Sovereign Goddess

Looking for Gumillya the Bound and Unbound.

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I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Ali Gumillya Baker 26th April 2018

Contents:

ABSTRACT

This theoretical exegesis of select aspects of my artistic practice begins by considering the moment my great-grandmother Kamilia's body was cast in the Royal Adelaide Hospital by Norman Tindale and subsequently stored in the South Australian Museum as part of a racialised movement of Physical Anthropology and Eugenics. This moment when the coloniser attempted to close down our family's capacity to reproduce, and inhibit our movements and relationships, our relationality and our life. They cast my great-grandmother in order to freeze me, they condemned the 'real' Aborigine to the museum object, the collection, the dim black and white photo, the shelf. These are the ideas that form the foundation of this *modernity*. Tindale's collection therefore represents a knowledge system that has ruptured and violently undermined the Nunga view of knowledge creation as a respectful and ethical endeavour. This research examines how these ruptures in ideas about respectful knowledge production and transmission could be claimed as points of healing and transformation by examining how stories are told and the implications of the stories and archives we leave for future generations. These broader questions have particular ethical relevance for filmmaking, performance and other forms of artistic practice, the areas of my disciplinary training and research.

My work responds to the violent representational practices of colonisation. It artistically and collectively responds to the ways that the Protector of

Aborigines records and the collections of museums globally contain and restrict representational understandings of Indigenous peoples. What happens then when these 'objects' of study become human? When these objects of study become academics? We become human; because while our families and elders may have been denied a humanity by the Europeans, our people never stopped being, were never frozen in time, were never plants or animals of a lower rung of a constructed false hierarchy, a hierarchy created precisely to justify the stealing of land while allowing those who benefited from the theft to feel good and righteous about it. Where is the place to mourn (or even forget) the crimes of re-articulation, where are the memorials, the places of honouring our dead, our lost and heart broken, how can our public places ever represent what this country is for our people? This violent history remains invisible to most. My ongoing creative project asks; what is *useful* and *important* to understand about violent colonial practices of racialisation, abjection and oppression? The work asks what are the ethical conditions for freedom for Indigenous peoples who exist both within and outside of the neo-colonial settler state? How might we represent ourselves and be both empowered and collectively free? What is the essence of our lives that lies beyond government or institutional control? How can we resist isolation as Aboriginal artists and academics?

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List of Exhibitions and Assessable Work:

The following research practice was created for the PhD body of work and exhibited in the following:

Baker, A. G., Harkin N., Tur S.U., Blanch F.R. (2014). Bound and Unbound, Sovereign Acts: Decolonising Methodologies of the Lived and Spoken, Act I. Fontanelle Gallery, Bowden, Unbound Collective.

http://www.flinders.edu.au/oise/unbound/about-unbound.cfm

http://www.flinders.edu.au/oise/unbound/unbound_act-1.cfm

http://www.flinders.edu.au/oise/unbound/catalogue.cfm

Baker, A. G., Harkin N., Tur S.U., Blanch F.R. (2015). Bound/ Unbound Sovereign Acts II. TARNANTHI Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, TARNANTHI, Flinders Art Museum and City Gallery: multi-media performance.

http://www.flinders.edu.au/oise/unbound/unbound-act-2.cfm

See also attached PDF of Bound and Unbound Act II Catalogue.

Ali Gumillya Baker (2011), *Tall Ship performance I*, Tandanya Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Grenfell St. Adelaide. Performers: Nazaree Dickerson, Alexis West and Ali Gumillya Baker. Vocals: Isabelle da Sylveira.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ksz-BYLMCCk&feature=youtu.be

Ali Gumillya Baker (2012) *Bow Down to the Sovereign Goddess,* series in From the Street, Art Gallery of South Australia. Archival inkjet prints.

http://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/agsa/home/Exhibitions/Past_Exhibitions/2012/Fromthestreet.html


Sovereign love poem #10


John Greenway
Down Among the Wild Men
A narrative journal of fifteen years pursuing the Old Stone Age Aborigines of Australia
THE NATIVE TRIBES OF SOUTH-EAST AUSTRALIA
A. W. HOWITT
A 572.994 100H8
HUTCHINSON
The Sexual Life of
SAVAGES
In North Western Melanesia
BRONISLAW MALINOWSKI
RKP

Resolution: New Indigenous Photomedia, National Gallery of Australia, National touring exhibition, contributing artist, curated by Francesca Cubillo, Shaune Lakin, Kelli Cole and Anne O'Hehir.

https://nga.gov.au/Resolution/Performativity/Baker.cfm

Article:

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Sovereign Acts III Refuse (2017), Unbound Collective, VITALSTATISTIX theatre company, Climate Century Lab.

Sovereign Acts: Methodologies of the Lived and Spoken

In this work *Sovereign Acts* is about the possibility of forming collective Indigenous critical-creative responses to painful and inter-generationally traumatic colonial histories and presents. It is about our critical and loving responses and the possibility of bringing out the beauty of our sovereign self-determination. It is about cultural continuance for future generations. It is about our families and in particular our grandmothers. It speaks back to the colonial-settler-state and the call of our families and communities who were forced to live under the *Aborigines Act*. It is about the lived and embodied archives of our histories of self. We collectively call and respond to what it means to en*act sovereign.*

While this work is not necessarily about legislation and *rights* relating to ideas of freedom, it is useful in this methodology to highlight the thoughts of Linda Tuhiwai Smith when she discusses Treaty in the context of Aotearoa/ New Zealand:

> I am talking about one element of the Treaty […] and that is the right for us to have an intellectual life. The right to have an intellectual life as collectives, and the right to an intellectual life as individuals. And this right to an intellectual life is also the right to an imagination, a right to create and be creative, a right to continue our hopes and aspirations. [1]

Our rights as Aboriginal people, as scholars and artists, to an intellectual life and an imagination *beyond* the discourse, administration and oppression of colonialism are

[1] Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2013) Live Up to Our Talk, accessed 07/07/16, indigenousknowledgenetwork.net/2016/07/07/linda-tuhiwai-smith-live-up-to-our-talk/

also countered and punctuated by our shared responsibilities to our families and communities who are in various states of resistance, survival and refusal, in crises and recovery from the continuing racialised physical and ideological genocide perpetrated upon our body-land by the colonial-settler-state. This *Sovereign Acts* work is not about us justifying our Indigenous rights to be *human* but collectively we are interested in our rights to have an imagination, and our rights to create and be creative and practice critical-creative-cultural-renewal. These imaginative spaces as indicated by Tuhiwai Smith have another purpose in this work, the possibility of *imagined* freedom is inherently a shared possibility and either we are all free as Indigenous people in this temporal space or none of us are.

These methodologies are also assisted by the thinking of Karen Barad as she talks about the enactment of agency:

> Agency is not held, it is not a property of persons or things; rather, agency is an enactment, a matter of possibilities for reconfiguring entanglements. So agency is not about choice in any liberal humanist sense; rather, it is about the possibilities and accountability entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production, including the boundary articulations and exclusions that are marked by those practices.[2]

> First of all, agency is about response-ability, about the possibilities of mutual response, which is not to deny, but to attend to power imbalances. [3]

[2] Barad, K., et al. (2012). "Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers"; Interview with Karen Barad." New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies: 7.
[3] ibid: 9.

Ideas about collective-creative-hope as discussed by Tuhiwai-Smith and agency and ethical *response-ability* of enactment are fundamental principles in the performative work of *Bound/ Unbound Sovereign Acts*[4]. Barad speaks of the reconfiguring of entanglements and the possibility to attend to power imbalances and these ideas resonate with this work which ultimately seeks justice and reconfigures our relationships with our presents and our pasts. While many of these ideas are more recently referred to as 'post-humanities' or 'new-materialities' it can be understood that the continual ethical rebalancing of power amongst the earth, sky, waters and all living and non-living beings and long ethical relationships of voice have always been Indigenous perspectives. We can recognise these discussions in our old stories of country, stories about ethical responsibility associated with knowledge and knowledge sharing[5]. Irene Watson acknowledges this at the beginning of her article 'Buried Alive' when she talks about the story that is known throughout Aboriginal Australia of the greedy frog who drank up all the water, and how the other creatures had to make the frog laugh to release the water so it would no longer dominate the community.[6]

Scope of Exegesis

> This was not a protest. This was not a demonstration. This was a quiet, collective act of resurgence. It was a mobilization and it was political because it was a reminder. It was a reminder that although we are collectively unseen

[4] Bound and Unbound Sovereign Acts is a major part of the work of this PhD, this will be elaborated throughout.
[5] see Barad, K. (2003). "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society **28**(3). and Braidotti, R. (2013). The Posthuman. Cambridge, Polity Press.
[6] Watson, I. (2002). "Buried Alive." Law and Critique **13**: 253.

> in the city of Peterborough, when we come together with one mind and one heart we can transform our land and our city into a decolonized space and a place of resurgence, even if it is only for a brief amount of time.[7]

This exegesis is divided into four sections. There are two *Context* papers and two *Act* papers. The *Context* papers provide theorising relating to the broader research journey conducted during the PhD candidature[8], as well as the historical and archival circumstances of my Mirning family that give further depth to the creative body of work I have submitted as part of this PhD. The *Act* papers theorise and (de)scribe the critical creative Sovereign Acts project of the *Bound/Unbound Collective*, and provide textual analysis and my perspectives and understandings as the creative lead (curator) on this project.

This PhD research journey began with a clear intention of wanting to re-patriate a cast made by Norman Tindale of my great-grandmother's face and bust from the collections of the South Australian Museum. In doing this I also wanted to understand how we as Mirning people have been represented within spaces like the South Australian Museum which is a *Natural History Museum* and the implications of these representations. In the process of researching, teaching, collaborating and creating; the journey of the PhD transformed into something else, it transformed into collective-critical-creative *Acts* which are our sovereign responses to ideas of colonisation.

[7] Simpson, L. (2011). Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence. Winnipeg, ARP Books: 11.

[8] I have been enrolled this PhD program predominantly part-time since 2009, while working full time and raising my children.

The *Bound/ Unbound* creative work of Act I and Act II has collective and individual artistic authorship by the four Unbound artists. I was as one of the artists on this ongoing project and provided curatorial and creative leadership for Act I and Act II of the project. Sovereignty for Aboriginal people is a description of a collective being. This work is always more than individual perspectives so this exegesis is my attempt to theorise and (de)scribe the project through a series of written pieces that creatively contribute some of the perspectives I make to the work of *Bound/ Unbound Sovereign Acts* and theoretically and methodologically process my journey as a Nunga artist and academic in the work leading up to this project and informing my 'curatorial' theorisation on this collective project. In a museum context the term *curator,* along with terms like *anthropological expert,* are loaded with historical ideas that inherently exclude Aboriginal peoples in their hierarchical origins. I will be avoiding using this term very much because of these limits, but part of my role in the funding of the project was as a *curator* for the work.

Each *Unbound Collective* artist brings their own unique creative gifts and Indigenous colonial and contemporary histories and lived experience to this projects' Sovereign *enactment*; our theories and practice are informed through relationships of trust that are both political and intergenerational. These ethical methods of active and continual negotiation and communication form part of our ongoing research practice. All of the artists in this project are writers and academics and have written about their respective work as well as the larger *Bound/ Unbound* project as a whole. We have collectively written catalogue pieces[9], floor sheets, essays and journal articles that

[9] Baker, A. G., et al. (2014). Bound and Unbound, Sovereign Acts: Decolonising Methodologies of the Lived and Spoken, Act I. Fontanelle Gallery, Bowden, Unbound Collective.

discuss *Bound / Unbound: Sovereign Acts*[10]. Throughout this exegesis I will refer to both *we* and *I* as this multi-dimensional project is very much about shared experiences and understandings. The *collective* is a fundamental theoretical underpinning of this work, and the ways in which we as sovereign-women-artist-academics continue to teach each other and share with each other are negotiated relationships of respect that extend beyond the bounds of artistic practice or research, it is therefore difficult and problematic to dissect this work in ways that defy its wholeness. I understand despite the resistance to dissection that I am submitting this dissertation for an individual PhD. I will therefore attempt to outline the role I took during Act I and Act II of the project as well as explain my work within the larger body of artistic practice, as well as other theoretical details relating to the work made for this PhD that are important. I will also attribute through a reference each of the collaborator Unbound artists' ideas that are included within this thesis. So unless referenced otherwise, the perspectives informing the written work that follows are my own.

I led the initial conceptual formation of the collective, as well as the conceptual framing of the work in applications for funding through the Australia Council, and in discussion and agreement with my sister-artists led the finalisation of the themes and forms that the installations, performances and multimedia works would take. I led the negotiation of these collective *Sovereign Acts* to be included in within the Fontanelle Gallery, for *Act I of Bound /Unbound Sovereign Acts*[11]; as well as within

[10] Baker, A. G., et al. (2015). "Act I, Bound and Unbound Sovereign Acts." Artlink **September** (35:3): 58-63.

[11] Baker, A. G., et al. (2014). Bound and Unbound, Sovereign Acts: Decolonising Methodologies of the Lived and Spoken, Act I. Fontanelle Gallery, Bowden, Unbound Collective.

TARNANTHI Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art for *Bound/ Unbound Sovereign Acts II*[12]. At various times throughout this work I will name this project as Bound/ Unbound, Sovereign Acts, Act I or Act II. All of these various names are referring to this project. This is a deliberate method of rejection of singularity and encourages understanding of this being not one thing but many, the project has multiplicity in form and ideas.

Each of these *Sovereign Acts* involved intergenerational gifts of our ancestors, space for informal, collective intuition, research, ethical discussions, openness and trust. In consultation with each Unbound artist I was responsible for the final layout and placement of works and projections in Act I within the gallery/ installation space at Fontanelle; and led the placements of the multi-media projections and sequencing of performances in Act II. I conceptually designed the costumes and use of portable projectors and props for Act II; each artist engaged in collectively *enacting* these sovereign performances and bringing their own unique and poetic work and words, techniques and embodied perspectives to that process. The music was written, composed and performed by Simone Ulalka Tur and Katie Inawanji Tur on the violin, with consultation for the creative development of the songs from Nancy Bates. Two songs were adapted from poems written by the late Mona Ngitji Ngitji Tur, including 'Dedication'[13] (My Tjamu) and 'We as Aborigines'[14]. Also performed by Simone was 'For I Aborigine'[15] by the late Lily Sansbury and Carrol Karpany.

[12] Baker, A. G., et al. (2015). Bound/ Unbound Sovereign Acts II. TARNANTHI Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, TARNANTHI, Flinders Art Museum and City Gallery**:** multi-media performance.
[13] Tur, N. N. M. (2010). Cicada Dreaming. Adelaide, Hyde Park Press: iii.
[14] Ibid: vi
[15] Sanbury, L. and C. Karpany (1993). For I Aborigine. The Fostering, Come Out Festival, Magpie Theatre.

The projected words in Act II were an amalgamation of individual quotes from each of Unbound collective artists' work and these will be referred to and quoted and attributed throughout the exegesis. Each artist maintains ultimate control over their image, ideas, and individual works within the larger project. The artworks in this project that I present as the work for assessment are made and shaped by my individual ideas, and also contain Aboriginal woman's performance of their sovereign self. It is our agreed conception of the intent of the work and our trust of each other that allows the work to be made.

Racialised Assemblages

While western philosophical thought will be mined for its usefulness throughout this exegesis it is also important to acknowledge that many of these Western philosophical threads have and continue to render the oppression of Indigenous peoples, through an absenting of racialisation and colonisation (as forms of intergenerational oppression embedded within modernity based on philosophical ideas of bio-inferiority), and as invisible processes, through failing to name them and the privilege of speaking positions that come with whiteness. Stoler refers to these grand-narrative philosophical threads as forms of colonial connectivity with the present, she argues that the methodologies we use can also be obstacles:

> The analytical tools we use to identify either historical continuities or, alternatively, profound ruptures from the past may be obstacles rather than openings. Colonial archives can impede the task: They have a way of drawing our attention to their own scripted temporal and special designations of what

is “colonial” and what is no longer.[16]

Stoler reminds us that methods stemming from colonial ideas; ‘wrap around contemporary problems’ and are ‘plaited through racialized distinctions; and hold tight to the less tangible emotional economies of humiliations, indignities, and resentments’[17]. So how and why Indigenous collective methodologies and scholarship are excluded from larger ‘universal’ and ‘individualist’ contemporary philosophical discussions about *ideas* that seem to be the domain of non-Indigenous philosophers will be examined throughout this work and these questions are directly and indirectly addressed by many Indigenous and Black philosophers and artists[18]; including in Alexander Weheliye’s recent work; *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Weheliye articulates the collective performative assemblage of racialised bodies between institutions as follows:

> The particular assemblage of humanity under purview here is habeas viscus, which, in contrast to bare life, insists on the importance of miniscule movements, glimmers of hope, scraps of food, the interrupted dreams of freedom found in those spaces deemed devoid of full human life (Guantanamo Bay, internment camps, maximum security prisons, Indian reservations, concentration camps, slave plantations, or colonial outposts, for instance).

