinas’ warnings of the danger of a “disinterested acquisition of knowledge” (1989, p. 78): knowledge for knowledge’s sake. The “statistics” that Macey spoke of so potently. The images in the documentary *Utopia* (Pilger, 2013) that deeply saddened an Indigenous student in the classroom. The idea that a connection to land lost led to lost identities. These words and numbers and images—these knowledges “of” Indigenous peoples—were wielded in a way that is epistemologically violent, that saddened the students in front of her that were represented in these words. Macey drew on Nakata’s concept of the *cultural interface* (2007), taught a few weeks before in class, to make sense of “horrifying” this experience must’ve been for the Indigenous students who were “liv[ing] in the complicated space between Western academia and Indigenous culture”. Instead of asking the Indigenous students in the classroom to contribute their

knowledge of the Homelands, a suggestion that Macey herself made, the teacher used her knowledge and understanding “about” Indigenous Australians in a way that redefined Indigeneity for the students according to the teacher’s conceptualisation; an application of Nakata’s corpus of knowledge about Indigenous Australians developed by non-Indigenous Australians. In her journal, Macey called the teacher out on having “misinterpreted this space”.

Thinking back to some of the other students’ writings around the embedding or non-embedding of Indigenous perspectives into the classroom, I wondered where this story fits in. Some students saw no embedding of Indigenous perspectives into their schools or classrooms. Others, such as Renee and Ivana, had been inspired by an initial perception of cultural acceptance through inclusive gestures in the physical and spoken environments of the school—letters of apology on the wall, flags hung out the front of school buildings, acknowledgements of traditional owners spoken by Year Seven school leaders—only to find that those acknowledgements of Indigeneity were not translated into the curriculum and classroom where more meaningful ways of knowing and being could be embedded.

Several of the students, such as Ivana and Sophie, had worried about the possibility that such gestures constituted a form of tokenism. Macey’s experience, however, was the writing of a slightly different story: a story where a teacher attempted to embed Indigenous perspectives into the classroom in a non-tokenistic manner, integrated into everyday learning and curriculum. And nonetheless, despite all of these movements towards embedding Indigenous perspectives, what Macey wrote was a story where the teacher “missed an opportunity to build on Indigenous knowledge” and instead inflicted a form of epistemological and ontological violence towards the students in her classroom. Macey’s participation in the course and the understandings she was building of deficit discourses and cultural interfaces gave her a lens through which to view this event.

Thinking about Macey’s journal entry from this event, my eyes keep being drawn back to the word “know”: the Indigenous students’ knowledge of the homelands, the non-Indigenous students lacking knowledge of Indigenous culture or traditions—and the ways that this knowledge played out in a classroom—documentaries, statistics, concepts, *their* spirit, *their* history, *their* culture. *Their* identity.

A miracle of modern Western freedom unhindered by any memory or remorse, and opening onto a 'glittering future' where everything can be rectified.
(Levinas, 1989, p. 78)

A “glittering future” might be a stand-in for the wants and desires of the young teacher in the classroom, or the desires of the education system’s project of embedding Indigenous perspectives into schools. The schooling system remains a colonial system of knowledge production. To accompany the deliberate and purposeful inclusion of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives with a pedagogy of remembrance—with the ghosts of education past—might speak back to the darker side of Western

modernity (after Mignolo, 2011). A hasty wanting to rectify the past, without taking into consideration relationships and how past atrocities can so easily be continued in the present and the future, would be to rub salt in the colonial wound. As Lucashenko (2003-2004, p. 10) writes, “We know—or should know—that blood has indeed stained the wattle, Henry, and the bleeding hasn’t stopped yet.”

Becoming Differently as Teachers-Becoming

I read back over the students’ writing. There is a paradox, I think to myself, in looking for change whilst on practicum: the pre-service teachers work within a classroom of a supervising teacher, and most have few opportunities to make meaningful changes within the curriculum. Instead it appears that in terms of Indigenous education, most students are relegated to the role of observer, only able to put into action their new understandings to commentate on happenings (understandings that shift through this process of commentary); the pre-service teachers themselves unable to do things differently, to enact what they feel out to be done. Macey, as a pre-service teacher on practicum, was constructed as an “observer”, a relationship with the class that left her unable to speak in this moment, only to write afterwards. I look ever more closely through the journals, searching for a change in the students’ actions whilst on practicum. Ahmed’s (2004) words on the non-performativity of anti-racism follow me as I search, reminding me that “sayings are not always doings” (para 52). Yet the absence of the reflection I am wanting, that the students are doing what they have stated ought to be done, suggests both the difficulty in translating learnings into praxis, as well as a blunt reminder that I as teacher-researcher am wanting the not possible: an encounter in a classroom that most pre-service teachers may not have the agency to enact.

But Barad (2007) reminds me that agency is created—not found—in the relational and differential becomings of our selves entangled as part of the world—not situated in the world. I read Caren’s entry following a moment in her practicum classroom, and think about the ways in which she is entangled in the relationality of that space. Caren writes of offering a reminder to her classroom students that “the Aboriginals owned this land before the Europeans came and that the statement was made from a European perspective” when discussing the national anthem and the country as a young nation. Having stated this to the class, Caren writes that “one student then said, ‘yeah, the Abos!’ Straight away I addressed his statement...I said it was an offensive term and...that language is not appropriate...We should say Indigenous Australians, Aboriginals, or refer to their specific language and cultural group”. In writing this reflection, Caren reflects that her participation in the course has given her “the confidence to address the issue”, as well as making her more aware of unintentional racism. I feel myself cringing as I read the word “Aboriginals”, wondering what had happened to the discussion in class on avoiding referring to groups of peoples with an objectifying adjective. Yet Caren

had also shared with her class the appropriateness of using place and group names. The futility of trying to use a particular set of standards to “evaluate” the students’ changes impresses itself upon me once more. To begin doing decolonial praxis differently is a difficult process, full of misunderstandings and errors along the way.

Stretching out in my chair, I take a figurative step backwards, back to the classrooms in which the pre-service teachers find themselves whilst on practicum. Macey’s reflection on the year ten social science class worried me. Here was a teacher who had thought that she was “doing the right thing”, a teacher who had carefully prepared a lesson that she most likely thought embedded Indigenous perspectives. Little stings of memory fill me as I think back to classrooms and lectures halls I myself had sat in, where “Indigenous perspectives” were included in a way that did not centre relationship, sovereignty, and ethics, but instead objectified, exoticised, and homogenised. Lessons where the focus had been on the “Indigenous disadvantage”, perpetuating a deficit discourse similar to that of Macey’s supervising teacher. I am struck once again by Macey’s insight into how this embedding had missed opportunities to privilege the Indigenous students in the classrooms as agents of knowledge, forgoing connection and embodied knowledge. Feeling dejected and emptied by this story, I want for something more uplifting, something that might make me feel better. An awareness of the politics in this turn floods my senses: how might my desire and wanting of some form of hope “allow racism to remain the burden of racialised others” (Ahmed, 2005, p. 82)?

Despite this awareness, I cannot help but want and desire hope, and turn to the journals once, looking for moments of practice in the classroom that the students and myself recognise as moving towards decoloniality; an undoing and delinking from the racist and colonial practices that have for so long dominated schools, even if they are always only partially there. And these moments make themselves evident as I read through the journals:

A community room
Open every day
Parents guardians carers

They have African
dance at lunch;
Parents and community
Learn how to
Cook Vietnamese food
To raise money
For the school

A year one class
Focusing on different
Aboriginal dreaming stories
Traditional Asian stores
The students are
Very engaged, loved
Listening to stories.