[16] Stoler, A. L. (2016). Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 5.
[17] Ibid: 4.
[18] See also for example: Moreton-Robinson, A. (2004). Whiteness, epistemology and Indigenous representation. Whitening Race, Essays in social and cultural criticism. A. Moreton-Robinson. Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press.

Weheliye articulates a methodology which exists beyond the dominion of the coloniser's law, beyond the re-articulation of hierarchies of oppression. He examines the 'breaks, crevices, movements, languages, and such found in the zones between the flesh and the law' [19]. The Unbound Collective's 'critical, political and poetic assemblages' represent alternative ways of viewing this assembled space of knowledge this *cultural precinct* this *colonial outpost* on Kaurna country[20], our collective work re-weaves these racialised assemblages:

> Habeas viscus accents how race becomes pinioned to human physiology, exposing how the politicization of the biological always represents a racializing assemblage. Taking leave from considering racial categorization as a mere ideological imposition of scientifically "wrong" phenomena, habeas viscus, as an idea, networks bodies, forces, velocities, intensities, institutions, interests, ideologies and desires in racializing assemblages, which are simultaneously territorializing and deterritorializing.[21]

Weheliye articulates a method of assemblages that considers how we can collectively embrace 'the push and pull' of ideas, of binaries, of colonising and decolonising territories and identities and through consideration of these complexities we can find the heart-beats of this work. What ideas do we choose to bind ourselves to? What is the nature of collective freedom?

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[19] Weheliye, A. G. (2014). Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 11.
[20] Baker, A. G., et al. (2015). Bound/ Unbound Sovereign Acts II. TARNANTHI Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, TARNANTHI, Flinders Art Museum and City Gallery**:** multi-media performance.
[21] Weheliye, A. G. (2014). Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 14.

Ethical understandings, embedded and relational sovereignty: love

Judith Butler discusses the history of ethical practice within disciplines of knowledge over time as forming from the ideas of the individual's infinite striving to insurmountable idealism[22]. While I can understand this theorisation in the context of Western frameworks of modernity and mass individualism, somehow these ideas continue to make absent the unethical acts of colonialism and the cover up that 'ethics' now takes the place of within institutions like universities operating on colonised land and selling colonising ideas. Butler says:

> Indeed, it is from this very difference, gap, incommensurability between the realizable and the ideal that a certain striving emerges, one that tries always to realize the ideal but never can, one that takes that failure as the occasion to mobilize the effort to approximate the ideal again and again, indeed, *infinitely*. Finally, then, it is in the valorization of this infinite striving that the reinscription of ethics takes place; the ethical relation will be understood no longer as the embodiment of the ideal of reciprocal recognition but as the infinite failure of that embodiment and, hence, as the infinite striving that that failure somehow motivates.[23]

When we remove the primacy of the *individual* ethic as a (now cynical in the face of globalised-capitalism) infinite striving and reimagine collective responsibility as contained in the infinite laws of place, we are required to rethink relational

[22] Butler, J. (1993). "Poststructuralism and PostMarxism." Diacritics **23**(4): 4.

[23] Ibid : 4

sovereignty that is beyond the history of and capacity for collective violence as a form of white settler-state sovereignty. This also requires a larger understanding of *individual rights* within *present* notions of linear time as extending beyond human to country and all living and once living and future living.

Ethics in academic contexts is too often about the momentary coverage of the researcher and institution against any potential litigation from the 'researched', insuring the university from any engaging with 'risky' bodies and ideas. For our collective work we share ethical considerations that relate to Indigenous sovereignty and continuing responsibility for research-over-time, relationality and intergenerational transmission of responsibility and critical-love. This is work that is entangled with care that comes with certain kinds of experience, emotion, and story. These are *embodied* knowings, and these ideas relate to knowledges and living laws of place as taught by our elders and communities.[24] These are undeniably collective responsibilities and require our collective focus.

The importance of processes of meeting, seeking permissions and ongoing conversations about the intent, process, cultural risks and benefits of particular research/performance/ artmaking work within Aboriginal communities cannot be diminished and it is often in these ongoing and fundamentally open conversations with our elders and communities that we provide and are provided with foundational relationships, contexts, priorities and concerns; and are made aware of issues relating to how the work might unfold and how the work may be perceived or change

[24] See for example: Moreton-Robinson, A., Ed. (2007). Sovereign Subjects: Indigenous Sovereignty Matters. Sydney, Allen & Unwin. and Byrd, J. (2013). The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism, University of Minnesota

over time. These dialogues provide the conditions through which collective performances may go ahead. In many ways the ethical approach and engagement with what is *not represented* is as important as what is represented.[25] In this way this work seeks to indirectly address issues of the unknowable and also address past traumas in ways that do not engage in re-trauma. Our work reflects and draws upon Trinh T. Minh Ha's ideas that it is through peripheral engagement of ideas, large movements of power, grand narratives, through indirect looking that we can gently circle the *heart of the matter.* Through not looking directly at the problem but in fact looking carefully and gently at ourselves and each other, this is also the foundation of the knowledges taught to us by our old people:

> Never does one open the discussion by coming right to the heart of the matter…to allow it to emerge, people approach it indirectly by postponing until it matures, by letting it come when it is ready to come. There is no catching, no pushing, no directing, no breaking through, no need for a linear progression which gives the comforting illusion that one knows where one goes.[26]

This exegesis provides an assemblage of contexts and representations that as Minh Ha describes should not be read as a linear progression of words and ideas; rather, these ideas provide insights as they are read in relation to each other, or in the defraction of collective calls and responses. As Barad identifies, *defraction* take us

[25] See for example: Rony, F. T. (1994). "Victor Masayesva Jr. and the Politics of Imagining Indians." Film Quarterly **48**(no. 2, winter): 20, where he says: 'refraining from photographing certain subjects has become a kind of worship'.
[26] Trinh T. Minh-ha (1996). The Undone Interval: Trinh T. Minh-ha in conversation with Annmaria Morelli. The Post-colonial question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons. I. Chambers and L. Curti, Routledge: 3.

beyond auto-ethnography or *reflection*, it shows traces but not like a mirror, the gaze cannot always follow where the light travels, and the light is changed by the experience.[27] We also may have different expectations of where and how the work will resonate in the present and future, in the process of defracting our relationship with our past. Donna Haraway describes this difficult work in her book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*:

> The task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present. Our task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places [...] Staying with the trouble does not require such a relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or endemic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings.[28]

The exegesis is structured as a series of creatively written theorisation papers that provide both context and process/rationale for the creative visual/multi-media works that are also submitted for examination.

[27]Barad, K. (2003). "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society **28**(3).
[28] Haraway, D. (2016). Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene Durham and London, Duke University Press: 1.

There are two *context papers* in the exegesis. The first context paper; *The representation of the Sovereign Goddess, Looking for Gumillya: Binding and Unbinding*, traces the early photographic and performative work of this creative PhD project and contextualises this representational work in relation to my ongoing research into the colonial archive relating to my family and community.

The largest paper of the exegesis is: *Bound and Unbound Sovereign Acts: Decolonising Methodologies of the Lived and Spoken Act I (2014).* This paper theorises and describes the Bound & Unbound collective work where we imagine what it means to be speaking from *inside* the colonial 'collection'. Not only is this *Act I* paper written about and theorising these ideas of being *bound* by particular ideas of race and culture, it is written in a form of being tensely contained within an archive, of having an archive fever. I write as I imagine and inhabit the uncomfortable knowledge of being collected and subsumed, writing my way out of the hateful ideas that bind, and at times this is a fragmented and sickened rant. This is our invisible weight. *Act I* engages with imagining what it means for us collectively as Aboriginal women to look and speak out *as sovereign* from inside the abject colonial collections that are currently contained within Museums and institutions of settler-states globally. This work (re)imagines unpredictable trajectories and defractions of the bodies and objects at the heart of these collections.

The second Context paper, *Artmaking, Storytelling and Servitude,* reflects on the circumstances and representations prevalent in the teaching of *knowledge*, *culture* and *art* in university contexts, this paper also weaves the history of forced servitude

of Aboriginal women within my family amongst others and the intimate impact of these histories upon our bodies and thoughts.

Bound/Unbound Sovereign Acts II emerges in contrast from the constraints of Act I, it engages in imagining what it means to both physically and theoretically free; to release ourselves from hateful ideas, shedding the white gaze while critiquing white-violent-colonial ideas as persistently seeking to surround, contain and define us; this work imagines what it means to be intimately human beyond these ideas. This writing flows out in a narrative that is unconstrained.

Unbound Collective

Bound/Unbound Sovereign Acts and the *Unbound Collective* are engaged in creative responses through performance and installation that seeks to both reflect and defract the relationship of our Nunga/ Murri/ Anangu bodies to the institutions and ideologies that have sought to surround, contain, silence and oppress us. The ways our families and communities have been cast as abject/ object under racializing acts of colonial surveillance and representation are one of the central focuses of our work. Of particular relevance to this ongoing project are the collections contained within the South Australian Museum and the South Australian State Records.

Each Sovereign Act begins with the audience lining up and signing their names into an old bound, once discarded South Australian Museum register (pulled from a rubbish skip at the back of the museum). This register provides us all with a lasting record, an archive, *for all time*, of attendance. A data sheet that acknowledges the whiteness of lists, a measurement of attendance. Those who sign, our guests, are instructed and

supervised by collaborators in white laboratory coats. The co- conspirators/ collaborators are responsible for informing those who wish to bear witness to the work that they will be recorded as *data*, as part of the 'endless paper trail'[29]. Our audience's presence will be fixed in written form allowing the Western practices of recording, fixing, making real, creating foundations, evidencing; these practices are brought into a contrasting relationship to the performance which is embodied, emotional, transitory. Barad articulates:

> …things are indeterminate; there are no things before the measurement, and that the very act of measurement produces determinate boundaries and properties of things. So, this is an ontological principle rather than an epistemological one. In other words, for Bohr particles do not have a position independently of my measuring something called position.[30]

The relationships of bodies-on-country over time, and the recent entanglement of the colonial-racial/ bio-physical, with long Nunga histories of place, as well as our individual and collective relationships to intergenerational power imbalances and colonial/racial/legal oppression are complex articulations that this work embraces.

[29] Harkin, N. (2014). "The Poetics of (Re)Mapping Archives: Memory in the Blood." Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature **Vol 14**(No 3).

[30] Barad, K., et al. (2012). "Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers"; Interview with Karen Barad." New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies. Accessed 20/10/17: http://quod.lib.umich.edu/o/ohp/11515701.0001.001/1:4.3/--new-materialism-interviews-cartographies?rgn=div2;view=fulltext

top: Great-grandmother Kamilia (family photo)
below: Nana May Miller (nee Boxer) and Ali Gumillya Baker, Fowlers Bay 1998.

The representation of the Sovereign Goddess, Looking for Gumillya: Binding and Unbinding. Context 1

There is a long history of singing to the stars and the whales in the histories of my Nunga ancestors. There is a long history of collection in the lives of my colonising ancestors; knowledge, objects, ideas, faces and data. Small and large things link us all to these moments; this land and our stories.

I acknowledge Kaurna country where I was born, I now live, write and raise family; growing food in the garden on the plains near Karra Wirra Parri and working at the university built on the body of Nganu[31]. I also want to acknowledge that in living on Kaurna country I am indebted to Kaurna people and this place. I live my life on this unceded yarta[32]. I acknowledge Kaurna peoples and in particular Kaurna elders who have significantly cared for me.

I acknowledge my Mirning family and all of the Mirning matriarch women and elders of my family; Great-Grand mother Gumillya, Grand-Mother May, Great Aunts Myra, Ruby, Olive, Omi, Reda. My mother, my aunties, uncles, my children. My extended Mirning family from the Nullarbor and the Far West Coast of South Australia[33].

[31] See the entry text and collaborative artwork at the entrance to Flinders University Bedford Park campus. The words were gifted to the university by Kaurna elder Uncle Lewis Yerloberka O'Brien and Kaurna language committee. These ideas are Kaurna philosophy and long history of place. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-361VyPWZ4

[32] Yarta is a Kaurna word for *country*. See: Pintyandi, K. W. (1995). Warra Kaurna. Warra Kaurna: A Resource for Kaurna Language Programs. R. Amery. Adelaide, Kaurna Warra Pintyandi.

[33] I also need to acknowledge the work of my mother Dr. Jennifer Baker, in particular her PhD: Baker, J. (2006). Theorising Survival: Indigenous Women and Social and Emotional Wellbeing. Women's Studies. Adelaide, Australia, Flinders University. **Doctor of Philosophy**.

I acknowledge the work of my sisters and brothers, aunties and uncles who have loved me, my dear friends and colleagues and collaborators from wider global Indigenous communities. I also acknowledge those who stand in solidarity in queer, refugee, dispossessed, exiled communities, those peoples globally who stand for decolonization, critical compassion, social justice and stand against imperialism, racism, torture, hate, greed, war, stand against ideologies of oppression and degradation of the planet.

Indigenous artists, educators and academics working into and out of a university are often forced to consider the institutional and ideological limitations and expectations of cultural work, art and healing, justice and solidarity. Multiple and conflicting concerns from within our communities, multiple expectations from the university regarding our roles as educators and racialised subjects in an emerging landscape of consumer capitalist branding and the selling of higher education and knowledge as commodity. Aboriginal people working in academia understand that the ways identities are constructed and performed are profoundly political/ theoretical undertakings. Our relationships to our countries and ancestors are not arbitrary or chosen signifier/identifiers but inherited and situated and naming these lived realities continues to be understood as ongoing acts of love of family and country in direct resistance to the colonial-settler-consumer-capitalist-patriarchy.

This is our connection through time and across generations of families and communities. This relationship to land-spirit-ancestors is not ceded, it is

sovereign and it remains despite being a threat to colonial ideologies. **Our work is collective and collaborative at its core**.

This research journey is not one I have made alone. It is with my elders, family and community, fellow academics, artists and friends, we journey together, we have multiple reasons for both our celebration and critique.

That our Nunga perspectives are fundamentally not represented and our collective interests largely unserved, is both a historical-colonial legacy and contemporary reality. There is much written and said but little changes in relation to the ongoing issues of oppression and crises facing Aboriginal communities. The colonial state has its freedom because of the oppressed. We exist simultaneously within and outside of the colonial state.

This research journey began through consideration of our (Nunga) representations, in particular the colonial representations contained within the South Australian State Records and South Australian Museum collection. This research work forms part of an ongoing search for information and representations of Aboriginal peoples, in particular my grandmother and mothers' family, held within these colonial archives. As part of this ongoing research I have also been engaged in the practice of creative transformation, this creative practice was partly a survival and protection against the madness

that I found contained within the archive. My sanity and my response to the call of my ancestors from within the *records they keep about us*.[34]

The first creative and artistic collaboration in this doctoral research journey began with an exhibition of work in *ALIAN*[*]*: Bow down to the Sovereign Goddess, Inside the Museum of Un-natural History* at Tandanya, National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, in Adelaide from November 2011 to February 2012.

This exhibition at Tandanya included an installation of photographs and embroidery, accompanied by a live *Tall Ship* performance work on opening night[35]. The work for the series *ALIAN: Bow down to the Sovereign Goddess, Inside the Museum of Un-natural History*, exhibition continued to unfold and develop and in 2013 work was begun for the formation of a collective of Aboriginal women artist/academics – the *Bound/Unbound* collective[*]. From this collective work a series of exhibitions including the group show; *Historia and Tall Ship performance* (2014) at the Adelaide Town Hall. The collaborations were then extended to form what is now the Unbound Collective. This exegesis demonstrates the theoretical and artistic unfolding and unbinding as well as re-folding and binding. The next Chapters focus on the work of the Unbound Collective in *Bound and Unbound Sovereign Acts*,

[34] It is important to acknowledge the early work of the late Doreen Kartinyeri in Aboriginal family histories at the South Australian Museum as well as the important text: Mattingley, C. and K. Hampton, Eds. (1992). Survival in our own land: "Aboriginal" experiences in "South Australia" since 1836 / told by Nungas and others Sydney, Hodder & Stoughton.

[*] ALIAN is the last part of the word Australian. ALIAN is also a misspelling of the colonising language of exclusion that is fitting for Aboriginal peoples as both sovereign and dispossessed in an Australian context. The exhibition also included paintings by the late Wiradjuri artist Ian Willding who exhibited under the title *ALIAN: Family Matters a Wiradjuri Story*, though Ian's beautiful work in this exhibition will not be discussed in this thesis.