A bit more
Could've been done.

Lessons were focused
Getting content across.
So much pressure
Assessment
Had. To. Be. Done.
Needed to get
Through the unit

My teacher believed
Utilising the community
And accessing elders
Wasn't an option.

The national Anthem
"Uluru" "Mother Earth".

These two poems
By Aboriginal peoples
Represent their perspectives
Land, sacred places,
Anangu language group,
Advocate Aboriginal rights.

Students looked at
Poetic devices, how
The author expressed
Views of land,
The author, their background.

The students enjoyed
Learning about the
Author, her culture
Beliefs about Australia.

The students learnt
About Uluru, why
It's sacred place,
The paintings, surroundings.

I gained a
Deeper understanding into
Aboriginal culture, beliefs.

A great way
Incorporate cross-curriculum priorities
Especially as my
Class consisted of
Majority Indigenous students.

No reluctance to
Include these perspectives
Rather awareness ensuring
The appropriate occasions.

Placing the journals on the table, focus my eyes back on the familiar yellow walls of the teaching room in front of me. In amongst these moments of delinking from colonial classrooms, I see threads of tentativeness from some of the students—the entanglement of tensions of assessment, the importance of ensuring right process, perceived difficulties from teachers in working with community. This careful approach could perhaps be seen as an awareness from the pre-service teachers that their work would be entangled. And always lingering, as well, is the tension between knowing *through* and

knowing *about*. What would Levinas think about the student who wrote of gaining a deeper understanding into Aboriginal culture? Is this another drawing into a colonial totality; a reframing of ways of knowing and fixing Indigenous peoples? And what possibilities might there be for incorporating Indigenous perspectives on a day-to-day basis? Perhaps, I think to myself, the voice of the Anangu poet speaking out, on her terms, is a starting point: “language is spoken where community between the terms of the relationship is wanting, where the common plane is wanting or is yet to be constituted” (Levinas, 1969, p. 73). Another want, I think to myself. When community is still wanting, yet to be built, a voice that speaks out is transcendent, radically foreign. Does such transcendence exceed the analysis through poetic devices?

Thinking back to the students’ writing as they entered the second half of the course, I ask myself what this diffractive studying of the entanglements on practicum—the little differences that matter in how pre-service teachers are becoming as they enter classrooms—might do? As I read the journals and my own words together, I am brought to new understandings of what it might mean to prepare pre-service teachers to enter schools and classrooms. The students entangle their supervising teachers into their own writing; the teachers’ practices of working with Indigenous students and embedding Indigenous perspectives framing and modeling what the students feel ought to be done in their own future classrooms. I notice too, how cognisant the pre-service teachers are of their own becomings. They write their way into cultural interfaces and into what might possibly become an onto-ethico-epistemology (Barad, 2010) entangling theory, practice, words, students, teachers, community rooms, land, food and more into their own material practices of who they are becoming as teachers in this space. And perhaps, what stays with me most of all in reading these journals, is the responsibility that the pre-service teachers have towards this work. For those who wrote about their experiences on practicum (others choosing to focus purely on readings and lecture recordings), the careful attentiveness of the types of differences that might matter in classrooms—what they wrote ought to be done—matters.

Chapter Eight

The Final Few

In which the students write letters to future students; acts of Knowing are dis/re-entangled; and I consider what it might mean/do for us to be *present* as educators, as the Future is enfolded into the Past into the Present.
(Weeks 10-13)

To want.

A verb.

To wish or need someone to be present.

Example: Am I wanted at the meeting tomorrow?

To want is to want someone—or something—to be present. To be a present. To present one's self, to be in the moment. At times, when I look at the black and orange stripes of the journals sitting on my windowsill, these miniature books feel like a present. It is the generosity of the students who allowed their journals to be used in my research that has made this particular excursion into the field of research possible. But even as an educator, racing back to my desk after a tutorial, I love to open the journals and pour over the students' writing. Caught in the present, the little moments that are presented in the book are more than just learning logs. They are the cover of a story about teaching and learning, about the interactions and the intra-actions between students, myself as a teacher, the content in the course, the students' prior experiences, and the journals themselves. I feel gleeful as I devour the books, desiring these insights, thinking about how the tutorial went and what aspects the students have influenced the becoming of the student-as-agent. The act of looking into the students' worlds as constructed on the page, no matter which conceptual apparatus is present in my writing, is a present gratefully received. And like a present, wrapped in shiny paper and adorned with a ribbon, these words have the potential to fill me with joy, like when the first sentence of a book takes your breath away and you know that the story will be good. Words like "enthusiastic about starting my career" or "motivated into becoming a better teacher" bring that same feeling of happiness that a gift brings; affect and emotions shifting as we become entangled with the matter of presents. Of course, sometimes the presents we receive are not the ones that we had wanted.

To present as a verb is also to give or to show—this thesis is written with the words I choose to present, particular words chosen from the journals and presented to you on this page you are reading now. The words I present both do and do not re/present the writings of the students in their reflective learning journals. From one angle, it might appear that the words I present are representative of the

students' intentions, thoughts, and affects as they sat in the classroom at the end of each tutorial, pouring words onto the page, only the scratching of pens filling the air. But if you stand in another corner and look at the words presented differently, they are always only ever the aspects that I-as-writer (the self as writer present as I think about myself as researcher) choose to present on this page. Despite having little agency in the production of this data-as-agent in its first formation as written words—the journals having already been written before this project was formalised—the data became something other than what was presented to me as the reflective learning journals, intra-acting with myself-as-writer-researcher-educator.

And to want is to wish or need something or someone to be present. There are many things I wish to be present in the journals when I read. These have shifted from desiring stark comparisons between students who were able to reflect on their positions as white middle-class teachers and the impact of this in the classroom, and salacious comments that I thought I could use to write damnations about the whiteness of pre-service teachers and the university several years ago; comments that I could write back to saying “Can’t these people see what they are writing?” But that’s before I came into contact with Barad’s (2007) book, a material artefact that interfered with my patterns of thinking about reflection: about my research analyses assessing the extent to which I deemed students able to reflect on their own whiteness. In the same ways that the students encountered knowledges and ideas that made them responsible, diffracting their patterns of thinking, writing with (rather than reflecting on) Barad’s book sent my own thoughts into new places. Rather than reflecting, looking to the self-same, attending to diffraction or interference patterns is productive and performative, demanding that we know as a material practice, and therefore recognise our responsibilities as entangled parts of the world (Barad, 2007, pp. 88-89).

And now I want words to be present that suggest that the students will not want to know about Indigenous peoples or cultures, and that their future work will lay in creating knowledge spaces where Indigenous peoples can define themselves and their own ways of knowing. I want to find present the idea that the pre-service teachers themselves want to be present in the future: to take seriously the ethical responsibility that they have in this space; to not turn away when they are called to responsibility. In this encounter with the learning journals, I hope to find present the becomings of the agents who are present in the writing, and in education: becoming-teachers whose subjectivities shift as they encounter different people, writings, matter, policies, and pedagogies. As I write, I think back to those last weeks in our tutorial classrooms, and the space the students were in as they wrote the journal entries.