[35] Tandanya, or Tarndanyangga is a Kaurna word for the place of the city of Adelaide in South Australia.

[*] The Bound/ Unbound collective is also called the Unbound collective, and this project is also called; Bound/ Unbound Sovereign Acts, Act I & Act II.

Act I and *Act II*, in particular the creative theorisation of these collaborative projects[36].

[36] *Historia*, (2013), curated by Carolyn Kavanagh at the Adelaide Town Hall. *Tall Ship Performance I* (2012) performance artists; Alexis West, Nazaree Dickerson, Isabelle Da Sylveira (vocals) and Ali Gumillya Baker (artist) Tandanya Aboriginal Cultural Institute. *Tall Ship Performance II* (2013) performance artists; Faye Rosas Blanch, Simone Ulalka Tur (vocal performance, Lily Sansbury, *For I Aborigine*), Alexis West, (artist) Ali Gumillya Baker, Adelaide Town Hall. *Bound and Unbound Sovereign Acts: Decolonising Methodologies of the Lived and Spoken, Act 1*, (2014) artists; Ali Gumillya Baker

(curatorial lead), Simone Ulalka Tur, Natalie Harkin, Faye Rosas Blanch, Fontanelle Gallery, Bowden. *Bound/ Unbound Sovereign Acts II* (2015), artists; Ali Gumillya Baker (curatorial lead), Simone Ulalka Tur, Natalie Harkin, Faye Rosas Blanch, performance outside the South Australian State Library, Flinders City Gallery and South Australian Museum during TARNANTHI Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, October 2015.

For the last 20 years my interest has focused on the connections between performance and how I could begin to understand the long-term colonial-archival representations of my family contained within the colonial states collections. In particular this work honours my great-grandmother Kamilia Boxer, a Mirning woman from the Nullarbor on the Far West Coast of South Australia. My performance practice has taken the form of art-making, installation, poetry, vocals, photography, video works[37]. This exegesis examines some of the contexts and rationale for these ideas and practices.

Nana Kamilia, outside Penong, family photo. 1930's

[37]Baker, A. G. (2001). Squeezebox Text. Translating understandings of homeplaces into new media: A Nunga perspective. Department of Screen Studies, Faculty of Education Humanities, Law and Theology. Adelaide, Australia, Flinders University. **Master of Arts**. This work examined ideas of home and identity and country, as part of the work involved making a documentary with my Grandmother May Miller, on her return to her birth place at Fowlers Bay after 50 years.

ALIAN: Museum of Un-Natural History; Bow Down to the Sovereign Goddess; (2012) Kaurna Gallery, Tandanya Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Grenfell St. Adelaide.

> How is historical agency enacted in the slenderness of narrative? How do we historicize the event of the dehistoricized? If, as they say, the past is a foreign country, then what does it mean to encounter a past that is your own country reterritorialized, even terrorized by another?[38]

When I began research about my maternal great-grandmother Gumillya Boxer (*Ka-mil-lya)*, in my mind I hoped to find a memorial and information and honouring stories and songs to remember her.

What I found instead was the opposite of a memorial. This anti-memorial and absence of honouring was profoundly disturbing. What I found was debris of documents and objects scattered throughout institutions in dark places[39]. Abusive documents. This evidence of abuse of us by the colonial powers is like a pit of sadness. The pit could swallow me up as I walk. I could fall in and never be seen again. My remedy to this was to begin another story. This story is for my children and their children and all children. It is a story for my children of what I found when I looked for my family and Aboriginal people in the archive. It is our museum of un-natural history.

[38] Bhabha, H. K. (2001). In a Spirit of Calm Violence. After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Diplacements. G. Prakash. Princeton, Princeton University Press**:** 326-343.
[39] For example -The South Australian Museum, South Australian State Records, Barr Smith Library at University of Adelaide.

Part of the work of this 'Museum of Unnatural History' (2012)[40] was the development of a theoretical and textual 'picture' of research undertaken by white ethnologist Norman Tindale. Tindale had an international reputation as an anthropologist, linguist, ethnographer, and undertook 'data collection' throughout Aboriginal Australia while working for the South Australian Museum from the early 1920's through to the mid 1960's[41]. In particular, this research is focused on Tindale's *data* collection that contributed to a larger landscape of objectification and categorisation of racialised ideas about Aboriginal people and was part of a global movement of analysis using the ideologies of 'eugenics'[42]. The ideas contained within eugenics are concerned with 'racial purity' and 'hierarchies of race' and within this there was a movement of physical anthropology and 'phrenology'. The dominant idea was that intelligence could be determined through measurements of a persons' head and that culture could be bred out through a persons blood. It is this particular racialised phenomenon that needs focused critique and informs the larger body of this doctoral work[43]. These ideas about 'racial and biological variability and purity' and the work of Aboriginal artists and scholars in response to these ideas form a core part of the ongoing academic teaching I continue to engage with in the university.

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[40] Baker, A. G. (2012). ALIAN: *Bow Down to the Sovereign Goddess inside the Museum of Unnatural History*. Kaurna Gallery, Tandanya Aboriginal Cultural Institute.

[41] See for example: http://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/collections/information-resources/archives/tindale-dr-norman-barnett-aa-338

[42] Gould, S. J. (1993). American Polygeny and Craniometry Before Darwin. Blacks and Indians as Separate, Inferior Species. The "Racial" Economy of Science. Toward a Democratic Future. S. Harding. Bloomington, Indiana University Press**:** 84 - 115.

[43] See for example Hacking, I. (1991). How should we do the history of statistics. The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality. G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller. London, Harvester Wheatsheaf**:** 181-195.

> The volatile rapport between race and the human is defined above all by two constellations: first, there exists no portion of the modern human that is not subject to racialization, which determines the hierarchical ordering of the Homo sapiens species into humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans; second as a result, humanity has held a very different status for the traditions of the racially oppressed.[44]

This theoretical 'exploration' of the archival holdings of the colonial state, provides the background to the process of reclamation of the plaster cast of my great-grand-mother's head undertaken and collected by Tindale in the Royal Adelaide Hospital at the time of her death in 1951 and since held by the South Australian Museum[45]. This head cast is one of many hundreds of plaster casts of Aboriginal heads taken as part of a data collection exercise and kept by the museum in its holdings[46].

The direct imprint of my great grandmother's head makes this particular object significant to my family, and because of the ideas that generated these kinds of body casts, the process by which the museum will deal with this matter is of concern to us. This act of collection was not known by Gumillya's family until recently, and it would appear that no authority for Tindale's 'research'/ 'data collection' including permission for the production or long-term archiving of the

[44] Weheliye, A. G. (2014) Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human, Duke University Press, Durham and London: 8.
[45] I have since been told that these casts were regularly used to trade for other 'objects' and artefacts.
[46] Hale, H. M. (1956). "The First Hundred Years Of the Museum - 1856-1956." Records of the South Australian Museum 12. See also Colquhoun, L. (2009). A Question of Access: Dispute Over Aborigines Department Files. The Adelaide Review. Adelaide**:** 11.

cast was given by her relatives. Tindale's collection therefore represents a knowledge system that has ruptured and violently undermined the view of knowledge creation as a respectful and ethical endeavour. This research examines how these ruptures in ideas about respectful knowledge production and transmission could be claimed as points of healing and transformation by examining how stories are told and the implications of the stories we leave for future generations. These broader questions have particular ethical relevance for filmmaking, performance and other forms of artistic practice, the areas of my disciplinary training and research.

This archival gathering of 'evidence' draws upon the records of the Protector of Aborigines, the Aborigines' Department and Aborigines Protection Board in South Australia as well as other materials held within the South Australian State Records and the Mortlock Library, and the extensive belongings of Mirning people held-kept-taken by the South Australian Museum.

What becomes clear in this research is that this is never just an historical archive, these objects and ideas are as powerful as their operation/ occupation within the contemporary imagination. As discussed later in this exegesis these archives also have a political and material effect: on Native Title, Heritage Protection, Narratives of Nation, local, state and federal government policy. Indeed these archives are 'guarded', 're-made', 're-cycled' and rearticulated by people who are our contemporaries. There is continual contestation over the representation of these ideas, as González states:

> Arguing race is a discursive formation, rather than an essential, biological, or ontological category, entails recognizing that the concept necessarily changes with the shifting currents of culture and language, techniques and methods of representation, and scientific imperatives. Recognizing that race is a social construct rather than a biological fact does not imply, however, that the stakes in the contest over its meaning have decreased. For the most part, the meaning of race has left the realm of science behind (despite recent efforts to revive genetic typologies) but has continued as an intensified struggle, familiar in the arts, over the politics of representation.[47]

How can we ever escape these ways of viewing us that have become fixed within the archive of goonya knowledge about us[48]? How can these arrogant perceptions become transformed? The repositioning of oppressive ideas through critical-creative practice can provide new perspectives and is one way we can re-configure these racialised realms of discourse, but as Butler points out, these representations are often a movement between what is already there (in the archive), and what is yet to come, how we imagine our Nunga bodies and our children's subjection into the future. The representational ambivalence referred to by Butler is also identified by Homi Bhahba in talking about the colonial project- a discourse, an ambivalence that gives voice to the sovereign/ subject but in the same moment discounts, dismisses and silences that voice as abject/ savage/ object[49]. Butler says:

[47] González, J. A. (2008). Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art. Massachusetts, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press: 3.
[48] Goonya is a Kaurna word for white people.
[49] Bhabha, H. K. (1994). The Location of Culture. London, Routledge.

> Exceeding is not escaping, and the subject exceeds precisely that to which it is bound. In this sense the subject cannot quell the ambivalence by which it is constituted. Painful, dynamic, and promising, this vacillation between the already-there and the yet-to-come is a crossroads that rejoins every step by which it is traversed, a reiterated ambivalence at the heart of agency. Power rearticulated is "re"-articulated in the sense of already done and "re"-articulated in the sense of done over, done again, done anew. [50]

At the heart of ‘re-articulation’ of colonial representations are many criminal acts, some of these acts are ‘fixed’ within and upon objects. When Tindale chose to make a cast of my great grandmother’s head, and place that cast within the museum collection, he objectified and abjectified her within the colonial archive in perpetuity. Colonial objects like head casts or tapestries or photographs, are re-articulated acts of violence upon us, of what has already been done to us as Aboriginal people. They contain the evidence of how we have been ‘done over’.

What happens then when these ‘objects’ of study become human? When these objects of study become academics? We become human - because while our families and elders may have been denied a humanity by the Europeans, our people never stopped being, were never frozen in time, were never plants or animals of a lower rung of a constructed false hierarchy, a

[50] Butler, J. (1997). The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection. Stanford, Stanford University Press: 17.

hierarchy created precisely to justify the stealing of land while allowing those who benefited from the theft to feel good and righteous about it. Where is the place to mourn (or even forget) the crimes of re-articulation, where are the memorials, the places of honouring our dead, our lost and heart broken, how can our public places ever represent what this country is for our people? The beauty and the horror of this violent history remains invisible to most. Judith Butler asks:

> Is this what Hegel called 'the loss of the loss', a foreclosure that constitutes an unknowability without which the subject cannot endure, an ignorance and melancholia that makes possible all claims of knowledge as one's own? Is there not a longing to grieve- and, equivalently, an inability to grieve- that which one was never able to love, a love that falls short of the "conditions of existence"?[51]

In many ways what I find impossible to endure as an Aboriginal person is the continuing internalization and projection of historical ideas of hatred perpetrated upon our families and communities. These ideas and the evidence of these ways of viewing our people must be critiqued and this analysis must be more than a reversal of signification. A fundamental challenge we have as Aboriginal people is to make visible our resistance and maintain the records of our histories, as told by us. This challenge is pressing because of the ongoing erasure of our memory, and appropriation of our children's memory through colonising objects and ideas. The challenge

[51] Ibid: 24.

involves articulating languages of resistance that form something else. These articulations reconstitute the way we consider the past and 'loss' through our rights as Aboriginal people to remember or just as importantly our rights to forget.

The re-inscription of dominant codes and examination of the ethical relationships of power from within Aboriginal communities and beyond speaks to a multitude of issues including historical relationships to power and structures of law, our sovereignty and how these structures of power continue to impact on 'lateral violence' within communities[52]. It is because of these multiple concerns that research by and with Aboriginal communities must engage in rigorous and reflexive critiques of ethical positioning and long term benefits for the community, both in terms of cultural capital and economic capacity. Our communities have limited economic capacity and many pressures are placed upon those with income and education. Amidst these large ideas, smaller narratives can be lost or disregarded.

The works in the exhibition *ALIAN; Bow Down to the Sovereign Goddess, Inside the Museum of Unnatural History* at Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute (2012) and later the collaborative works *Bound / Unbound Sovereign Acts: Decolonising Methodologies of the Lived and Spoken, Act I*, Fontanelle Gallery, Bowden (2014) and *Bound/ Unbound Sovereign Acts II* (2015) State Library of South Australia, South Australian Museum, are intent on examining those larger abusive colonising narratives within the frame of

[52] for example see Gooda, M. (2011). Native Title Report 2011: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. Sydney, Australian Human Rights Commission: 78-89.

the personal. These works are attempts at telling stories that are ethical; and even more than an individual ethic, the works collectively add to the record of voices of resistance to oppressive ideas. They create ripples and help transform internalised visions of the colonisers hatred of us and our bodies. Denzin and Lincoln provide us with a discussion of scholarly work that challenges the conventional western conceptualisation of research, the possibility of a research that is ethical and respects Indigenous ways of being:

> Documenting the geography of pain, the shameful twin of privilege, may appear to be a somewhat easier task, but here we bump into issues of personal and community ethics and vulnerability…[53]

They argue that research should meet multiple criteria:

> It must be ethical, performative, healing, transformative, decolonizing, and participatory. It must be committed to dialogue, community, self-determination, and cultural autonomy. It must meet peoples perceived needs. It must resist efforts to confine inquiry to a single paradigm or interpretive strategy. It must be unruly, disruptive, critical, and dedicated to the goals of justice and equity.[54]

This work must seek to undo the 'order' of the cruel madness contained in the colonial archive.

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[53] Denzin, N. K., Y. S. Lincoln, et al., Eds. (2008). Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies. Los Angeles, Sage: 166.
[54] Ibid: 2.

These works are attempts to identify the smallness, the intimacy within the crimes of the domestic. These works are also about our miniature worlds, the stories we tell; and they need to identify and include the local and the intimate. These works also acknowledge that as Indigenous peoples we are giants of our histories; we are central in our bodies on our countries and in our intergenerational responsibilities and our loving relationality and stories of place. These works seek to minimise the colonial enclosure as a peripheral story at the end of long lawful times. These stories seek to minimise the oppressive ideas and maximise our transformation from them. These transformed stories must also interrogate ideas of 'enclosure' and the 'internal environment' of *home* that make it (un)comfortable for colonisers and '*easier* or more difficult for non-Aborigines to visit.' [55] Easier or more difficult: depending on where you are positioned or position yourself within history and present political landscapes. Our histories are not exclusive, we can all learn from these acts, we can all share in these insights.

When we engage in the act of making, in the moment of creative chance, the possibility of freedom from our subjection cannot be denied to us. No longer internalized these ideas form part of a much larger conversation.

In her book *The Psychic Life of Power*, Judith Butler describes a Foucaudian 'subjection' as the process of becoming subject to and of power, 'the

[55] Webb, H. (2007) 'Say Goodbye To The Colonial Bogeyman: Aboriginal Strategies of Resistance', *Altitude6* www.api-network.com/altitude, in Foley, G. (2007). Cultural Warrior. Richard Bell: Positivity. R. Leonard. Brisbane, Institute of Modern Art.

simultaneous formation and regulation of the subject[56]'. We are all born into some form of subjection, it is all around us as the discourse of power. Butler identifies Foucault's argument that not only does the power surround us but it also forms us from within. She goes on to ask what happens when we identify the discourse turned in on ourselves. She asks if this moment of 'turning in' of recognition of our subjection marks the limit of the power[57]. As Aboriginal people within Australian contexts have both historically and recently been denied our sovereignty and self-determination within policies like the Northern Territory Intervention, we are framed within what might be described by Butler as 'abjection'. Those who are abject are those who the subjects of power are taught to look down upon, to not recognise as familiar, to de-humanise, Butler writes:

> Are there not discursive conditions for the articulation of any "we"? Subjection consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never choose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency.