*Pen and paper
An empty envelope
Lying, waiting, wanting*

*Gripping pens ever
so tightly
pausing thinking scribbling
writing reading writing
slower ever faster
“A letter to
the future students
of EDUC2090”.*

(Be)coming as Teachers: Pedagogical Frameworks

I think about what was on the students' minds and pens as they scribbled out a letter addressed to the next year's cohort, a teaching and learning activity that we use as a material practice of thinking through the course. In the last few weeks of the course, we focused heavily on the translation of theory to classroom praxis and educational scenarios. Frameworks such as Uncle Ernie Grant's (2002) Holistic Framework and Yunkaporta's (2009) 8-ways pedagogical framework¹⁶¹ (see Chapter Two) were introduced and used to discuss curriculum design and classroom activities. For many of the students in the group of journals I am reading, the pedagogical frameworks have been linked to increasing their confidence and their capacity to embed Indigenous perspectives into their future classrooms. Having discussed her learning from the implementation of the 8-ways pedagogical framework, Ellissa writes: "I am now feeling more confident to teach in a way that will embed this knowledge...I'm still not 100% confident, but I feel like I'm definitely getting there." For Bella, this framework "allows me to shape my pedagogical practices in a way that creates an effective, inclusive environment for all of my students." Carly writes: "I have been able to more readily consider Indigenous skills, knowledges and perspectives in classroom contexts. Pedagogies such as yarning circles are something which will be useful in my future classroom, across all subject areas." More generally around the course, Felicity writes that, "Before I began this course, I was quite concerned that I'd be able to gain enough insight in order to embed Indigenous perspectives into my pedagogical practice in a meaningful way that doesn't feel like I'm 'just ticking the Indigenous perspectives box'. This course has provided me with invaluable knowledge of how this can be done in genuine and culturally responsive way". These comments are in line with Moreton-Robinson et al.'s (2012) audit on teacher education throughout Australia, which argued for the importance of preparing pre-service

¹⁶¹ The framework designed by Yunkaporta (2009, p. 50) is the 8-ways Aboriginal Pedagogy Framework, designed as "explicit Aboriginal pedagogy to support Indigenous learners" that overlaps with "optimal pedagogy for all learners". Within the context of this course, the 8-ways framework is taught as a pedagogical framework integrating Indigenous ways of teaching and learning that can be used for all students in a class, in conjunction with local community and knowledges.

teachers with the appropriate pedagogies required to transfer their understandings into classroom praxis. Some of these comments don't re/present a change in wants, rather a change in agency: Felicity suggests that even before beginning the course, she had concerns around meaningful praxis, and that the shift lies in the capacity to enact praxis. Eleanor, on the other hand, has been moved to consider praxis, but writes that she "disagree[s] with a lot of my peers in saying that this course has offered me the substantial tools in approaching the implementation of Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum/pedagogy". Despite writing that she is "more motivated", she suggests that the tools to do so have been left wanting.

Nonetheless, these shifts in tangible resources and tools can allow the students to continue implementing Indigenous perspectives, regardless of how their own constructions of their work in this space may or may not have shifted. I think back to Levinas, and how he might make sense of the students' writing. In the moment of writing, the pedagogical frameworks become a way to reach out to the Indigenous other, a movement towards a more ethical, more decolonial practice. Having come face to face with Indigenous knowledges and questions of responsibility, some of the students write of the necessity of attending to this work in their lives and classrooms—an ethical necessity, I think to myself. Lampert (2012) writes that despite strong intentions around socially just practice, many students have difficulty translating these intentions into praxis. Perhaps engaging with questions of ethics and considering the complexities of working within Indigenous pedagogical frameworks could re/present a move away from the mix-and-stir approach of "plonking" Indigenous knowledges into the curriculum that Nakata (2007) warns about, with incommensurable differences between Western and science epistemological foundations. Instead, this move might present a shift from an approach that suggests the "first world has knowledge; the third world has culture" (Mignolo, 2009, p. 159), and instead re/presents Indigenous peoples as knowers of their own stories and worlds, as well as knowers of the worlds of colonisers (Nakata, 2010); practitioners of educational sciences. Surely, I think to myself, this desire from the students to ensure Indigenous pedagogical frameworks are present in their curricula is a way that they want to be present as ethical educators in their classrooms.

Yet a certain thought remains present, making itself known to me as a disruption to my writing-lines as I write these words. The old man I met on the bench (in Chapter Four) had argued passionately that "One of the greatest violences we can perpetrate on the Other is to bring them into our totality, 'the reduction of the other to the same' (Levinas, 1969, p. 46)". When experiential knowledge is fundamental to the ways we come to know the world, would the "conceptual limits of their own thinking" (Nakata et al., 2012, p. 121) mean that the pre-service teachers were unable to escape the inevitability of wanting to reduce Indigenous knowledges into their own ways of knowing, being, and doing, re-absorbing Indigenous knowledges into their own totalities and acts of teaching and learning? What might it mean for pre-service teachers—for all educators—to engage with Indigenous

knowledges in a way that respects rather than reduces the alterity that is present when working with difference and Others; in a way that wants and moves towards making a decolonial approach present, rather than roughly grasping an Indigenous approach, drawing it closer?

(Not) Knowing

One of those diffraction waves is a subtle difference in what or who pre-service teachers claim to know. In those first few days and weeks of the course, many of the pre-service teachers wrote a strong desire to know *about* Indigenous people and culture as a way of becoming a better educator. Their expectations were around wanting to address their *limited understandings*, wanting to *heighten, develop, broaden understanding and knowledge; know more about them, their culture*. But by the end of the course, knowing and understanding is presented in a different type of way. For some students, the knowledge they now want is about their own histories and culture: “As a teacher I need the bravery to acknowledge what happened in the past but still celebrate moving on,” writes Caren in her final week. In reference to a discussion around the former Prime Minister John Howard’s refusal to make a formal apology to families affected by the Stolen Generation policies, Renee writes, “I didn’t know this happened. Why, sorry is something so easy to say.” For these students, history-as-agent came into play in the course as the past was remembered in the present, and the knowledge that is learnt is a remembrance of what had happened. As Rose (2004) writes, Levinas presents to us in his philosophy a moral duty to remember and witness: “One is commanded to goodness even if it is futile” (p. 32). For some of the students, that which comes to be known is their changing understandings of themselves. Caitlyn writes “Have I left this course feeling privileged to be a white middle class pre-service teacher? Yes, I have. I know I have opportunities of abundance based on my background yet will compete with many other females for a job opportunity”, and Eleanor notes “I need to know my views more thoroughly and this idea of a reflective journal is great for that”. These words bring to mind Haraway and Barad’s writing around reflection being a tired metaphor that leads to sameness rather than difference. I think about how reflection for Caitlyn has led to a recognition of the types of privilege she holds as a “white middle class pre-service teacher”. These two pre-service teachers write of knowing themselves, yet Caitlyn juxtaposes this knowing with a reflection on the opportunities that she perceives to not be afforded to her. Eleanor wants to know her views more thoroughly, but does not indicate how these views are always shifting and changing, instead constructing them to be static. The self-same is displaced elsewhere (Haraway, 1997); the geometries of sameness reign (Barad, 2007, p. 72).

However, students show indicators of diffraction and a move to new directions of thought as a result of interference, even in the same entries where they reify sameness. Caitlyn also wrote “Nakata’s readings directed my thinking into a different direction. His cultural interface article was exactly my

concern throughout the course of my internal struggle between what I knew, what I thought I should know and what others know (more specifically Indigenous people)". What should I make of this comment—in fact, of the process of analysis—I ask myself, flipping through the techni-coloured rainbows that are highlighted and scribbled on transcripts? There are so many ways that I could be reading through this data, and it all seems to depend on what conceptual apparatus I bring to bear on the data. One moment I think of Caitlyn's work as reflective, the self-safe projected onto the pages of the journal; the next moment diffractive, encountering course readings that sprawl her line of thinking into a new direction—one that no longer wants to know and determine Indigenous people, but instead recognises Indigenous peoples' agency as knowers (Nakata, 2007). Writing research itself is a continually shifting process as different conceptual agents are brought into contact with the data, and myself as researcher-writer-educator.