> "Subjection" signifies the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject. Whether by interpellation, in Althusser's sense, or by discursive productivity, in Foucault's, the subject is initiated through a primary submission to power. Although Foucault identifies the ambivalence in this formation, he does not elaborate on the

[56] Butler, J. (1997). The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection. Stanford, Stanford University Press: 2.
[57] Ibid: 3.

specific mechanisms of how the subject is formed in submission. [58]

As I began researching my great grandmother, and as I uncovered and read the records of our family and communities through the South Australian State Records I became increasingly distressed at the content and intent and magnitude of the records that I found. I think about these articulations of power and abjection. My grandmother's head-cast taken by the museum is an attempt to stabilise the colonial identity. This object in its material form is more than a photograph, it is an 'artefact' on display and a direct imprint of the body. In order to keep perspective on these evil ideas about us it was important for me to make artwork that responded to these ideas and represented alternative perspectives. In many ways the works contained within the exhibitions *Bow Down to the Sovereign Goddess: Inside the Museum of Unnatural History* and *Bound and Unbound Sovereign Acts* were created as an alternative to the madness I found in the violent archive. These works were a way of engaging my loved ones- family, community and self. A way to maintain self-representation amidst a sea of racist views generated over the last few hundred years both in this country and across the globe. Leanne Simpson writes of this in her book *Islands of Decolonial Love*, in the poem *leaks*:

[58] Butler, J. (1997). The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection. Stanford, Stanford University Press: 2.

you are the breath over the ice on the lake. you are the one the grandmothers sing to through the rapids. you are the saved seeds of allies. you are the space between embraces

she's always going to remember this

you are rebellion, resistance, re-imagination

her body will remember[59]

The works within these exhibitions address a personal longing to inscribe/weave Nunga perspectives into objects and ideas that continue to persist in the maintenance of racist views within the physical and ideological landscape of Australia. These racist colonial representations offend many Aboriginal people and challenging them is a way for us to transform that anger into the gift of shared knowledge.

[59] Simpson, L. (2015). Islands of Decolonial Love: Stories and Songs. Winnipeg, ARP Books: 21.


post colonial boy

Offensive Tapestries- Domestic Blindness (series, 2012)

These works are part of a series representing forms of *domestic blindness* through contested history telling. The story of blindness to the domestic and local has many tangents. When former Prime Minister John Howard and Keith Windshuttle accuse historians such as Henry Reynolds and Lyndall Ryan of having a 'black arm band view of history', or when former Prime Minister Tony Abbott describes the Sydney area as "nothing but bush" prior to the arrival of the First Fleet, they articulate and validate a perpetuation of the lies of colonisation and the lies of *terra nullius* and perpetuate the construction of race as a means of oppression[60]. The response from Aboriginal people to

[60] For example see Manne, Manne, R., Ed. (2003). Whitewash, On Keith Windshuttle's Fabrication of Aboriginal History. Melbourne, Black Inc. Agenda.
also see; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQPIb6EyBE for Abbott's comments about civilisation.

Howard's statement regarding the 'black arm band' view of history was to call him and his followers out as having 'white-blindfold' views of history. These arguments continue on as the 'history wars' or, as Hemming might describe, the battle for control of the representations of the past into the future[61]. But what is lost in this confrontation? How does it feel to understand the extent of white race privilege playing out in this country? To be offended by the entire political and cultural landscape? Denzin and Lincoln write:

> while global human right documents... were extremely articulate about what discrimination looked like... the local indicia may curdle into self-doubt, drug and alcohol abuse, violence in the kitchen, and bruises on the soul.[62]

In my travels around the second-hand shops of Adelaide I have continually come across the domestic evidence of these historical lies of *neat colonial processes*. In artifacts like mass produced tapestries for example, it can be assumed that these small needle works were embroidered by white women for decorative soft home furnishing and within them is contained an ideology which reflects larger ideologies of histories of invasion, land theft, segregation and attempted genocide as something to be symbolically celebrated, as an unquestionable given. I buy these discarded second-hand tapestries and vandalise them, I reappropriate their symbols. The tapestries were made in an

[61] Hemming, S. (2007). Managing Cultures into the Past. Taking up the challenge: Critical race and whiteness studies in a post colonising nation. D. W. Rigg. Adelaide, Australia, Crawford House**:** 150-167.
[62] Denzin, N. K., Y. S. Lincoln, et al., Eds. (2008). Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies. Los Angeles, Sage: 166.

attempt to blanket this country with stories of heroic white nationalism, and now they are being thrown away as *unfashionable* home decor. The total myth of peaceful and unopposed colonial 'settlement' is astounding, especially when you find intricate cross-stitches valorising a view of an empty country waiting to be conquered and you find our presence as Aboriginal peoples, the history of violence towards us, and our resistance to that violence made invisible through tapestry. Each careful stitch in each tapestry is testament to the considered occupation of space to the exclusion of all but the approved subject. The role of white women in the *civilising mission* of making us feel ashamed of and unclean in our bodies through the keeping of space. Each embroidered needle prick an act of violence to the dispossessed, each home an enclosure to the invasion. Each home a museum of un-natural objects, ideas and ideologies. This work is about re-imagining those domestic landscapes.

postcolonial boy (2011), speaks back to the theatricality of representation of the *wild colonial boy* and 'Native' through the eyes of colonials, the depiction of the 'Noble Savage', in this representation he is complete with diamanté bling and breast plate. He is also a writer with a bloodied feather quill in his hair as he meets the colonisers gaze. He meets the gaze of those who assume knowing, dress up in black-face and mock our being. In my imagination he is a song- writer-poet-activist.

It is in the crimes of the text that many of our battles are fought. This work also reminds me of those who were kidnapped and taken on circus show

tours of Europe and the Americas, such as the Aboriginal people from Queensland who were exhibited in side shows and museum exhibitions against their will. These acts have been researched by people such as Wendy Holland[63] and also Roslyn Poignant in her work, *Captive lives: Looking for Tambo and His Companions* and *Professional Savages*[64]*.* I remember when I first came across Poignant's research, I thought how in many ways what it documented was a form of torture and mockery so profound that knowing about these cruel occurrences becomes an assault of the spirit that cannot be unknown. Examining the photographs in the books in the library still makes me weep, and I remember the first time I saw these images my tears dropped on to the page, I kissed the photographs with tears. Somehow this intimate-violent -tender -anguish represented in these images is without time. We meet in the air and on the paper, our sorrow and our people.

[63] see Holland, W. (1999). "Reimagining Aboriginality in the circus space." The Journal of Popular Culture **33**: 91-104.

[64] Poignant, R. (1997). Captive Lives: Looking for Tambo and his Companions. Canberra, National Library of Australia. also see Poignant, R. (2004). Professional Savages; Captive Lives and Western Spectacle. New Haven and London, Yale University Press.

Canberra, Aboriginal Tent Embassy – hunting us in the landscape. (2011) Cotton thread, textile multimedia.

Canberra, Aboriginal Tent Embassy (2011) is a work that was inspired after a visit to Government House in Canberra to be present at the awarding of the Governor General's Scholarship for Indigenous Student Teacher Education. A recipient of this award (and dear friend) and myself accidently arrived too early at the enormous grounds of Government House, in a taxi. We were overwhelmed by the re-enforcement and re-enactment of whiteness within the display of wealth and authority of the State building and estate.

> The assumption that the nation is a white possession is evident in the relationship between whiteness, property, and the law, which manifested itself in the latter part of the nineteenth century in the form of comprehensive discriminatory legislation tied to national citizenship. Colonial and subsequent governments legitimated the appropriation of

> Indigenous lands, racialized incarceration, and enslavement and limited naturalized citizenship to white immigrants. While blackness was congruent with Indigenous subjugation and subordination, whiteness was perceived as being synonymous with freedom and citizenship.[65]

This enclosure of nationhood is not a place where Aboriginal people have ever been represented as foundational or central, and while we may stand proud in our sovereign histories as Nungas, we are surrounded by articulations and re-articulations of colonial violence, in this space of governmentality we felt we might rub dirt onto on the white seat, this seat of the civilized and enact their dirty primitive.

The congregation and concentration of power in this enclosure was so overwhelming we could not stay within this house of governmentality a moment longer, we could not breathe. My friend and I escaped out the side-door-servant's-entrance and walked down to the lake on the grounds, waiting and hoping for the other Nungas to arrive soon for the presentation ceremony. Standing in this elitist place was intensely anxiety provoking, while we were 'invited' (thick-card, gold, stamped with symbols of power) and 'welcomed' (by the servants of power holding cups of tea in fine china) we were also definitely made to feel the 'other' there, as the security guards surveilled us slowly in their unmarked-tinted-window cars. And we were thankful to be outsiders to that. We both commented to each other at how uncomfortable we were within

[65] Moreton- Robinson, A. (2015). The White Possessive: Property, Power and Indigenous Sovereignty. University of Minnesota Press: 30.

this Government House, and how we would much rather be at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy.

This tapestry also reminds me of the recent history on Kaurna country in Adelaide of colonial *hunting through the bush*. Wealthy families would ride horses with hunting dogs through the parklands, guided by local Aboriginal people and this is well documented. Wealthy families such as the Bar Smiths and Elders were part of what was called 'The Hunt Club'.[66] The blindfolded hunting scene in this tapestry represents the landscape of contemporary politicians, monarchists and neo-colonialists who are blinded by their own histories and white interests and are unable to understand Aboriginal people as sovereign in the landscape, while at the same time they actively hunt us down.

Bow Down to the Sovereign Goddess, (digital photographic series 2012)

The series of photographs *Bow Down to the Sovereign Goddess* (2012) engages with the elaborate neo-colonial frame of white representation that Aboriginal people are continually required to simultaneously look through and challenge, or rearticulate, or remind the wider community of. We have been talking about our identities as Aboriginal peoples for a long time in this country, but in neo-colonial Australia it takes a long time for our voices to be heard, and they are almost immediately forgotten, and even now we are polarized by the mainstream media, both as highly visible and under abject

[66] Hirst, J. B. (1973). Adelaide and the Country. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press. p44-46

surveillance, or highly invisible and our concerns and voices ignored. Alexis Wright describes how our stories are continually told for us, our narrative is high-jacked.[67]

Bow Down to the Sovereign Goddess was inspired through researching Aboriginal, Native and African American artists/ photographers/ filmmakers and performers whose work responds to and theorises ideas about race and representation; for example the work of African American visual artist Kara Walker, where she describes how she wanted to be the heroine and kill the heroine at the same time[68]. Walker's work also describes the moments of colonization, where in the epic nature of history telling, the grand narratives, the singular emotional events, and the horror of the perpetration of those events that unfold are lost.

What makes someone hate someone else's smell as a racial repulsion? The impact of these artists' intent and creative practice and influence on my ongoing work will be discussed in further detail later in this exegesis.

These photographs are a tribute to the strong black women of my community who I do not see represented enough. It is through the study of our Nunga histories that I continue to learn about extent of the oppressive and violent acts of classification, surveillance and control which remain often unspoken and unsettled within our fragmented landscapes as well as continuing to be

[67] Wright, A. (2016). "What Happens When You Tell Someone Else's Story?" Meanjin **Summer 75**(4).
[68] see for example- Berry, I., D. English, et al., Eds. (2007). Kara Walker: Narratives of a Negress. New York, RizzoliThe Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College.

quietly screaming ‘crime scenes’ that are captured eternally in fractured detail by the colonial archive[69].

The *Sovereign Goddess* photographs are staged and reflective, almost like a mirror that one holds, with a background made of the debris of modernity, small pieces of coloured throw-away plastic, all strung together, bottle top lids and detergent containers.

[69] See ideas of this fractured layering of crime scenes in Gibson, R. (2002). Seven Versions of an Australian Badland, University of Queensland Press. See also artist Julie Gough who often describes her work as an ‘invisible detective’. see Gough, J. (2004). "Messages received and lately understood." Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art **no. 2**(1): 155-162.

Ali Gumillya Baker (2012) *Tall Ship performance*, Tandanya Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Grenfell St. Adelaide. Performers: Nazaree Dickerson, Alexis West and Ali Gumillya Baker. Vocals: Isabelle da Sylveira.

The *Tall Ships Performance I* and *II* (2012) (2013) performance, vocals installation.

Just as the narratives of colonialism can be objectified, so can behaviours. Performance is one way of breaking embodied occupation, of momentarily shedding the internalized invasion. The *Tall Ships* performance grew out of a desire to engage in a performance that experimented with ideas of 'unlucky whites', and 'sinking ships'. To create a sovereign fleet of black women, parting the audience like the sea. These imaginings are more than simple reversals: more than the opposite to the binary of the ships invasion. As Bhabha has suggested these imaginings engage in colonial *mimicry*, that

which is almost the same, but fundamentally different[70]. Seeing these boats on the horizon of the imaginary, imagining what else could have happened. Many Aboriginal artists have made reference to sinking ships, one that I particularly enjoy is Lin Onus' piece *X and Ray witness the sinking of the ship* (2000)[71]. Another example of this reimagining of the arrival and subsequent departure of colonials can be found in the wonderful text *The Aboriginal Children's History of Australia*, a history of Australia as recounted by Aboriginal children in 1977:

> Long, long ago Captain Cook sailed to look for a good place to start a little mission. He sailed around the world. He sailed to the nearest place to stop. When he stopped, he saw this place and he knew it was a good place to build a mission. After, he got in a little boat and rowed to shore. When he got out of the boat he walked towards the beach. He went further and further in the bush. Suddenly a spear came swooping through the bush and nearly got him. So Captain Cook ran back. He was very frightened of us. It was black Aboriginals coming towards him with spears, sharp pointed spears. Then Captain Cook went rowing back to his ship.[72]

I began collecting small wooden models of tall ships, which I painted black and made into elaborate head-pieces. There is a history of these kind of ship hats in Europe at about the time of the colonial invasion of this country, white

[70] Bhabha, H. K. (1994). Of mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse. The Location of Culture. London, Routledge**:** 85-92.
[71] Baker, A. G. and J. Wurm, Eds. (2011). Long Way Home: A Celebration of 21 years of Yunggorendi First Nations Centre. Adelaide, Flinders University City Gallery: 21.
[72] Aboriginal Arts Board, A. C. (1977). Aboriginal Children's History of Australia. Hong Kong, Rigby Publishers Limited: 56.

women would wear model ships mounted in their hair to celebrate and show their support for warring nation states[73]. I am fascinated by these colonial representations as well as how these representations occupy the imaginary of many white nationalists; the sentimentality of the re-enactment of invasion, the detailed replicas of the 'original' tall ships. They clutch at the straws of their flimsy identity in this land. Recently I found a book that commemorated in great photographic detail the 1988 Australian Bicentennial tall ship re-enactment ceremony[74]. A debauched January 26 1988 that saw 2 million people line the shores of Sydney Harbor as a real-life-replica fleet of tall ships with Prince Charles and Lady Diana waving from the deck, sailed in to commemorate the invasion, theft and unlawful occupation of this country. We as Aboriginal people were there to protest, mourn and remind people that we find such displays deeply offensive, that we had/have nothing to celebrate except our continued resistance to the symbols of invasion, our continued survival despite attempted genocide, our belonging, our sovereignty that has never been ceded[75].

The *Tall Ship I* performance at Tandanya involved performers moving through the exhibition space, three Aboriginal women, wearing ship hats, forming a fleet of black ships, sailing into the installation in black-mourning-tissue-paper dresses that make a rustling paper noise like wind travelling through she-oaks. We have the weight of colonialism in our hair, little model tall ships. It

[73] See interview with Phillip Treacy in: Meagher, D. (2008). Fashion Speak: Interviews with the Worlds Leading Designers. Sydney, Random House: 132.
[74] King, J. (1988). Australia's First Fleet: The Voyage and the Re-enactment 1788/1988. Sydney, Fairfax Robertsbridge.
[75] See for example the documentary: Wills, A. R. (2014). 88: The True Story of a March that Changed a Nation, Umbrella Entertainment**:** 57min.

weighs down our heads. The sovereign women pass out cards from an old-playing-deck of a game called 'Sorry'. The cards gave individual instruction, and had the word 'sorry' printed on them, and we had scrawled in black pen 'not' so the cards read 'not sorry'. A proclamation was then read, declaring the reasons why we were 'not sorry'[76]. Bhahba speaks of these ideas of the mimicry, the same *but not quite*, articulating this complex intersection. In some ways the reading of our performance engages with the return-of-gaze, the ambivalent museum space, and while we work to shed light on the nature of unethical, paternal, violent and murderous power relationships within Australian society, this seems to do little to significantly change the ways those power relationships continue to be enacted within these institutions of power. Though I continue to have faith in the possibility of peaceful ripples in ways yet unknown.

> I want to turn to this process by which the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined, where the observer becomes the observed and 'partial' representation rearticulates the whole notion of *identity* and alienates it from essence.[77]

Despite the surveillance and institutional control that I have encountered in searching for archival evidence of my family, I can return to our ancestral perspectives of country. It is through this that I imagine my grandmother and great grandmother in a place, a place where the land and the edges of the

[76] These Sorry (not) messages also in this way makes reference to the history of the 'Sorry' movement and unfolding of an 'apology' to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in this country.
[77] Bhabha, H. K. (1994). Of mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse. The Location of Culture. London, Routledge: 89.

sand dunes and ocean meet, where they were born, the patterns in the soil and smoke rising into the air, the sound of the wind in our ears and our hair being blown about. I look out to sea, seeing our women looking out together.