And for some students, knowing is about not-knowing. Moving away from a desire to know, and thereby possess, the students wrote about having to know no longer being present: "I owe my current sense of confidence to that Nakata article. The education system can't expect all teachers to know exactly how to embed Indigenous pedagogy into their classrooms, can they?" writes Caitlyn in her final entry, following on to say, "The main strategy I got from the readings...still stands true: 'We don't know everything' and I will not act like I do." Similarly, Felicity writes that, "I am not an expert and I am now aware of the multitude of resources available, particularly the community".

As I sit at my computer, writing the stories into this narrative, the messy idea of knowledge arises once more. For the students to claim knowledge of Indigenous peoples (or myself to claim knowledge of students) would be to enact epistemological violence; denying the alterity of the other and drawing them into our totalities. But the idea of what it might mean for educators to *know* Indigenous peoples—to claim to know how to teach Indigenous students or to put texts that are artefacts of the corpus, the body of knowledge produced about Indigenous peoples (Nakata, 2007), into their curricula—takes me back to our conversations of whiteness and possessive logic. In those early weeks of the semester, I read in the students' writing a desire to grasp onto knowledge that they can take with them, to find some way out of the pools of emotions that accompany teaching and learning in this space. I read myself in their writing. The "I never knows" (see Chapter Five) that accompany the difficult knowledges of learning brutal histories and presents present more than a difficult knowledge to be carried, but rather shift students' subjectivities once more as the foundations on which another subjectivity had stood are dismantled. In that feeling of a void, students grasp for new ways of knowing.

I place the journals carefully back onto my desk, and ask myself what type of presence the students want. How might pre-service teachers view knowledge about the other—an Indigenous other—as a present? Shiny, neatly packaged boxes of knowledge adorned with ribbons. A present can

be picked up, wrapped up, given or received, wanted or unwanted. Knowledge can be presented in classrooms, re-presented in different forms, for Indigenous knowledges have continually shifted and changed, accounting for Indigenous accounts of colonisation (Nakata, 2007). But is it possible to know Indigenous peoples without enacting violence? Thinking back to how Moreton-Robinson's (2011) concept of possessive logic was linked to whiteness (see Chapter Six), I remember how she suggests that possession imposes a will-to-be on Indigenous peoples who are perceived to lack will, and are therefore open to being possessed (Moreton-Robinson, 2011a, p. 646). Claiming knowledge of Indigenous peoples would be an erasure of Indigenous peoples' will-to-be, the exercising of patriarchal white sovereignty (Moreton-Robinson, 2004b). As Moreton-Robinson (2004b, p. 75) writes, "Aborigines have often been presented as objects—as the 'known'. Rarely are they represented as subjects, as 'knowers'."

I close my eyes and lean back into my chair, hands resting lightly on the table in front of me. In my mind, I imagine a man walking up towards me, his dark brown hair shaved close to his head, a beard covering the bottom half of his face. He introduces himself as Maldonado-Torres (2007, 2011), but says I can call him Nelson instead, his voice heavy as his words tumble over each other. "That idea of the known, and knowers is at the heart of coloniality," he says, as if he could read my mind—although, I muse to myself, this conversation is in my mind. "You see," Nelson continues, "Western philosophy is built on Descartes' *ego cogito*: I think, and therefore I am. A Western tradition of thought is built on knowing first and foremost, and staking knowledge claims about Others. Without knowing, we cannot be. And this is how coloniality justifies racial hierarchies of oppression, through *ego cogito*. The Cartesian formulation of philosophy as epistemology hides propositions about the notion of being; propositions enacted through the colonisation of lands across the world. If I think, and therefore I am, what is left for those who are not seen as thinkers? Those who aren't recognised as knowers—those who don't appear to know the world in which they live through a Cartesian system of classification—don't exist as humans. And those who do not know, are not. 'I think means that others do not think, or do not think properly. Therefore I am suggests others are-not, lack being, should not exist or are dispensable' (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 252). And this is how Western enlightenment thinking links colonialities of Knowing and Being: "The absent of rationality is articulated in modernity with the idea of the absence of Being in others" (pp. 252-253).'

My eyes still closed, I see the man wave goodbye and walk away, leaving me to reflect on his arguments. Maldonado-Torres had spoken about Levinas' proposal that to claim to know the other is to enact violence: the other is one so radically different from ourselves. If we try to know her, we try to make her the same as our self, understanding her only through our own frames of reference. The other is no longer allowed the agency to define her own way of being and knowing in the world. For the students who wrote these journals, a claim to knowledge of Indigenous peoples would be another act in

a line of colonisers enacting violence; constructing Indigenous peoples as “non-human”, non-thinking, replacing Indigenous peoples’ will-to-be with their own will. Levinas (1989, p. 54) writes that “this absence of the other[‘s Being] is precisely its presence as other”, as colonial ways of knowing Indigenous peoples and other colonised subjects coerce them into positions of being-known. But subjectivities shift and change throughout the semester, as the students and myself encounter and entangle ourselves with different ideas, discourses, curriculum artefacts, flags hanging in assembly grounds and classrooms, other teachers, documentaries, histories of Boundary Street and discussions of whiteness. For the students to now write that they no longer want to know, or to be experts in, Indigenous peoples and cultures, instead shifting their language to one of facilitation, can be read/written as a move towards a decolonial ethic that positions responsibility first, rather than a possessive logic that would want to own knowledge-of. As students move and shift frameworks of “knowing about Indigenous people” to understanding that multiple ways of knowing and being are present in the world, the understanding that is constructed continues to be one that assimilates the knowledge one is taught into their own way of perceiving the world—into what they know. Could this re-present an inability to move outside of our own totalities? Is it possible to be otherwise than being? But perhaps this might be a necessarily and frustratingly imperfect move in another direction. Even as I think these thoughts, I am hauntingly aware that I can’t move outside of my own understandings of Indigeneity and what Indigenous perspectives should be, look like, and do. This frustrating inability takes place even as I reflect on this idea of epistemological violence and what role “knowing” plays in educational spaces.

Entangling Barad’s writing into my thinking/writing/learning/teaching around knowing, I remind myself that to claim knowers and the known as separate entities is in itself an act of Cartesian dualism, a “God-trick” (Haraway, 1997) of representationalism that suggests a knower stands apart from the world, taking it all in. “The subject and the object do not pre-exist as such” Barad (2007, p. 89) reminds me. If we recognise the entangled nature of being in the world, then our practices of coming to know are part of the world—our subjectivities arising through intra-actions with one another. These intra-actions, perhaps another way of saying that we do not stand alone and apart from the world (rather are in relation), require an attentiveness to the ways in which we impact one another.

In the same way, I think to myself, fingers resting lightly on the keyboard as I open my eyes, trying not to gaze at the journals lying present before me, I must remain constantly vigilant of not writing truth-claims about students’ subjectivities. Reminding myself of Levinas’ words, I whisper, “to claim to know the other is to enact violence: the other is one so radically different from ourselves”. The decolonial logics that govern how I want students to learn, and education to look like, also apply to my own research.

To Be Present

Not knowing is not incompatible with students recognising the vital importance of their role within the cultural interface of classrooms. For the majority of students whose journals I read, their wanted-ness in the classroom—the importance of presence as teachers—is an idea I continually encounter in their writing. To write into themselves a need to be present could demonstrate an ethical responsibility, as students encounter thoughts of their future praxis and begin to construct thoughts about what their praxis will look like. I pick up the journals again, looking through the students' final entries for words and moments that might indicate a wanting-to-be-present-as-becoming-ethical-teachers. I read carefully, listening to the rhythms in the text. I underline words that catch my eye.

I will
remember forever, reactions
shocked, sad, guilty.

a difference is
I don't feel guilt.

I feel
I'm not alone.

I feel
more aware of
how I teach
how my opinions
can affect people.

I guess
we are the ones
who must make
the change.

I feel
somewhat relieved by
what today's lecturer said.
"If you're willing
to step out
from behind fences
to engage meaningfully
with Indigenous communities
it will not be difficult."

I believe
the 8-ways framework
the unit of work
provide authentic experiences
are perfect avenues
to shape pedagogical practices

I believe
my job is
to embrace remembrance
to make this happen
to make sure it stays.

I will
take away frameworks
support Indigenous students
alongside Indigenous teachers
learn from them
consult with community
improve my teaching.

Reading the students' words, I am struck by the ways in which they construct themselves as teachers, the taken-for-grantedness from so many of the students that they will incorporate Indigenous knowledges and perspectives into their work as teachers. To have Indigenous peoples and knowledges present in the classroom is one way in which the becoming-teachers are making themselves present. Eleanor, who had written that she didn't feel equipped with the pedagogical tools she needed, still felt "motivated" to introduce "political issues into Australia's current system".

But what might Levinas say about this sense of presence as students project into the future? I pick up the library-barcode "Levinas reader" (1989) sitting by my desk and flick through passages, searching for a trace of presence. In an essay entitled "Time and the other", I find present the writing I

am wanting. Levinas writes, “The future is what is in no way grasped...Anticipation of the future and projection by the future...are but the present of the future and not the authentic future” (pp. 43-44). I play with these words, doodling them into my notebook as I think through what Levinas has written. Time is another other, and the future can never be grasped, can never truly be known. It is always what is coming, for we can only ever experience the present, seconds passing, one after the other. As the students write their thoughts about their future practice, they are projecting the future into the present, the present of the future, bringing the future into their existence now. The students’ words, a response to our call to think about their praxis in future classrooms, claims a future that can never truly be known.

Present and Future

But, I think to myself, it can be easy to write these words. How quickly the *I wills* and the *I believes* roll off the tongue and the pen, particularly when the students are aware that their writing is being marked. This is not to say, I rebut myself, that the words are not meaningful or meant, that the students don’t want to make themselves present in future classrooms as educators on the Indigenous education landscape. Yet responsibility is being deferred to the future. As Rose writes,

The vision of a future which will transcend the past, a future in which current contradictions and current suffering will be left behind enables us to understand ourselves in an imaginary state of future achievement. It thus enables us to turn our backs on current social facts of pain, damage, destruction and despair which exist in the present, but which we will only acknowledge as our past. (2004, p. 17)

I reflect on her words and wonder whether the students’ words suggest a future vision, a deferral for their work as educators to the future. What would it mean to “do” decolonial practice in the “here and now”? A future orientation (Rose, 2004, p. 18) enables the deflection of responsibility, focusing on what the students might do in the future, when they have their own classrooms, but “turning their backs” on a lack of action in the present. I look through the journals again, wondering what types of actions students undertake now in the present. Macey writes of a conversation with a friend, about “invasion day¹⁶², the national anthem, treaties”, and suggests that this conversation gave her “a huge understanding from an Indigenous person’s perspective”, and noting that “without this course, I would never have considered this

¹⁶² Many people (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) choose not to celebrate the national day of celebration, Australia Day, which commemorates the landing of the First Fleet in Sydney Cove. Instead, this day is termed Invasion Day.

concept let alone engaged in such a deep conversation”. Perhaps the course exists as an other to students’ interiorities, a call to responsibility that pushes students to enter into dialogue with Indigenous peoples, bridging distances. Yet for the other students, there were precious few instances written into their journals that suggested a difference in action now, rather a deferral to what they “will do”.

I recognise as I write these words, however, the catch that the students find themselves in if I want to analyse journals in such ways. As pre-service teachers, preparing for future classrooms, future praxis, this is what we as educators ask for: a relation to how they will change their future work in a time yet to come. The reflections that students wrote on practicum (Chapter Seven) exemplified some of the small changes that students made in their practice, but for the most part, they were required to watch mentor teachers, or to teach into a broader curriculum program. Their agency to enact difference as becoming teachers was limited by the totality of the current school programs in which they found themselves. I wonder what this means for our work as educators involved in forming new subjectivities and performativities in relation to becoming-teachers’ work as educators on the Indigenous education landscape. Moreton-Robinson et al. (2012) have suggested, as I agree, on the importance of explicitly teaching pedagogy for Indigenous Studies. In our work as teacher educators, there needs to be a focus on how to “do” education differently in order to construct an education system where Indigenous students, communities and knowledges are not just allowed into the space, but where pluriversalities are actively supported. Yet a reflective learning journal, and assessment directed at thinking through work as teachers, does not enable—or perhaps I should say ask for—a change in the here and now.

Pre-service teachers do write about changes though, with the optic metaphor of opening eyes being ever present. Bella wrote on several occasions about how the course had been “an eye-opening journey”, how it had “opened [her] eyes to the ignorance and intolerance that is still effecting Indigenous people”. For Bella, this “change in perspectives” was very much linked to a call for presence in the classroom: “It has really empowered me to try my absolute hardest to break through and make a difference for these children as well as educating non-Indigenous students, creating not only an inclusive learning environment, but one that allows all students to see other through an understanding and empathetic lens”.

The optical metaphor presents itself again and again, as students write about the ways the course, the teaching and learning activities and the matter they have encountered became part of their changing subjectivities.

An eye-opening journey

into existing inequality
ignorance and intolerance
boundary streets and roads
acknowledging Indigenous background
the different perspectives
how to embed.

I can now see

how close minded my parents were.
the changes I have made (I feel them as well).
aspects of texts such as this.
colour-blindness is a racist mindset.
the impact an educator can make.
why that comment had such an impact, is so offensive.

Points of view

a 13 year old rural girl's
a biased white
an Indigenous

I guess that's what this course is about.

What would Levinas say to the optical metaphors appearing again and again in both the students' writing and I am sure in my own? For Levinas, an analysis must begin with the radically unknowable: "Absolutely unknowable means foreign to all light, rendering every assumption of possibility impossible, but where we ourselves are seized" (Levinas, 1989, p. 41). The idea that there is something beyond what can be taught in a course such as this, or writing in reflective learning journals or even a thesis, is in one way the thought that exceeds itself. How might we write, teach, and learn into an unknowable place that seizes one in?