It is from this place of collective looking out over country and over the ocean that this PhD work becomes a collective endeavour. The strength we find as Aboriginal women together becomes the place to change the terms of the conversation and allow ourselves to engage in the work that is important for ourselves and our communities. The next section of the exegesis is about the first part of the Bound/ Unbound project.

Bound and Unbound Sovereign Acts: Decolonising Methodologies of the Lived and Spoken. Act I

This event, as a series of performances and an exhibition, is articulated – sung, spoken, rapped, written, woven, shared and enacted – in response to the practices, practitioners, acolytes of physical anthropology that have besieged First Nation peoples. Thirty-six metres of shelf space in the South Australian Museum reverberates for thousands of Aboriginal families from the "project outcomes" of the national exploits of Tindale and Birdsell in the 1930s and 1950s.[78]

As Aboriginal people we all share a historical legacy of living under the various Aborigines Acts, and the racialising impacts of these Acts on and through our bodies. As sovereign people we choose to act / speak / look / give back, and we do this in critical-performative ways: we weave, film, sing and project; we disrupt in order to transform.[79]

We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space, which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world.[80]

[78] Gough, J. (2014). Opening Address, Bound and Unbound Sovereign Acts. F. Gallery. Bowden, Unbound Collective.
[79] Baker, A. G., et al. (2014). Exhibition Floorsheet, Bound and Unbound, Sovereign Acts: Decolonising Methodologies of the Lived and Spoken, Act I. Fontanelle Gallery, Bowden, Unbound Collective.
[80] hooks, b. (2004). Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness. The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies. S. G. Harding. New York and London, Routledge**: 159**

In 2013 a group of four Aboriginal women; Faye Rosas Blanch, Natalie Harkin, Simone Ulalka Tur and myself Ali Gumillya Baker, formed what was to become named the *Unbound Collective* based around our shared ideas of performing/ projecting/ singing/ installing and transforming our understandings of sovereignty, ethics, decolonisation, storytelling, institutionalisation, history, race and representation. The *Unbound Collective* are Aboriginal artists and educators and all have different scholarly backgrounds and disciplinary interests/training in the arts;

> **Simone Ulalka Tur** (Antikirinya/ Yankunytjatjara) has a background as a professional actor with a particular focus in theatre as well as playwright and a singer, Simone is finishing her PhD in Cultural Studies and has Undergraduate and a Masters degree in Education. Simone has been working in the University sector since 1998.
>
> **Natalie Harkin** (Narungga) is an internationally recognised published poet with an Undergraduate degree in Communications and a Masters in Environmental Studies as well as a PhD in Communication Studies on archival-poetics. Natalie has been working in the university sector since 1996.
>
> **Faye Rosas Blanch** (Yidinyji/ MBararam) has a background of performance poetry and filmmaking, with an undergraduate degree in Aboriginal Studies a Graduate Diploma in Education and a Masters in Australian Studies and Faye is also undertaking a PhD in Cultural Studies and has been working in high schools and then the university sector since 1990.
>
> **Ali Gumillya Baker** has an undergraduate Honours degree in Visual Arts,

experience of working in performance art, and a Master of Arts in Screen Studies and has been working in the university sector since 1999.

The *Unbound Collective* are Yidinyji/ MBararam, Narungga, Antikirinya/ Yankunytjatjara and Mirning. After working together as academics at Yunggorendi First Nations Centre, Flinders University, we have shared experiences of teaching mainly non-Indigenous students topics in Indigenous Colonial Histories and Cultural Studies[81]. The Unbound collective are actively engaged as artists in our communities in the areas of performance, writing, poetry, singing, filmmaking and politics. Our collaborative work shares some ongoing questions about the capacity of ideas to both bind us and set us free:

Who speaks? Who listens? Who hears?
I was left here for dead. But instead I lived.
Chaos descended upon my beautiful grandmother's mother
and now we are here together.[82]

This section of exegesis is a critical-creative theorisation that accompanies the work of *Act I* (2014) exhibited at Fontanelle Gallery and also informs part of the development of the work of *Act II* (2015) of the *Bound & Unbound, Sovereign Acts* project.

[81] Yunggorendi First Nations Centre has now been restructured within the Office of Indigenous Strategy and Engagement at Flinders University.
[82] Ali Gumillya Baker and Faye Rosas Blanch, opening performance dialogue, Act 1, Bound and Unbound Sovereign Acts: Decolonising Methodologies of the Lived and Spoken, Fontanelle Gallery, Adelaide, 24 August 2014. For examples of the ideological and representational chaos see: Gibson, R. (1985). Camera natura. AFC Creative Development Branch. Canberra ACT, Ronin Films**:** 32min.

Bound/ Unbound Sovereign Acts collectively offers both theoretical positionings of resistance alongside performative practices of resistance. This ongoing project asks; what is *useful*[83] and *important* to understand about violent colonial practices of racialisation, abjection and oppression? The work asks what are the ethical conditions for freedom for Indigenous peoples who exist both within and outside of the structures of neo-colonial settler states? How might we represent ourselves and be both empowered and collectively free? What is the essence of our lives that lies beyond government or institutional control? How can we resist isolation as Aboriginal artists and academics?

The project started as a creative/research opportunity for each artist to both individually and collectively contribute, share and express, layered, intuitive, embodied, theoretical and critical-creative representations. We created opportunities to experiment, share and develop our work. This process provided research space to continue the theorisation and unfolding of ideas in many Acts.

There was a need to create opportunities for ourselves: Aboriginal- women- artist-academics working together in creative ways, united, self-powered and sovereign. The Bound and Unbound project provided opportunities to share and consider ideas free from the context of university lectures, scholarly books and journals, and in doing so provided opportunities for public performative connections with our communities: theoretical exchanges outside of university spaces. It is from *outside* of

[83] see for example: Moreton-Robinson, A. (2015). The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

the university that we collectively reflected and responded to the work we have been doing *inside* the university.

The *Bound/ Unbound Sovereign Acts* project became the space to share intergenerational gifts of our families as well as examine and respond to philosophical ideas that underpin our work on Kaurna country.

Our current Institutionalisation: The University and our shared experiences of Teaching, Living and Speaking; Indigenous Knowledges and Race.

Our challenge has been to engage with, critique and also share our understandings of this globalised, colonised, white-individualist-modernity. Act I of the Bound and Unbound project provided each artist both individually and collectively an opportunity to look back at the attempted abjection of ourselves and our ancestors as Aboriginal people. We reflected upon and responded to each other's work as well as the circumstances of our families and ancestors and shared how these layered intergenerational gifts and narratives of survival and protest by our people *resonate outside* the context of colonialism's 'collections' of our beings and selves, their colonising published texts, their state archives; we share our uncontainable resistance to being subsumed to within the 'collected' and dehistoricized. Together we perform these ideas to our audience who in many ways are also invited to respond. Linda Tuhiwai Smith identifies these challenges across boundaries as such:

> So the challenge is to use rhetoric, in other words, to use public talk, really for

> two separate audiences. That is our challenge. How do we 'speak', if you like, to the academy, how do we speak to power, how do we speak to ourselves, how do we speak to our own communities, and how do we convince them that we are actually useful.[84]

The relevance and importance of what we do as Aboriginal women academics working into and out of the university space within our collectively colonised lands is understood in multiple and complex ways by both the university and our families and communities. There are many limitations to universities as institutions of *knowledge production.* Despite the limitations, universities can provide space for the naming, tracing and planning of Indigenous resistance and refusal to being subsumed within the colonial- invader- settler-state[85].

Many Indigenous scholars working within universities have identified the complex problems of (re)articulation and (de)(re)construction of our Nunga identities. Whilst it may seem that we are ideologically contained and bound within these institutions, we can be ideologically and theoretically free from formations that are derived from a colonising imagination. Walking the line, teaching and researching from/into/out of the margins/centre, and politically engaged in the world of spirit-place and community-place. Linda Tuhiwai Smith articulates:

> …we moved into a space of claiming theory and method. In other words claiming the 'tools' of research and refashioning them in our own image.

[84] Smith, L. T. (2013). Live Up to Our Talk. He Manawa Whenua Conference. University of Waikato. accessed 15/07/16, indigenousknowledgenetwork.net/2016/07/07/linda-tuhiwai-smith-live-up-to-our-talk/
[85] see for example: Said, E. (1996). Representations of the Intellectual, Vintage.

> Refashioning these tools as our tools. And reconnecting those tools actually to our past, to understand that we had research-active ancestors…[86]

Aboriginal people teach and write to put food on our shared tables; to contribute to the long struggles of our communities, and we remain hyper-aware of our institutional surrounds. Historically and presently our Nunga families have been both excluded, defined and oppressed from within universities and other institutional apparatus of the state[87]. While Indigenous peoples' have had a continued engagement within the western academy in Australia over the last forty-five years[88], the racism of the neo-colonial Australian state is an all encompassing fact of our lives and universities remain places inhabited by a neo-colonising and epistemologically violent elite[89]; they are still places that exert power and 'knowing of difference' over and upon 'others' the impact of the history of Social Darwinism and Physical Anthropology on all disciplines of knowledge taught within universities continues to be a major absence in our higher education system:

> The corpus of knowledge that Indigenous scholars have produced over the past four decades has been primarily concerned with expressing and theorizing the specificities of our cultural differences in multiple forms in order to stake our claim in the production of knowledge about us.[90]

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[86] Smith, L. T. (2013). Live Up to Our Talk. He Manawa Whenua Conference. University of Waikato. accessed 15/07/16, indigenousknowledgenetwork.net/2016/07/07/linda-tuhiwai-smith-live-up-to-our-talk/

[87] In my Undergraduate Honours final installation at Art School I listened through a stethoscope to a recording of a famous Eugenicist Professor of Anatomy at Melbourne University who said in 1921, "The Aboriginal boy sitting in his class room spends only half his time concentrating on the lesson, the other half of his time is spent keeping his spine straight because he is so close to the ape'.

[88] The first Aboriginal graduate of an Australian university, Charles Perkins, graduated in 1966 from the University of Sydney. http://www.perkinstrust.com.au/about-dr-charles-perkins.html

[89] see for example Spivak's analysis of epistemic violence in; Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture. Basingstoke, Macmillan Education: 271-313.

[90] Moreton-Robinson, A. (2015). The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press. p xv

Use, Density and Incommensurability

In her book *The White Possessive: Property, Power and Indigenous Sovereignty*, Aileen Moreton-Robinson outlines particular questions that are related to the formation of Indigenous 'disciplinary knowledge' as being the basis of a *knowing* of 'cultural difference' within the academy. Moreton-Robinson's questions concern the usefulness of 'Indigenous knowledges' when understood as 'cultural difference', these questions are important in relation to the work of the *Unbound Collective*; as Aboriginal academics engaged in considering the context, worth, and benefits of this cultural work in our communities, juxtaposed with our ongoing teaching and research and positionality within the university:

> Has the intellectual investment in defining our [Indigenous] cultural differences resulted in the valuing of our knowledges? Has the academy become a more enlightened place in which to work, and, more important, in what ways have our communities benefited?[91]

Moreton-Robinson argues that our work as Indigenous scholars within the academy; 'exist[s] [both] within and outside the Orientalist discourses producing Indigenous cultural difference'. The complexity of what can be called our 'density', 'consists of more than the knowledge that has been produced about us.'[92] Moreton- Robinson cites Chris Anderson who argues that 'our density is constituted through our lived positions within modernity.' He explains that the;

[91] ibid p. xvii
[92] ibid p xv

> …temporal and epistemological complexity of our relationships with 'whitestream' society must counter hegemonic representations of Indigeneity, which marginalize or altogether ignore our density.[93]

Moreton-Robinson argues that what should be sought is; "an interdisciplinary approach to Indigenous studies, one that requires an engagement with the epistemic complexity of our communities." [94]

The epistemic complexity and the need for an interdisciplinary approach is highlighted when one considers for example that Indigenous peoples continue to be fundamentally under-represented within all academic spaces of learning and continue to be grossly over-represented within colonial-state incarceration systems[95]. Our historical and contemporary relationships to these institutions are shaped by these hierarchical limitations. Edward Said describes the way that the globalized-capitalist-colonial state enacts particular legal/ ideological incarcerations for us all:

> Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience.[96]

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[93] ibid p xv-xvi
[94] ibid p xvi
[95] see for example, ABS (2016), http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4517.0~2016~Main%20Features~Aboriginal%20and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20prisoner%20characteristics~5 , where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Prisoners make up 27% of all prisoners aged 18 years and over in 2016, but only 2% of the overall Australian population aged 18 years and over.
[96] Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile,* in bell hooks, 1995, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*: 65.

Indigenous peoples occupy a particular place within the spectrum of globalised-colonial exile; that of those who are dispossessed within the 'familiar territory'; we are the strangers at home. I am a Mirning person who has grown up away from Mirning country on Kaurna land, and very little is known about what this might mean outside of Aboriginal families and communities. It is important to consider that *globalisation* requires no attachment to country except as property to be exploited.

Universities continue to be places that assert individualist disciplinarity and authority; authority that must be questioned and understood in the context of respectful, responsible relationality[97]. This respectful and responsible relationality is what has been passed down by our 'research active ancestors', as articulated beautifully by Tuhiwai Smith and also Rosalie Kunouth Monks on Q& A when she stated; 'I am sovereign, I am not the problem'[98]. Our ancestors were not wandering aimlessly throughout *pre-history* in this country 'hunter-gathering', but rather our old people continue to be holders of enormous knowledge and research understanding.[99]

The 'disciplines of knowledge' taught within the academy should be seen to be infinitely incomplete in the 'knowing' and positioning of knowledges which are not fixed or frozen but situated, colonised, assembled, and entangled [100]. These ideas

[97] For examples of how this is discussed in Indigenous Methodology and scholarship see for example Wilson, S. (2008). Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods. Halifax & Winnipeg, Fernwood Publishing. Chapter on Relational Accountability.
[98] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xto5mqxfDAw accessed 2/3/17
[99] See Gammage, B. (2011). The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia, Allen & Unwin., Pascoe, B. (2014). Dark Emu: Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident? Magabala Books., Kngwarreye, E. K., 1910-1996, (artist.) (2008). Utopia: the genius of Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Canberra National Museum of Australia Press.
[100] Haraway, D. (1988). "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." Feminist Studies **14**(3 (Autumn)): 575-599.

have been written about by many cultural and post-structuralist theorists[101], but despite this, universities continue to struggle to ethically conceptualise and create space for knowledges that cannot be known or knowledges that cannot be individually owned. The inability to embrace collectively owned, situated and inherited Indigenous knowledges, outside of economic relationships of monetary value and hierarchical intellectual exchange remains a challenge for Eurocentric universities, particularly in relation to research[102]. For Aboriginal peoples, the problems associated with individual academic benefit over shared, inherited, situated knowledges can be profound, whilst collective *authorship* without individualised percentage quantification of effort/ benefit/ prestige becomes a magnified structural issue within university contexts. This often leads to the reiteration of colonial representational power relationships of non-Indigenous scholars becoming *authors* of collectively owned Indigenous knowledges, enabling said non- Indigenous scholars to build careers within the academy. The academy is not currently equipped to deal with the possibilities of Indigenous collectivity/ intra-disciplinarity/ inter-relationality.

Critical-Creative-Sovereignty: Race- It's So Hip to Be Black

Aboriginal peoples are often accused of entering via the side door of the academy, we are here as the social contingency, we make up the numbers of *Indigenous* enrolled and employed. Cynical-right commentators would argue that we are not real[103], not authentic, not actually here because we deserve to be, we are here

[101] see for example Donna Haraway and the 'god-trick' of objectivity in sciences, ibid: 589

[102] see for example: Kuokkanen, R. (2008). "What is Hospitality in the Academy? Epistemic Ignorance and the (Im)Possible Gift." Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies **30**(1): 60-82.

[103] http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/1109_heraldsun09.pdf

because the-liberal-minded-white-people-let-us-in. It is in response to these attacks on Aboriginal identity that Faye Rosas Blanch wrote the poem *Its so Hip to Be Black*[104]*;*

Faye Rosas Blanch, *It's So Hip To Be Blak,* (2014), written and performed by Faye Rosas Blanch, video by Ali Gumillya Baker. In, Bound and Unbound: Sovereign Acts, decolonising methodologies of the lived and spoken. Act I. Fontanelle Gallery, Bowden. Tarndanyangga.