The changes in students' becoming-selves throughout the course led each to radically different end-points; points which could not necessarily be determined or defined by a taxonomical categorization. For example, Regina writes, "I had never really thought about the term 'Aboriginalism' until we defined it within the lecture... This is when I asked myself, "What do I think about Indigenous Australians?" 'Do I hold this stereotypical view?' Coming from Zimbabwe I had had minimum contact with Indigenous people so fortunately enough, I have not fallen into this 'trap'". In first reading Regina's comment, I was quick to denounce her reflection of not having "fallen into the trap" of thinking about Indigenous Australians as a homogenous group as uncritical, much the same as her

comment in her first journal entry that her family “looks past race and focuses on equality”, a comment that indicated a colour-blind approach to a supposed post-racial society. How do I make sense as a teacher-researcher of what could be “perceived” as a lack of self-reflection; if nearing the end of the course, Regina wrote that a lack of relationships with—presence by—Indigenous people in her life meant that she was able to avoid homogenising and stereotyping? What about the importance of presence in the classroom, of wanting to be an educator that was committed to working within the Indigenous education landscape? I flick to the last page of the journal, and there neatly written, in the last lines, was Regina’s reflection on what this course meant for her: “I feel this is just the beginning of my journey and I am inspired to learn more about this ‘hidden culture’. I am happy to say that I now am able to recognise and value the culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders”.

If epistemological violence was indeed enacted the desire to possess more knowledge about Indigenous people, to know them, then Regina’s last couple of sentences could surely reflect such a desire: to learn more, to value the culture. Where were the reflections on how Indigenous knowledges needed to be recognised as such—as knowledge, not just culture? I asked myself, thinking of Mignolo’s (2009, p. 160) scathing words: “As we know: the first world has knowledge, the third world has culture”. And that question remained: could this student be said to have experienced some form of critical change of their own self view? An epistemic delinking (Mignolo, 2009)? Perhaps not. Yet to claim that Regina’s learning throughout the course was insignificant, that her ever-shifting self had not changed in a direction that is more ethical, more in relationship and dialogue with Indigenous peoples would withhold from view the little differences that might matter: the differences in her writing, the act that Regina would perform in her teaching practice—and the acts that she performed in her everyday life, I remind myself.

I return once more to the book of Levinas’ writings lying on the desk before me. If the future is the other, I think to myself, then the presence or the imagining of the future in the students’ journals is also a calling to responsibility. To think of the future, to know its imminence—its proximity—is to come face-to-face with something outside of one’s self, outside of who the students are now. And to respond to that call is surely an ethical response, even if it always falls short of action in the here-and-now, as Rose (2004) might suggest. Chanter (2001, p. 241) writes “Levinas attempts throughout his work to give expression to a sense of the present that is not governed by ontology, being, or essence, a present that somehow signifies by exceeding, overflowing or going beyond the very thought that thematizes or presents it.” I wonder if I am reading as present that which I want: a present that overflows the ways in which I can myself thematise or present the students’ work.

For there are also students who, come the final week of semester and their final entry, are aggrieved and left wanting. Although only two students wrote explicitly of disappointment, I am called ethically to acknowledge and respond to the presence of this anger in the journals.

I'm disappointed with
my time spent
in this course
I feel judged.
hostile and unapproachable.
I didn't feel
safe or supported
I failed to gain
the great learning experiences
that were promised.

out of pocket
emotionally, intellectually, financially
this course just
ticked the box

at a loss.
not a better teacher
not a confident learner

that's what I wanted
from this course.

It's hard to know what to write in response to the presence of such words.

...

And in some students' journals, that which I had wanted was simply not present. Instead, traces of possessive logic continued to make themselves known. As Sarah writes, "Being able to witness Kevin Rudd in 2008 apologise to *our* Indigenous people, was something I will never forget" (emphasis added). I can't help but get stuck on the "our" and remember again Ahmed's (2005) arguments about how the National Apology became an opportunity for non-Indigenous people to feel good about feeling bad, whilst leaving the emotional labour of

remembering to Indigenous peoples. In Courtney's journal I read an unease of contradiction and a desire for comfort to be present: "Some of their content [in Nakata's articles] was a little weird—like when they insisted that their culture should be taught in the classroom and then went on to say that white teachers couldn't do it".

Even as the students reached the end of the course, words that are threads and traces of a possessive logic (Moreton-Robinson, 2004a, 2005, 2011) continue to weave their presence into the students' writing; a writing that includes a sense of responsibility and that writes the future into the present. To think through our teaching and learning within Indigenous education as a diffractive process that blurs boundaries and where waves overlap, entangling themselves in one another, is to rewrite teaching, learning and research as never a whole or finished process. Rather those possessive logics are creating becoming-agents at the same time that a sense of responsibility creates becoming-agents. At the same time that one is commanded to goodness by the presence of the other—a presence that is itself constituted through the entanglement of difficult historical knowledges and unpacking decolonial logics, as well as physical matter—competing wants and desires are knotted into the teaching and learning process. Perhaps our work as educators in this space lies in thinking through the balances of what we present to our students—enough tangible ideas and frameworks that they can grasp as knowable and usable in the classroom, but always entangling the presence of an unknowable other. This other entangles our changing selves until we are connected and committed to a place of responsibility.

Chapter Nine

In Three Parts

The thread created moves forward crisscrossed and interlaced by other threads until it breaks with its own linearity; and hence, a story is told mainly to say that there is no story—only a complex, tightly knit tissue of activities and events that have no single explanation, as in life (Trinh, 1999, p. 233).

Part I

Future researcher
of EDUC2090

You've been stuck, writing
a non-conventional end
to a non-conventional thesis.

How do you write this,
not wanting to claim knowing,
to claim final meaning?
What writing makes possible
another type of ending?

The kitchen table
on a Wednesday afternoon
your partner says
“If you started with the course
beginning, end with the end.”

Future researcher,
what do I think that this
thesis has achieved?
No passing of objective
knowledge from me to you.

But ideas that might
entangle, shift, change themselves
in the ways you are
Coming to research, teaching,
learning. Coming to writing.

...

I came into this research project thinking I knew how I would—that I could—analyse the reflective learning journals that the pre-service teachers wrote across the course of a semester. I could have already imagined the sentences I would write and the arguments I would put together as I found evidence to support what I already thought was happening: that mostly white students would originally be uncomfortable with using language around whiteness and white privilege, that they would refuse to see their roles as complicit in coloniality in education. I thought that then partaking in the course would give students a new language and reflective capacity to “better” see and write how they too were makers of race and racism, and therefore be able to change their actions, becoming “better” teachers on and within the Indigenous education landscape. But it was not until I stopped trying to commit the epistemological violence of claiming to know the pre-service teachers’ interiorities that something changed. My thinking encountered Levinas, St Pierre, Moreton-Robinson, Nakata, and others who challenged me to rethink the purpose of research, irrevocably altering the pathway I wrote. I took a more Harawayian/Baradian approach and started looking instead for the affects and effects of difference, the moments where pre-service teachers and myself faced an idea or theory that asked us to think and do and write our work differently in this space. Not just research, but teaching and learning became a diffractive process as we engage with difference as that which cuts together-apart.

...

I started searching
for ethical encounters.
Witnessing moments
Where students were called into
connection and commitment.

...

There was Boundary Street: an act of witnessing that called the pre-service teachers to remember; a pedagogy of remembrance that they wrote in their journals as unable to remain indifferent (Simon et al., 2002; Simon, 2011). Of course, I only wrote the responses from the students who were moved, who hadn’t remained indifferent. It would be impossible to know—or to claim to know—why other students chose not to write about this activity; and unjust to claim that they did not care, or remained unmoved. Perhaps they just had something else on their minds that day.

And as the weeks moved on, unpacking the white patriarchal possessive logics (Moreton-Robinson, 2011) of race and whiteness became a key teaching and learning point that might respond to the difficult knowledge students were being asked to carry. Instead of trying to make claims around the pre-service teachers' discourses of race, and their ability or inability to *reflect* upon—the things that I had wanted to write about—I stopped to listen to the students' words. What happened next was a subtle and almost imperceptible shift in myself as a becoming-educator, as I began to better feel and feel better about the diverse and complex ways that students grappled with the materiality and theory of race. Their own bodies were tugged upon by the other; an intercorporeality of alterity arising. This responsibility imposed by otherness caused a need to respond, and a beginning to deconstructing a white patriarchal possessive logic. To avoid bringing the students' writing completely into my totality, and presenting the journals in a playlet—the interruptionist logic of theory held off for a moment—I did not want to suggest that “things speak for themselves...the pure voice of the previously silenced” (Maclure, 2010, p. 278). Instead, this was an opportunity to take a step back as a researcher-writer-teacher, and think about how the words changed me and my thinking (around my own material body as well as teaching and learning) as I intra-acted with them, shifting apart lines from journals as I wove them into a new structure, a teaching and learning conversation about race and whiteness.

There were also the moments when the pre-service teachers entered their own practicum schools and classrooms, and encountered physical matter that mattered in the ways they thought about their own teaching and learning: the gold frame that hung in Ivana's school foyer caused her to reflect on the school's connection with Indigenous students and families; a connection that became more important when she realised the connection was missing from the classroom. I can imagine that without that encounter with the gilt-framed letter of apology—the mutual entangling between the teacher and the material-discursive frame—the lack of recognition of Indigenous perspectives and communities in the classroom may have been less apparent. As I began looking for these entanglements with not just ideas, but matter, a deeper understanding of how our agencies are constituted through our intra-actions with matter.

As we moved into the last weeks of semester, and students began writing more and more about their future classroom praxis, new tensions arose—threads pulling those entanglements closer together, or at times loosening the knot. There was a shift from seeking and wanting to know *about* Indigenous peoples and cultures, to a comfort with not knowing and instead a commitment to making Indigenous knowledges and perspectives present in their future classroom. How might a focus on future praxis from both pre-service teachers and the course and teaching staff enable a greater capacity to actually embed Indigenous perspectives into future classrooms, and to better work within community? Or was such a move a deferral to the future through ignoring the presence of pain and oppression in the

present, and what pre-service teachers could be doing now in their everyday lives to build community and relationality?

...

Focusing on small
moments that might matter, the
teaching and learning
that shifted into ethics,
I have wanted my own ethics.

Be prepared, future
researcher for change within
yourself; changes that
result from intra-actions,
teacher-learner-researcher.

Re-thinking teaching
and learning as diffractive
re-writes boundaries
as blurred, our relationships
with each other, history, matter
as who we are becoming.

...

And then there's writing. All of the changes, shifts and entanglements in your thinking, teaching and learning, all somehow end up as writing. When it comes to writing, there will be a turning point when you reach the chapter where you come to writing and tears of frustration materialise themselves on the page. But after Hélène Cixous holds your wrist steady as the writing women sit with you, you will feel her strong papery skin supporting you every time pen and paper come together from that point on; the imagined memory folding itself into your being. The women who wrote alongside you as you came to writing will hold you together through books and words.

...

The story that's told
isn't final, or finished,
the only story.
An agential cut might say
this thesis is finished, this
thesis is not me.

For your becoming
self, future researcher, this
story might enable
another way of thinking
about relationality.

Relationships remind
our agencies are only
distinct in relation
to their mutual entangling
in discourses and matter.

...

And this is the knot I find myself in. One that entangles Karen Barad and Emmanuel Levinas with Dr Mary Graham: three philosophers from different times, places, disciplines, and frameworks, but all three echoing Dr Mary Graham's Aboriginal Philosophy maxim, that You Are Not Alone In The World. We are all first and always in relation, this is a condition of our being in the world. For Levinas, this being-in-relation is the foundational principle of what it means to be, and thus informs all of our following interactions. When we as (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) teachers and learners encounter Indigenous others through our relationships, reading, histories and futures, we are reminded that this relationship between self and other is the essence of what it is to be. Barad's agential realism re/presents this relationship and encounter as being tugged into an entanglement, where relationality is not just the essence of being in the world, but the conditions under which our agency is constituted. In the end, there is no self and other, because we cannot exist outside of one another. As Graham (2008, n.p.) says, "to behave as if you are a discrete entity or a conscious isolate is to limit yourself to being an observer in an observed world". Individual identities are found as part of a group, subjectivities coming-to-be in relation. I have a feeling that Karen Barad and Dr Mary Graham would get on.

I'm not sure how much of this that I write is "research related", and how much is from my years of teaching and learning. I am sure that it is no longer possible to separate the two, so deeply and thoroughly are they entangled with this material act of writing.

With love,

Ailie

Part II

This thesis has been and is and will be about many things. Stories and differences that matter, Indigenous education, teaching and learning. What it has become for me—as it is becoming me—is an

engagement in the very serious question of ethics and what it might mean to teach and learn ethically in this space called “Indigenous education”. My starting points are two-fold: Levinas’ call to responsibility, that echoes Dr Mary Graham’s maxim, on the basis that we are not alone in the world. The very nature of our existence is founded in relationship, and thus we are always already called into ethics by the face of the other. The second point is Tuck and Yang’s (2012) reminder that “decolonization is not a metaphor”. How might I want to be doing my work as an educator in this space if I am to be true to the Aunties that support me and ground me, to the friends whose lives are grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, and to myself as a White Woman who wants to realise an alternative to colonial structures that quash alterity, having been entangled in a conversation of ethics that I can no longer walk away from. More than just myself, these questions re/present for me the bigger picture of what it might mean to live, work and learn together as Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians if we want to delink for coloniality.

Barad’s theories and writing around intra-action and agential realism are intuitively attractive as a White Woman writing around Indigenous education. There are reflections of an Indigenous worldview: we are all related (Graham, 2008), the sky, water, plant, animal, and human ecosystems are all intrinsically connected and only exist through their relationships with each other (Martin, 2003). A return to understanding how the non-human world around us matters echoes an Indigenous insistence to resist reduction to humans as above all others; that colonial hierarchy that was constructed to justify the exploitation of the non-human world (including Indigenous and non-white peoples who were labelled non-human) (Lugones, 2003; Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Barad presents an attractive framework founded firmly in North American and European scientists, philosophers and writers (e.g. Haraway, Latour, Derrida, Foucault) that is similar to many Indigenous worldviews, although with some critical differences in her reasoning for such an approach—quantum physics, rather than tens of thousands of years of learning to live within an environment. But what is often left unsaid—unsignified—in the growing body of work following Barad, is the position of power from which the mostly white women (such as myself) write this work. Where Indigenous knowledges continue to be marginalised within the Academy, the work of Indigenous Studies Units who are also tasked with supporting Indigenous students through their studies, that “thing we have to ‘embed’”, the work of Barad and her followers is taken up at great speeds, the writing recognised as a cutting-edge post-structuralist approach.

Rather than seeing Barad’s intra-action and agential realism as incommensurable with Indigenous worldviews, I am left uneasy at the similarity of two, one of the critical differences appearing in the apparatuses used to develop the former. Where does that leave me, and my research? I can still think with Barad’s theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) as a research methodology, as I think with Levinas. But I also need to continually draw out the paradoxes within which I find myself, the

apparatus of the Western Academy that produces Barad's theory is not devoid of politics. The production of the books and articles, and the thousands of citations that follow, is one of the ways that a Northern white power and privilege is materialised. As with the students' writing, teaching and learning, it is a question of ethics.