It so Hip to be Black, it's so hip to be black, it is so hip to be black

Apparently that's a fact, white is the new black

Intimidation, confrontation, condemnation, humiliation,

Politeness of whiteness let me give you a witness

To a policy of segregation denial of the human nation

Racialization and categorization to put this in context

Get this, blood quantum to define a peoples, a RACE: it's a Fuckin disgrace

Full-blood, half-caste, quarter-caste, Fairer,

[104] See for example, Heiss, A. (2012). Am I Black Enough For You? Australia, Penguin

And darker skin, the mixed breed. Please stand up the “true aborigine”
The inception, the Act and process of public discourse deceptive
Unfettered semantics of how the right to free speech where anything goes
Incite hatred, instead an offence makes no sense, incensed with the
Shame of naming strands of blood definitions where exemption
From Indigenous belonging, the presumptuous attitude
Played out through generations and generations of dominant “gratitude”?
Privilege through the propaganda of racial reality, its insanity
The obsession, conception and the ploy of the Right to deny
Us our identity, I mean what the hell, sell our soul to justify
So-called freedom of speech, whose freedom and whose speech
Rules a nation divides a peoples, but of course, only the powerful
Can provoke racial discrimination to have voice of popular
Debate it’s a sham, a travesty, a farce, a parody, a joke whiter, blacker
Heck what next, wait a minute, true fact is that the question was challenged
And dusted busted gutsy, stand up those who know that they are simply
Hip because they are BLACK.[105]

For Bound /Unbound Act I, Faye Rosas Blanch performed this poem as part of a video installation. This work speaks about how Blanch feels and responds when she reads the continual attacks on Aboriginal people by some commentators in the mainstream media[106]; Blanch speaks of the way she binds and unbinds her hair into little knots. This poetic work performs this physical/ emotional frustration of the

[105] Faye Rosas Blanch, (writer, performer), Sovereign Acts I.
[106] see for example the commentary of Andrew Bolt, Keith Windshuttle, Eddie MacGuire in recent public discourse.

continual hijacking of our stories and representations by the media. *It's So Hip To Be Black*, was made into a video installation and projected onto the back wall of the Fontanelle Gallery as a part of Bound/ Unbound Sovereign Acts I. In the *It's So Hip To Be Black* video Faye's hair is bound and unbound in tight little sections of red cotton. She speaks about the complexity of our bound/unbound articulations. Of how these ideas get stuck in our hair, in our heads, and how our responses to hateful racist representations are sometimes angry, or sad, or ranting, stilted and sometimes flowing, tight and unforgiving, restless and maddening. The video produced about Faye is at times awkward and out of sync, it sometimes appears as if Faye is unable to control her voice, that time is out of sync with her, but then she comes back, there is a laughter; a mad sad laughter, laughter that turns into a rising sob. When Maya Angelou perform the poems 'The Mask' and 'Poem for Old Black Men' in her performance 'We Wear the Mask' she speaks to the heart of our 'survival apparatus';

> We wear the mask that grins and lies, it shades our cheeks and hides our eyes
> this debt we pay to human guile, with torn and bleeding hearts we smile, and mouth with myriad subtleties
> Why should the world be over-wise in counting all our tears and sighs, nay let them only see us while we wear the mask. We smile but oh my god our tears to thee from tortured souls arise. And we sing. We sing. But oh the clay is vile beneath our feet and long the mile. But let the world think otherwise, we wear the mask.
> When I think about myself I almost laugh myself to death. My life has been one great big joke, a dance was walked, a song was spoke. I laugh so hard I

almost choked when I think about myself. Seventy years in these folks world, the child I works for calls me girl, I say hahaha yes ma'am for workin' sake I'm too proud to bend and too poor to break so hahaha I laugh until my stomach aches, when I think about myself. My folks can make me split my side, I laugh so hard I nearly died, the tales they tell sound just like lyin, they grow the fruit but eat the rind hahaha I laugh until I start to cryin, when I think about myself and my faults and the little children.

My fathers sit on benches, their flesh count every plank, the slats leave dents of darkness deep in their withered flank and they nod like broken candles all waxed and burnt profound, they say but sugar it was our submission that made your world go round. There in those pleated faces I see the auction block, the chains and slavery's coffles, the whip and lash and stock. My fathers speak in voices that shred my fact and sound, they say but sugar it was our submission and that made your world go round. They laugh to shield their crying, they shuffled through their dreams they step and fetch to country and wrote the blues in screams. I understand their meaning it could and did deride from living on the ledge of death, they kept my race alive. By wearing the mask.[107]

Angelou's performance of these poems, in so many ways goes to the heart of some of the shared intergenerational understandings of many Aboriginal peoples. These understandings about our collective oppression by the colonial state, the invasion, segregation, imprisonment, missionisation, assimilation and how our capacity to survive these oppressive and genocidal acts has shaped our bodies; our

[107] Angelou, M. We wear the Mask. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HLol9InMlc.

understandings; our submissions; our refusals, our pride, our fight, our survival; and how these oppressions are reflected in our countries.

It is because of the racialised ideologies of intellectual exchange spoken about in Faye's poem *Its So Hip To Be Black* that our approach, by four Aboriginal women academics, to the commodification and marketing of Indigenous knowledges and teaching, is cautious. We read Indigenous and non-Indigenous philosophical arguments and media-spin, we make our own analysis, we worry for our people, we worry for all people, we worry for the trees, for the animals, for the sky, the planet, for those who are yet to come, for the memories of those who have passed. We hold open physical and theoretical spaces for our communities to intercept and intervene and assert our knowledges on our countries. We found shelter within the university, though as asserted by Moten and Harney it is a tenuous relationship:

> But for the subversive intellectual, all of this goes on upstairs, in polite company, among the rational men. After all, the subversive intellectual came under false pretenses, with bad documents, out of love. Her labor is as necessary as it is unwelcome. The university needs what she bears but cannot bear what she brings. And on top of all that, she disappears. She disappears into the underground, the downlow lowdown maroon community of the university, into the undercommons of enlightenment, where the work gets done, where the work gets subverted, where the revolution is still black, still strong.[108]

[108] Harney, S. and F. Moten (2013). The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study. Brooklyn NY, Minor Compositions. p 33.

When considering these ideas of the down-low, lowdown and under-commons the Bound/ Unbound work is about bringing these ideas forward again and again, pushing out of the *administered* space, shedding light, making visible, speaking and singing out and about our collective subversion talents, [109] (re)offering our Nunga research tools, we (re)offer these tools to each other, to our children and communities and to the memories of our ancestors.

Interrogating the Colonial Archive: Looking out from Inside the Collection.

> It has also been important to apply principles of being sovereign. It's one thing to talk about being self-determining; it's an entirely different thing to act as if you are, to begin to take action, to behave as if you are self-determining. And I think that is where you get into this kind of difference around rhetoric and substance. You can talk as if you are self-determining but act in ways that you are not.[110]

Within Bound/ Unbound Act I it was agreed that we would develop some work that was an enactment of sovereign being, in that it was beyond an *auto-ethnographic* analysis and depiction of ourselves as *Aboriginal*, beyond responding to ideas of *anthropological identity studies*. We wanted to (re)turn the gaze onto the white watcher, research the researcher. As Natalie pasted on the wall of the Fontanelle Gallery during the opening performance of *Bound/Unbound Act I*;

[109] see Natalie Harkin, Whitewash-Brainwash (excerpt), 'smoke-and-mirror subversion talents'
[110] Smith, L. T. (2013). Live Up to Our Talk. He Manawa Whenua Conference. University of Waikato.

ARCHIVE KEEPERS OF THE STATE WE HAVE YOU UNDER SURVEILLANCE[111]

This work was also more than returning the gaze; we did not care who was looking at us, we were celebrating our collective seeing and being. Ulalka said she did not want to become an 'object of herself, responding to representations of the discarded and hated *abject* as the heart of colonial madness, the sub-human abject that the coloniser no longer wishes to be responsible for creating, and in turn the way this colonial madness is the beating heart of modernity. This work was about loving ourselves and each other. Our collective provided the opportunity to purge some of the hate, directed at our bodies and our communities, this project hoped to articulate critical – creative –loving responses to image making, to confront the representation of racialised symbols, and to highlight and complexify the polarisation of Nunga/ Murri/ Anangu identities. The project provided opportunities to (re)create space for emotional complexity, for loving-resistance. We deliberately did not want to imagine our audiences, their race-education or race-literacy or how they might interpret the work. We wanted to speak to our multiple communities and share complex and exciting ideas. We wanted to perform/ speak about our collective responses without didactic explanation or the continued interrogation by whiteness. As articulated by Jodi A. Byrd:

> There is a fine line, then, between deconstructing a process of signification and reinscribing the discourses that continue to justify the codification of knowledge production that orders the native as colonized.[112]

[111] Harkin N. (2014) ATTENTION, paper paste-up, dimensions variable.
[112] Byrd, J. (2013). The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism, University of Minnesota. p51

I had spent a long time imagining tall- ship fleets and the ideas of 'lucky' and 'unlucky' country, and white colonials washing up on the shore, observing many colonial paintings and stories that depicted tall-ship wrecks.[113] My interest in the representation of these historical events changed over the years because of a continuing proliferation of video and images of new kinds of boat people; dispossessed peoples without lands, on little leaky boats, people washing up on the rocks on Islands, fleeing from endless wars and people drowning in the seas and being turned away from countries, being locked up and excluded on islands, people being beheaded and tortured. Cruel conservative governmentality and fear generation with leadership that fails to protect the most vulnerable[114]. I spoke to Faye of my concerns about this, and we included these considerations of the cycle of violence into our opening performance. I discussed with Faye that I did not want to continue to even imagine alternative visual narratives of violent colonial histories that were in some ways perpetuating scenes of violence. Faye spoke to me of the book on bio-politics she was reading and the idea of white territorial sovereignty as the right to go to war; to invade, to kill, to possess[115]. Our consideration of the decolonising opposite to representations of violent white sovereignty and our response to colonial invasion is not about a simple reversal/ reflection; our sovereignty is not the opposite to this. While our *mimicry* of these acts as described by Bhabha may raise awareness and insight into the familiarity and reiteration and normalisation of the colonial violence into the present, it does not heal us who are

[113] Behrendt, L. (2016). Finding Eliza: power and colonial storytelling, St Lucia, Queensland : University of Queensland Press.
[114] Behrendt, L. (2009). Shaping a nation: Visionary leadership in a time of fear and uncertainty. Ninth JCPML Anniversary Lecture,. Curtin University, Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology, Sydney.
[115] Campbell, T. and A. Sitze, Eds. (2013). Biopolitics: A Reader North Carolina, Duke University Press. See chapter by Foucault on the ideas of sovereignty as the rights to kill and go to war.

inter-generationally wounded[116]. This work is not about a symbolic visual backlash of anger -response. The defraction as described by Barad speaks to these complexities of light in dark spaces. While we need to understand and stand opposed to oppressive acts of colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism and violence, we cannot live within and endlessly perpetuate this violence of representation, we cannot dwell inside these abject theoretical prisons in order to educate our oppressors. But sometimes we do. But we also seek what is outside and beyond, and we respond to the call of our ancestors, we are compelled to respond[117]:

> The silence is waiting. The silence is *waiting*.[118]

Judith Butler and Gayatri Spivak in, *Who Sings the Nation State,* articulate the following:

> If the state is what "binds," it is also clearly what can and does unbind. And if the state binds in the name of the nation, conjuring a certain version of the nation forcibly, if not powerfully, then it also unbinds, releases, expels, banishes. If it does the latter, it is not always through emancipatory means, i.e. through "letting go" or "setting free"; it expels precisely through an exercise of power that depends upon barriers and prisons and, so, in the mode of certain containment. We are not outside of politics when we are dispossessed in such ways. Rather, we are deposited in a dense situation of

[116] Bhabha, H. K. (1994). Of mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse. The Location of Culture. London, Routledge**:** 85-92.

[117]

[118]Blanch, F. R. and G. Worby (2010). "The silences waiting: Young Nunga males, curriculum and rap." The Journal of the Australian Curriculum Studies Association **30**(1): 1-13. Also see video performance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZi6avlAziE

> military power in which juridical functions become the prerogative of the military. This is not bare life, but a particular formation of power and coercion that is designed to produce and maintain the condition, the state, of the dispossessed. What does it mean to be at once contained and dispossessed by the state?[119]

If it is the representations of the colonial state that ultimately 'contain and dispossess' us as Indigenous peoples, it is through Indigenous refusal to agree or engage with the unsettled narrative of colonial settlement, as argued by Simpson and Byrd, that makes Indigenous sovereignty, 'unconquered and unconquerable', and that Indigenous demonstrations of sovereignty are found in, 'diplomacy and disagreement, through relation, kinship, and intimacy. And in an act of interpretation'.[120]

Our knowledge of and relationship to ourselves and each other through our shared embodied knowledge of these hateful representations, these colonial racist texts. These texts form a colonising narrative in our minds as they continue their trajectory as shared presences in our lives, the complex ways in which stereotyped ideas are in turn collectively re-shaped, reflected, loved and re cast, and resisted, constituting spaces that move around and through us.[121] Our ideas, our laughter, our tears, when shared lighten the weight of this knowing of the colonisers hatred and help each other imagine critical-creative landscapes based on relational sovereignty or love.[122]

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[119] Butler, J. and G. C. Spivak (2007). Who Sings The Nation State? Language, Politics, Belonging. Calcutta, Seagull Books: 4

[120] Byrd, J. (2013). The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism, University of Minnesota: xvi-xvii

[121] for example see Bryd's discussion of native motion as an active presence, ibid: xvi

[122] Wilson, S. (2008). Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods. Halifax & Winnipeg, Fernwood Publishing: 80.

This is our collective archive fever.

In her beautiful 1989 novel *The Temple of My Familiar*, Alice Walker describes a woman who was living her life within the walls of the British Museum[123]. She was the "last of her people" and had been captured and placed as a solitary living display in a recreated village reconstructed from the one where she once lived on her mother's country. Her world in the text was reduced to a small stage within the walls of the colonial institution. This character represents a global experience of capture within museums that continues to be true for Indigenous people, the living descendants of those who came before this time, in a place where we remain cast in the gaze of oppressive abjection[124].

Bound/ Unbound collective responds to, and seeks an alternative from, the ongoing intergenerational impact of these violent-colonial-research practices and representations perpetrated upon Indigenous peoples locally and globally[125]. We respond to the continued institutionalisation of our thoughts within the museum /university/ institution through embodied-creative-research-practice. This work is our way of changing/ stopping/ diverting/ dropping/ turning and re-casting the spinning reiteration and assemblage of unacceptable ideas. On the opening night of *Bound and Unbound Act 1* at Fontanelle, Faye and I started the performance cycle. During my performance, I say:

[123] Walker, A. (1989). The Temple of My Familiar. London, The Women's Press: 251.
[124] Butler, J. (1997). The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection. Stanford, Stanford University Press: 136.
[125] series of performances, theorisations and events in 2014, 2015, 2016.

> When my great grandmother died in the Royal Adelaide hospital in 1951 the anthropologists rushed in to cast her body. They took her hair. They took her blood. They cast her face. The museum still holds these objects. They used these violent acts of taking our bodies as a way of documenting our apparent biological inferiority. They hold evidence of this research violence in their one-way archive. Things go in and never come out.[126]

Invasive, unethical, greedy, research practices are still used by *Institutions of Culture* and are methodologically and ideological positioned within these spaces as *the* scientific basis of true measurement and worth[127]. They construct methodologies of economy and progress. As already discussed and despite the rhetoric of mutual benefit, much of the economic exchange regarding the administration of Indigenous intellectual and cultural knowledges occurs outside of our community spaces and Indigenous peoples do not often benefit from these exchanges; rather, the money is passed from one administrator to the next to implement project outcomes[128]. As articulated by Moreton-Robinson:

> We are overrepresented as always lacking, dysfunctional, alcoholic, violent, needy, and lazy, whether we are living in Illinois, Auckland, Honolulu, Toronto, or Brisbane. For Indigenous people, white possession is not unmarked, un-named, or invisible; it is hypervisible.[129]

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[126] performance Bound/Unbound Sovereign Acts, August 2014, Ali Gumillya Baker, Faye Rosas Blanch
[127] such as the South Australian Museum, South Australian State Records.
[128] There are exceptions to these kinds of cycles of experts to representations that are also beginning to occur for example policy progress in relation to the National Museum of the American Indian: http://www.nmai.si.edu/explore/collections/repatriation/
[129] Moreton-Robinson, A.(2015). The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press: xiii.

There is continual struggle with what has been imposed and overlayed upon our grandmothers and children's country and bodies; we are required to untangle and extract ourselves from the ideas that suffocate. We are seen as strangers here and our sense of deep sadness at the surrounding horizon of collective ignorance/ amnesia/ insensitivity is overwhelming. Where is love to be found, in the fragmented rubble of modernity?[130].