The type of ethics I am writing about is a Levinasian ethics, one that does not give us hard and fast rules about how to navigate the world in which we live. Instead, to think with St Pierre (2017), we can learn to live with theory until we have internalised it completely and we can no longer remain indifferent to the wants of the philosophy we read; always becoming a more ethical person. To think of an ethical encounter within Indigenous education is also always already two-fold: the ethics of a space that always already insists on delinking from a colonial structure, but also of the ways we work with students. To insist on students' rigidity or to project one's own conceptualisation of what non-Indigenous students might or might not be able or wanting to learn, is to totalise students using the same logic of epistemological and ontological violence that has and continues to oppress Indigenous peoples. It is only from a point of radical connection that we can begin to unbuild this logic.

This attentiveness to ethics has brought my thinking and writing to a particular place, as I prepare to make an agential cut to this research process. Remember that we—whoever you may be within this particular entanglement—are indeed entangled, and therefore responsible to each other. As a non-Indigenous Australian educator, working with a majority of non-Indigenous teacher education students, the specificity of this webbed relationship is to think about our histories, our bodies, our physical worlds around us, and our capacity to doing things other-ly to how they have been done before. Our agency as educators arises through paying attention to these thickly knotted ideas and objects, and therein see effects of connection and commitment; to be called into the type of responsibility that Diprose (2002) and Levinas (1969) write of. For Levinas, this responsibility is irreducible to knowledge, but requires a choice of action and a deliberate move away from a "Utopia" where one is free to do as one pleases:

One can uproot oneself from this responsibility, deny the place where it is incumbent on me to do something...One can choose Utopia. On the other hand, in the name of spirit, once can choose not to flee the conditions from which one's work draws its meaning and remain here below. And that means choosing ethical action. (Levinas, 1990, p. 100)

To return to writing, writing as a material practice also creates agency as we put pen to paper and bring ourselves to another place of thinking. If we deliberately entangle questions of ethics, commitment, and responsibility into our writing, then we might not just "learn to see and build here" (Haraway, 1992, p. 295) an imagined elsewhere, but also write it into being. As both research-praxis and a teaching and learning tool for university students, writing can be used not to reflect, but rather

diffract our ways of thinking. To write writing as a “diffractive apparatus” (after Barad) is to look for where the boundaries are blurred, particles of light appearing where shadows should reign, and moments of darkness in brightly lit places. Such has been the process of both reading and then re-writing the students’ reflective learning journals. Rather than seeking to thematise and condense (although the institutionally-trained want to do this is strong, and something I have had to continually and deliberately fight/write back against), writing holds always already these blurred and entangled boundaries, and I have tried to bring my attention to these moments, rather than collapsing the ideas into analysed categories. For working further with pre-service teachers, or anyone we seek to write together with, to use writing as a diffractive apparatus requires us as writers to specifically think about our points of connection and the commitments this connection entails as we write. Whether writing about Boundary Street, or thinking about their future work in classrooms, the pre-service teachers whose reflective learning journals I used drew connections and commitments into their own becoming-as-teachers, the intra-action creating agency.

New questions arise through the process of dis- and re-entangling these wants and words. What happens when pre-service teachers begin to become in-service teachers; leaders of their own webbed classrooms of material bodies, walls, desks, and found and lost objects? How do these entanglements now fold into praxis in the future then? How do the responses to ethical questions continue when teachers are entangled with new matter, new relationships, new competing discourses and interests? Is there a way for non-Indigenous teachers/me to overcome the conceptual limits of their/my own experiences in the world: that is, to embed Indigenous pedagogies and knowledges in a way that does delink from colonial frameworks, or will such non-Indigenous teachers/I always only be able to offer their/my own interpretations of what decoloniality might look like. Perhaps using an Indigenous pedagogical framework such as 8-ways or Uncle Ernie Grant’s Holistic Framework will take us closer towards decoloniality, however it will always be tethered to a non-Indigenous teacher’s way of doing if more radical steps aren’t taken. As Levinas would suggest, we subsume difference into our own understandings of the world. As I stand there in that tutorial classroom, I see an eagerness to latch onto a pedagogical framework, something can be grasped and held onto. Its very know-ability is at once its non-radical difference and its strongest benefit in its potential to enact different types of teaching and learning in classrooms. If the frameworks are totalised into “business as usual”, if they are too easily grasped, then they have become indeed just a metaphor for change. Yet the potential of such frameworks lies in—from where I stand—a potential to continue building connection and commitment, to work with/in community, and to think about the responsibility that we all—regardless of where we stand—hold towards Indigenous peoples and students.

Part III

It is a strange thing, the White Woman thought to herself, to try to write an ending: as if this story is concluded, as if the stories told within could be summarised into a single chapter. As if by writing that final sentence, scripting *Fin* at the end, saving the last draft, and powering down her computer one last time, it would all be over.

The White Woman glanced around the teaching room once more to check her for any lonesome belongings, as she tucked her coffee cup and the stack of exercise books back into her bag. She thought back to the sandstone buildings that housed the teaching and learning that took place within this space. Those burnt orange bricks with its carvings and inscriptions had taken on yet another layer of meaning as she thought about how matter and bodies intra-acted, an entanglement of material-discursive meaning. The buildings shaped subjectivities as bodies walked through these spaces. But even those solid buildings were not necessarily static. The sedimentary stone had the potential to, under pressure, change into metamorphic rock; elite sandstone metamorphosing into crystallised quartzite. The White Woman wondered what type of pressure might have to be applied to the university for this transformation to occur.

No longer seeking light or enlightenment—happy with not being able to see for now—the White Woman switched the lights, and as the fluorescent bulb flickered and then cut out, felt her way out of the room.

The woman sat at the table, spent from writing; that embodied, material praxis of writing. She closed her book, and put down her pen.

But already new words started to slowly swell up inside of her, pushing forth, and knotting themselves together into writing that would soon follow.

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Appendix



THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
Institutional Human Research Ethics Approval

Project Title: Indigenous Knowledge And Education Course
Evaluation And Investigation Of Student Attitudes -
21/09/2016 - AMENDMENT

Chief Investigator: A/Prof Elizabeth Mackinlay

Supervisor: Deanne Gannaway, Prof Peter Renshaw

Co-Investigator(s): Evaluation Unit, TEDI, Ailie McDowall

School(s): School of Education

Approval Number: 2013000908

Granting Agency/Degree: None

Duration: 31st December 2016

Comments/Conditions:

- Extension of project duration to 31st December 2016.
- Participant Information Sheet & Consent Form, 22/09/2016
- Interview Schedule, 22/09/2016

Note: if this approval is for amendments to an already approved protocol for which a UQ Clinical Trials Protection/Insurance Form was originally submitted, then the researchers must directly notify the UQ Insurance Office of any changes to that Form and Participant Information Sheets & Consent Forms as a result of the amendments, before action.

Name of responsible Committee:

University of Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee A

This project complies with the provisions contained in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and complies with the regulations governing experimentation on humans.

Name of Ethics Committee representative:

Professor Emerita Gina Geffen

Chairperson

University of Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee A

Registration: EC00456

Signature _____

03/11/2016

Date _____



THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
Institutional Human Research Ethics Approval

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Evaluation And Investigation Of Student Attitudes -
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Chief Investigator: A/Prof Elizabeth Mackinlay

Supervisor: Deanne Gannaway, Prof Peter Renshaw

Co-Investigator(s): Evaluation Unit, TEDI, Ailie McDowall

School(s): School of Education

Approval Number: 2013000908

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Chairperson

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Registration: EC00456

Signature _____

03/11/2016

Date _____