Racialised positionings of cultural worth are used by and for imperial and neo-colonial structures of administrative control in the continued invasion of our great-grand-mothers bodies, spirits and counties. We are depicted as having 'once roamed' over vast tracts of land having no attachment, no 'civilised' development, no humanity.[131] As Audra Simpson states:

> Like "race" in other contexts, "culture" was (and still is in some quarters) the conceptual and necessarily essentialized space standing in for complicated bodily and exchange-based relationships that enabled and marked colonial situations in Empire: warfare, commerce, sex, trade, missionization. Culture described the difference that was found in these places and marked the ontological endgame of each exchange: a difference that had been contained into a neat, ethnically defined territorial space that now needed to be made sense of, ordered, ranked, governed and possessed.[132]

[130] See Watson, I. (2002). "Buried Alive." Law and Critique **13**: 253. where she describes being buried in modernity.
[131] see for example my local council website which describes the Kaurna as; 'They apparently roamed freely over their territory with their movements governed by the seasons and the availability of food supplies' http://www.westtorrens.sa.gov.au/Council/Local_history/Kaurna_heritage. I put in a formal complaint about this site and it has subsequently been removed.
[132] Simpson, A. (2014). Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States. Durham and London, Duke University Press.

State- institutional-archives are the primary source repository of 'histories of capital' and 'histories of white settler colonies' as defined, ordered, narrated and controlled by the colonisers[133]. Archival histories and collections are also predicated upon colonising ideas about biological variability and inferiority, concepts which require particular interrogation and focus within this Bound/ Unbound work as they relate to our grandmothers bodies, and all our racialised bodies. As Faye Rosas Blanch articulates in her performance of Act I:

> They are not absent I am their text [134]

> Love your skin, love your neck that has held chains, unshackle yourselves, don't let your neck be their tool for death, straighten up your neck, face them.[135]

While these archives cast a dominating white shadow they also trace another history. This invisible history can be seen through the *almost* breathtakingly complete absence of our voices within these spaces and texts. There are glimmers and whispers and we can read through their lies. This is a history that we can collectively give life to; our Nunga histories of creative-resistance, our histories of collective love transforming abjection, our histories that are deeply engaged in survival. We cast our

[133] Haraway, D. (2000). How like a leaf: an interview with Thyrza Nichols Goodeve/ Donna J. Haraway. New York, Routledge: 12.
[134] Worby, G., et al. "Writing Forward, Writing Back, Writing Black- Working Process and Work-in-Progress." JASAL: Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature **14**(3).
[135] Faye Rosas Blanch, Bound/Unbound act 1 opening performance 2014, Fontanelle

own shadows. We shed our own light, it can be found shining in the midst of oppressive times.

Our agency as Aboriginal peoples is rarely understood and respected by the broader non-Indigenous Australian community as living and continuing layered cultural narratives. We are often requested to perform versions of our identity that fit within what the coloniser think they already know about us. As Natalie Harkin expresses in her poetic re-mapping, a poem that formed part of the Act I exhibition at Fontanelle, hanging in a long scroll from floor to ceiling:

> *She's not your hybrid-'between-world'-wonder nor your noble-wretched-girl or your savage Australian nigger waiting to die, she was never 'destitute' from Mother-love and she won't let you see her cry - you will never know her fully. Tilt her chin up-slightly to the right and shoot her body once again down the barrel of your camera drag her image through your lens – you will never know her fully. Make her draw fish on a chalk-board test her reading and her sums and teach her time with the clanging-mission-bell, and you think she's making progress clawing back from native-hell – but you will never know her fully. Teach her to scrub and mop and sew remove her three times from her lands document her features and bleed-her till she bends and then examine her brown-body through your microscopic lens - but you will never know her fully. You can frame her you can name her through your science stake your claim but you will never stop her thinking for her mind you cannot tame, her sacred*

truth her choices we'll recover I'll reclaim - no you will never know her fully, never know us - never know, you will never know her fully never know. [136]

It is in stories told to us by our grandmothers that we find our continuity[137]. It's by tearing through and between the lines of the colonial archive that we read our histories[138].

When we ask ourselves what it means to be free? (its not to live like goonyas[139]), (not to have 'arrogant perception'), (not to feel like we could own everything, know everything and travel everywhere). [140]

And I never wanted to be like you
I never wanted to do as you do[141]

Collecting Bodies Projecting Knowledges.

In her chapter, *The Visibility of Difference: Nineteenth Century French Anthropological Collections*, Nelia Dias marks the cultural exemption from moral and ethical responsibility granted to race-science 'research' in the 1800s, on the basis of scientific 'neutrality';

[136] Natalie Harkin (2014), The Poetics of (Re)Mapping Archives: Memory in the Blood, in *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, Vol 14, No 3
[137] Bound and Unbound Sovereign Acts I - see floorsheet where there is a discussion of grandmother stories.
[138] Acknowledgement of Natalie Harkin's work on the colonial archive.
[139] White people in Kaurna language. Pintyandi, K. W. (1995). Warra Kaurna. Warra Kaurna: A Resource for Kaurna Language Programs. R. Amery. Adelaide, Kaurna Warra Pintyandi.
[140] see for example; Lugones, M. (1990). "Doing Theory: Playfulness, "World" - Travelling, and Loving Perception. Making Face, Making Soul, Haciendo Caras G. Anzaldua. San Francisco Aunt Lute Foundation Books: 391.
[141] Lily Sansbury, Carol Karpany, *For I Aborigine*, excerpt of lyric, performed by Simone Tur, closing performance Fontanelle 2014.

> There was a rapid institutionalisation of the 'science' of difference […] The laboratory was thus transformed into a veritable ante-chamber of the museum. It was the space in which scientifically authenticated artefacts, and in effect, 'facts' were produced. [142]

> Facts, obtained through systematic study, were interpretation free 'reflections of nature'[143]

Museums had key roles to play in the generation, display and promotion of scientific 'progress' and the 'evolution' of the ideas around racial superiority/inferiority as well as colonial endeavours of categorising, civilizing and hierarchizing[144]. The witnessing and understanding and endowment of knowledge production inside museums institutions is articulated by Michel Foucault in *Archaeology of Knowledge* and also by Dias[145]:

> Displayed artefacts were thus subject to witnessing, and this endowed them with 'truth' and the capacity to serve as instruments of knowledge.[146]

It is useful to engage with the work of Cressida Fforde whose ongoing research into repatriation of Aboriginal peoples' human remains describes the horrific situation that Aboriginal people faced during the period from invasion right through to the 1950's:

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[142] Dias, N. (1998). The Visibility of Difference: Nineteenth-century French anthropological collections. The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture. S. Macdonald. London, Routledge**:** 36-39.
[143] Ibid: 40.
[144] see for example: Hale, H. M. (1956). "The First Hundred Years of the Museum - 1856-1956." Records of the South Australian Museum **12**.
[145]Foucault, M. (1972). The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language. New York, Pantheon Books.
[146] Dias, N. (1998). The Visibility of Difference: Nineteenth-century French anthropological collections. The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture. S. Macdonald. London, Routledge**:** 41.

> Indigenous human remains were widely procured during the colonial era for scientific research conducted within the race paradigm. Research was undertaken by phrenologists comparative anatomists and, later, physical anthropologists, by those advocating monogenism, polygenism and Darwinian evolutionary theory. Fundamental to the analysis of human remains was the assumption that race could be distinguished and identified through quantitative measurement of skeletal (and, later, soft tissue) material. Until the mid- twentieth century, each approach always assumed a fundamental connection between biology and culture, and this adherence to the concept of biological determinism helped to attach what was perceived as human 'worth' to physical characteristics.[147]

Faye and I have spoken about the intimacy of such ideas, the intimacy over our bodies and the value judgement and perceived intelligence of our children, intimate expressions of colonial control and perceived *knowing*. The colonising assertion of our *missing link status, the lowest order of man*. The reiteration of this in contemporary popular culture; amazing and talented Nunga footballers having banana's thrown at them, being booed and called apes.[148]

Is this what Tindale thought about my beautiful Nana's body when he was procuring a cast of her face, neck and shoulders on her death bed in the Royal Adelaide

[147] Fforde, C. (2002). Collection, repatriation and identity. The Dead and Their Possessions: Repatriation in principle, policy and practice. C. Fforde, J. Hubert and P. Turnbull. New York and London, Routledge: 25

[148] see for example: http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/sport/afl/teams/adelaide/eddie-betts-bananathrowing-fan-speak-out-about-racial-abuse-at-showdown-41/news-story/49b818a588e8aceb0630f82e115a3c83
or the impact on Adam Goodes of being called an Ape and booed by fans until he retired from football.

Hospital? I am advised that he would not have hated her body[149], but he was uncomfortably obsessed with scientific collection, procurement and curation, with the idea of the *becoming extinct fullbloods*:

> Because Australian Aborigines were frequently perceived as the 'lowest' order of mankind, their remains were highly and much sought after within scientific circles. By the late nineteenth century the human remains of Aboriginal people were housed in most, if not all, of the major collecting institutions throughout Europe, as well as numerous local museums and university departments.[150]

As indicated by Fforde's research on this, my grandmother's face and head was understood by science as an anatomical peculiarity when Tindale cast her. She was considered *one of the last of the Mirning full-blood,* as described by Davis cited in Fforde:

> The skull is an excellent exemplification of Australian peculiarities, and most decidedly opposes the depreciators of craniological science. The superficial portions of the brain are very imperfectly developed in the race, and this gives rise to all their marked properties. Hence they have been rendered, by nature, utterly devoid of the power to receive that which is designated 'civilisation' by Europeans, i.e. an extraneous and heterogeneous cultivation, for which they have no taste or fitness, but which has to be thrust upon them by the high hand of presumed philanthropy, and under the influences of which their own

[149] My supervisor Steve Hemming worked with Tindale at the SA Museum and visited him in home in the USA when he was in his 80s.
[150] Fforde, C. (2002). Collection, repatriation and identity. The Dead and Their Possessions: Repatriation in principle, policy and practice. C. Fforde, J. Hubert and P. Turnbull. New York and London, Routledge: 26.

> proper endowments are constantly injured, and they themselves are inevitably destroyed.[151]

In his article, '*Re-claiming TRU-GER-NAN-NER: De-colonising the Symbol'*, Ian Anderson has also written about the fate of Truganini, whose body was placed on display after her death, despite her wishes for a respectful burial. Her bones were never safe.[152]

Fforde highlights that the collection and trade of our old people's, 'human remains' was facilitated by colonialism and has had an ongoing oppressive impact on Aboriginal peoples; but also, importantly, this ideology of 'race-science' contributes to 'ideological formations' that have and continue to shape broader scientific and (neo)colonial ideas about Aboriginal people. These are unsettling and unsettled acts of ideological violence.[153] Fforde asserts:

> As has been observed with reference to ethnographic objects, the collecting and scientific use of Aboriginal remains did not take place by 'historical accident' [...] Instead, this practice was embedded within the large-scale historical processes, namely imperialism and colonial domination.[154]

So while these scientific acts of 'research' were engaged in racializing, categorizing, hierarchizing and oppressing Indigenous peoples, simultaneously they also

[151] ibid: 30
[152] Anderson, I. (1995). Re-claiming TRU-GER-NAN-NER: De-colonising the Symbol. Speaking Positions: Aboriginality, Gender and Ethnicity in Australian Cultural Studies. P. V. Toorn and D. English. Melbourne, Department of Humanities, Victoria University of Technology.
[153] Fforde, C. (2002). Collection, repatriation and identity. The Dead and Their Possessions: Repatriation in principle, policy and practice. C. Fforde, J. Hubert and P. Turnbull. New York and London, Routledge: 29
[154] ibid: 28-29

contribute to an equally oppressive narrative of *dehistoricizing*. We as Aboriginal people were and are being stripped bare by a process of globalized universality and modernity. As Homi Bhabha puts it:

> The dehistoricized authority of man and his doubles produces, in the same historical period, those forces of naturalization that create a modern Western disciplinary society. The invisible power that is invested in the dehistoricized figure of Man is gained at the cost of those "others"- women, natives, the colonized, the indentured and enslaved-who, at the same time but in other spaces, were becoming "the peoples without a history."[155]

Our specific histories, our languages and our knowledges were *almost* rendered invisible, wiped out, silenced, punished or forced underground, and the *dehistoricized* native was represented by the coloniser as the primitive-hunter-gatherer, skull and bone peculiarity, dis (re) membered body, the assimilated half-castes, the servants. We were seen as 'lacking history', of only having 'myths'. Our abjection continues. Bhabha critiques Foucault and the discourse on colonialism:

> Foucault is able to see how knowledge and power come together in the enunciative "present" of transference: the "calm violence", as he calls it, of a relationship that constitutes the discourse. By disavowing "the colonial moment" as an *enunciative present* in the historical and epistemological condition of Western modernity, Foucault can say little about the transferential relation

[155] Bhabha, H. K. (2001). In a Spirit of Calm Violence. After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements. G. Prakash. Princeton, Princeton University Press: 328.

between the West and *its* colonial history.[156]

Bhabha speaks of the 'sly civility' of the colonial outposts, of which Adelaide was one of many[157]. Adelaide served as one of the centres in the trade and export of Aboriginal old peoples remains.

Bhabha analyses the writings of colonialism's handmaidens: the anthropologists, the missionaries, the mounted police. He writes:

> It is the 'rationalism' of these ideologies of progress that increasingly come to be eroded in the encounter with the 'contingency' of cultural difference. Elsewhere I have explored this historical process, perfectly caught in the picturesque words of a desperate missionary as the colonial predicament of "sly civility". The result of this colonial encounter, its antagonisms and ambivalence, has a major effect on what Foucault beautifully describes as the "slenderness of the narrative" of history in that era most renown for its historicizing (and colonising) of the world and the word.[158]

The question of how these institutional structures containing collections of personal and public documents directly shape and affect the emotional and physical landscapes of our lives continues to be of vital importance. Finding our way out of this physical-ideological enclosure and seeking ways that may continue the shedding of the hate that can engulf our lives is part of our search for well-being[159].

[156] Ibid: 327.
[157] ibid: 326-327.
[158] ibid: 326-327.
[159] Stoler, A. L. (2016). Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 7

Modernity is always about separating, individualising, compartmentalising and disciplining, as Barad speaks about in her analysis of the connections between quantum physics and cultural studies.[160] Similarly, Moten and Harney also query the urgency and production of modernity:

> Where did logistics get this ambition to connect bodies, objects, affects, information, without subjects, without the formality of subjects, as if it could reign sovereign over the informal, the concrete and generative indeterminacy of material life?
>
> Modernity is sutured by this hold. This movement of things, unformed objects, deformed subjects, nothing yet and already. This movement of nothing is not just the origin of modern logistics, but the annunciation of modernity itself, and not just the annunciation of modernity
> itself but the insurgent prophesy that all of modernity will have at its heart, in its own hold, this movement of things, this interdicted, outlawed social life of nothing. [161]

Whilst the nineteenth century preoccupation/ obsession with the collection of 'things' as well as 'scientific' ideas of hierarchical 'race' and racial difference in relation to intelligence and 'civilisation' on the basis of culture or skin colour/ blood quantum have been recently scientifically disproven as *bad science*, we are still left with the

[160] see Barad, K. (2007). Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning. Durham, Duke university Press.
[161] Harney, S. and F. Moten (2013). The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study. Brooklyn NY, Minor Compositions: 92.

nineteenth century language used to describe our racialised identities[162]. These linguistic power formations of categorisation and control remake themselves again and again through ideologies of fear and hatred. Once the ideas have been cast so decisively into the world of visual, visceral, hurtful descriptions no amount of alternative corrective human-science will stop their hateful ripples. Robert Young highlights this in his book *Colonial Desire*:

> As racial theories show their unrelenting attempt to assert the inalienable differences between races, this extraordinary vision of an unbounded 'delicious fecundity', in Virginia Woolf's phrase, only took on significance through its voyeuristic tableau of frenzied, interminable copulation, of couplings, fusing, coalescence, *between races*. At its core, such racial theory projected a phantasmagoria of the desiring machine as a people factory: a Malthusian fantasy of uncontrollable, frenetic fornication producing the countless motley varieties of interbreeding, with the miscegenated offspring themselves then generating an ever increasing *melange,* 'mongrelity', of self-propagating endlessly diversifying hybrid progeny: half-blood, half-caste, half-breed, cross-breed, amalgamate, intermix, miscegenate; alvino, cabre, cafuso, castizo, cholo, chino, cob, creole, dustee, fustee, griffe, mamaluco, marabout, mestee, mestindo, mestizo, mestize, metifo, misterado, mongrel, morisco, mule, mulat, mulatto, mulatta, mulattress, mustafina, mustee, mustezoes, ochavon, octavon, octoroon, puchuelo, quadroon, quarteron, quatralvi, quinteron, saltatro, terceron, zambaigo, zambo, zambo prieto... Nineteenth -century theories of race did not just consist of essentializing

[162] Young, R. C. (1995). Colonial Desire, Hybridity in Theory Culture and Race. London, Routledge: 181.

differentiations between self and other: they were also about a fascination with people having sex- interminable, adulterating, aleatory, illicit, inter-racial sex.[163]

Emotional responses to the Records

inthedesertisawacreature
nakedbestialwho
squattingupontheground
heldhisheartinhishands
andateofit
isaidisitgoodfriend
itisbitterbitterheanswered
butilikeitbecauseitisbitter
andbecauseitismyheart[164]

How might we transform these knowledges in ways that are yet unknown?

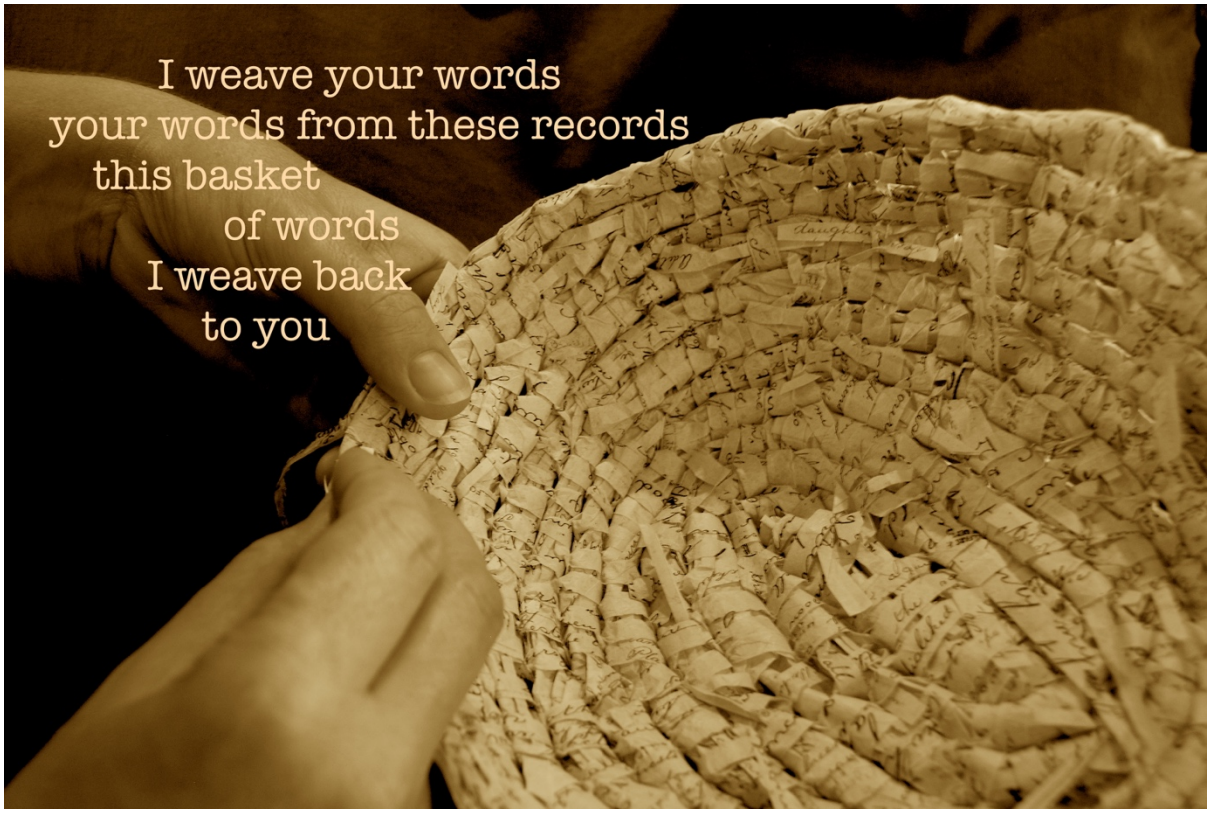
Despite the strength and dominance of this narrative, colonialism cannot find the closure it so violently fought for. These colonial collections and records refuse closure, they retrospectively *fail* to provide proof, or justification for the evil that swept across the lands of my great-grandmother. Robert Young reminds us:

[163] Ibid: 181.
[164] Ah Kee, V. (2009). Born In This Skin. Brisbane, Institute of Modern Art: 48-49.

> Then, suddenly, at the point of closure, a curious indeterminacy grips the chain of the discourse. This becomes the space for a new discursive temporality, another place of enunciation that will not allow the argument to expand, to include and surmount what is said in opposition to it. We would call this the catachrestic moment in all critical elaboration; or the incommensurable time/ space contingency in all forms of closure.[165]

For us, the women of the Unbound collective, these records mark the beginnings of the moments of violence that continue to be endured by our families. They mark the time when the chaos descended across our countries[166]. There was a time before this time, before the paper enclosure. A deeply lawful time. Of long living spoken situated memories and relational sovereignty. Of law that drew breath[167]. We have not forgotten this.

[165] Young, R. C. (1995). Colonial Desire, Hybridity in Theory Culture and Race. London, Routledge: 327.
[166] Baker, J. (2006). Theorising Survival: Indigenous Women and Social and Emotional Wellbeing. Women's Studies. Adelaide, Australia, Flinders University. **Doctor of Philosophy**.
[167] for example, see: Watson, I. (2002). "Buried Alive." Law and Critique **13**: 253-269. See also for example: Kngwarreye, E. K., 1910-1996, (artist.) (2008). Utopia: the genius of Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Canberra National Museum of Australia Press.



For the *Unbound Collective* these colonial records and archives, their containment and the violence that is still generated from these well-kept ideas, is like radioactive waste that should have never been generated in the first place. We continue to refuse to let them use our land-bodies as their waste repository.

When embarking on this theoretical journey into the archive you have to be ready to avert your eyes at the enormous amount of de-humanising data they collected, not just about your family but every Aboriginal family of the State; all were under surveillance. [168]

These documents become embodied, they can make your stomach churn; cause bizarre aches in your body. The physicality of the temporal weight of the *Aborigines*

[168] Natalie Harkin, *Postcard*, *Archive Fever Paradox [2],* side 2, 2014, postcard.

Act in South Australia permeates through subjection and categorisation; through carefully filed and preserved data/ forms/ lists and instruction [169]. These ideas seep into the back of the mind, into moments of (un)consciousness at their enormity; when woken in the night, when trying to sleep and for my mother and grandmother and great grandmother they were a living horror of violence, cruelty and depravation; and looking forward for my children, they too will understand this archival *history* that the state holds about 'itself' and how it continues to represent Nungas both within and outside of that process.

Our personal, individual and collective expressions are predominantly absent from these archives, but there are moments where you can glimpse our hands, our resistance, our love. In these archival spaces we are not perceived as the experts on our identities, we do not own our artefacts, but we can sit with white gloves like proper researchers and observe the paper parchments and trace the scrawling handwritten ink of the 'Protectors' projected hate of our identities being reconstructed in the ways the state chooses to view us.

Within the State Records we can find many papers with our family names and sometimes they completely change our name, or they blacked out our names with thick texta. We are absented, but then also our names are recorded over and over, in lists, our photographs taken, samples of our hair and blood, bones, saliva and skulls are cast, and our movements, and 'behaviours' are monitored and

[169] Each State of Australia had their own similar version of the Aborigines Act see for example Mattingley, C. and K. Hampton, Eds. (1992). Survival in our own land: "Aboriginal" experiences in "South Australia" since 1836 / told by Nungas and others Sydney, Hodder & Stoughton.

described[170]. We were either incarcerated onto missions/ reserves, or 'exempt' from the 'Aborigines' identity and abjected again as not really *real* or white and not black, abjected in our exclusion from any society, on the edge of the cities, and towns[171].

We cleaned their houses while they removed our children.

These accounts are then re-told and re-assembled by (mainly non-Indigenous) historians or anthropologists to provide support for further administrative processes of inclusion and exclusion. Often providing jobs for (mainly non-Indigenous) historians and anthropologists to become experts within legal and administrative frameworks, cycling through the experts to arrive at what Harkin describes as the 'endless paper trail'[172]. This administration of and by (mainly non-Indigenous) experts continues into the present, finding further resurgence in the continuing *possessive* nature of the State's child-protection policies and in the possessive judicial processes of *Native Title*.[173] These methodologies also require us to rethink 'what is this work'? Spivak articulates detailed analysis of these ideas of the *worth* of *work*[174]. As outlined by Moreton-Robinson the work is possessive at its core:

> Tragically and ironically even though we were dispossessed of our lands by white people, the burden of proof for repossession of our lands is now placed

[170] They changed my great grandmothers name when she was married from Kamilya to Camelia.
[171] See the conditional and unconditional exemption from the Aborigines Act documents, which many Aboriginal people including many of my family carried throughout their lives. see Mattingley, C. and K. Hampton, Eds. (1992). Survival in our own land: "Aboriginal" experiences in "South Australia" since 1836 / told by Nungas and others Sydney, Hodder & Stoughton.
[172] Harkin, N. (2014). "The Poetics of (Re)Mapping Archives: Memory in the Blood." Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature **Vol 14**(No 3).
[173]
[174] See for example; Spivak, G. C. (1999). A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press.

> on us, and we must demonstrate proof in accordance with the white legal structure in courts controlled predominantly by white men. As the written word is generally regarded as more reliable by courts, all claimants must be able to substantiate their oral histories with documents written by white people, such as explorers, public servants, historians, lawyers, anthropologists, and police.[175]

Our potential humanness measured and either denied or granted, stamped, copied, filed and kept and sometimes revoked. Our precious family connections and culture and language disregarded, disconnected, displaced, extinguished. They shrug, smile or look blankly at you.

It can be at times astounding how *well,* (neatly, orderly and proudly) they keep the evidence of their own cruel and unethical activity. How well resourced and well documented the meanness and petty governmentality and perceived cultural superiority. How nervous and suspicious the public servants are when you ask to access it; Why do you want to know? What will you do with the information? Who will you tell? Will you make them or their archivist clerk bureaucrat ancestors appear to be psychotic criminals? Will you sue the state?[176]

[175] Moreton-Robinson, A. (2015). The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press: 16.
[176] See for example: Raynes, C. (2009). The Last Protector: The illegal removal of Aboriginal children from their parents in South Australia. Adelaide, Wakefield Press. This book also documents Cameron's access to the State records was revoked because the state did not like what he was uncovering, see also Adelaide Review article; Colquhoun, L. (2009). A Question of Access: Dispute Over Aborigines Department Files. The Adelaide Review. Adelaide**:** 11.

In my hands are the evidences of the dead white ethnographer, cartographer scientist and his lawlessness[177] . The psychotic archivist, the violent archive, Foucault asks about the relationship of the material body to power, but he doesn't talk about 'race':

> Indeed I wonder whether, before one poses the question of ideology, it wouldn't be more materialist to study first the question of the body and the effects of power on it. Because what troubles me with these analyses which prioritize ideology is that there is always presupposed a human subject on the lines of the model provided by classical philosophy, endowed with a consciousness which power then thought to seize on.[178]

We are the objectified bodies of their fascination and fear, there was no presupposedness about this, this relationship of the black body and this colonising power that seizes. Our bodies were seized upon. But we were considered to be without human consciousness. Without memory. The ideas about 'half-castes' 'quarter-castes' etc. written by the 'protectors' such as Daisy Bates that also justified the many formations of the assimilation policies in all states of Australia were justified on the basis of the 'science' of eugenics. Our blood quantified and our bodies compartmentalised. Eugenics informed inter-racial 'breeding' and the coloniser's assumptions about the outcomes of that 'breeding'. This 'civilizing' mission also informs many subsequent assumptions about our shared capacities for

[177] Hale, H. M. (1956). "The First Hundred Years of the Museum - 1856-1956." Records of the South Australian Museum **12.**
[178]Foucault, M. (1980). Body/ Power. Power/ Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977. C. Gordon. New York, Pantheon/ Vintage.

articulating love; for ourselves, for our children, for each other. This is the moment when they attempted to close down of our capacity to reproduce, and inhibit our movements and relationships, our relationality and our life. They cast my great-grandmother in order to freeze me, they condemned the 'real' Aborigine to the museum object, the collection, the dim black and white photo, the shelf[179]. These are the ideas that form the foundation of this *modernity*.

We stand here in the shadow of the racist text. This statement is a quote from the Act I opening performance, when Faye and I stood within the diorama of the constructed-museum-shelter-replica-wurley and behind us our beautiful framed family photos of our parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles and in front our gammon-camp-fire, and I pointed over the tops of the heads of the audience to the other side of the gallery-museum-room, to the teetering-tower, floor to ceiling stack

[179] See: Hemming, S. (2003). "Objects and Specimens: conservative politics and the SA museum's aboriginal cultures gallery." Overland **Winter** (171): 64-69.

of racist texts and announced to the audience: “We are standing here in the shadow of the racist text.’

These textual representations cast enormous shadows in our lives. What have they done with all our trees, these scientists and anthropologists and researchers; all this wasteful hateful writing?

In places, quiet places, like the South Australian State Records or the deep underground bowels of old university libraries where the evidence remains three generations later, these documents lying quietly-screaming waiting to be sought by the descendants of the abject /object/ subjects. I could tap into the colonial madness, drill down and let my anger spew all over the page. It’s impossible to clean up this hateful tangent. To unlearn these things. I wonder how we can infiltrate, re shape, take back these disturbing images/words, and create the wonderful place we would like our children to inhabit. This seems like an impossible project, but it is underway. As Claudia Rankine so beautifully articulates:

> The world is wrong. You can’t put the past behind you. It’s buried in you; its turned your flesh into its own cupboard. Not everything remembered is useful but it all comes from the world to be stored in you. Who did what to whom on which day? Who said that? She said what? What did he just do? Did she really just say that? He said what? What did she just do? Did I hear what I think I heard? Did that just come out of my mouth, his mouth, your mouth? Do you remember when you sighed?[180]

[180] Rankine, C. (2014). Citizen: An American Lyric. Minneapolis, Graywolf Press: 63.

Tindale proudly wrote about his rambling ‘research in the field’ where he and his colleagues, taxidermists, ethnographers, articulators took hundreds of face cast/masks of ‘unspoilt and passive Aborigines’ out in the desert, with his plaster-of-Paris, his diary and his tent. This casting process was later to also be the fate of my great-grand-mother in the Royal Adelaide Hospital in 1951 when she died. Tindale cast her bust. A cast to represent one of the ‘last of the Mirning’ in the great exhibition all of the ‘races of man’, a retrospective of those who are ‘culturally/biologically inferior’ and sure to die anyway, but must be preserved, permanently frozen, in time. Below are the passages I find bound in innocent brown leather in the basement of the Barr Smith library at the University of Adelaide, Herbert Hale fastidiously accounts the *The First Hundred Years of the Museum - 1856-1956* in South Australia:

> Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, of the Smithsonian Institution, when examining the human skulls in the Museum in 1925, had suggested that we should attempt face-casts (or "life-masks") of Australian aborigines, in order that permanent records of the features would be available for future investigators. He advocated making such casts with the eyes open, in order to ensure a life-like expression. This entailed careful handling of liquid plaster, as lachrymal outflow resulting from the slightest irritation might cause it to run into the eyes, an extremely uncomfortable situation for all concerned. Tindale and the writer experimented on several trusting friends, including T.D. Campbell, who had followed Wood Jones as Honorary Curator of Anthropology at the Museum. Emboldened by some success, we then decided to extend operations to aboriginals in the field,

and wonderful subjects these unsophisticated people were.

Our interest was stimulated by the acquisition of a series of life-masks of Eskimo and other races from Dr. V. Suk of Brno, Czechoslovakia. Suk operated in much the same way, covering the face, but only one ear, with plaster in order to avoid locking, which would present complications when the hardened mould was ready for removal. We evolved the idea of including both ears and, before the plaster was fully set, cutting the mould partly through around one ear. This portion was easily broken off (see upper photograph of plate) as the first step in removal of the mould and because of the jagged surface fitted perfectly back into place; the casting was later extended to busts.

Our first essay in the field was made at MacDonald Downs. It was a scene which intrigued the members of our party, as indeed it intrigued all who took part in anthropological field work over the next decade, for the taking of life masks was extended over a considerable period.

Picture a naked aboriginal immobile on an extemporised platform, eyes fixed on a "sugar lolly" or stick of tobacco suspended by a string from the roof of the tent in order to minimise movement of the eyelids. Two plaster-smeared figures bending over the placid brown man- or woman- only the dark eyes showing at last, glistening through the white of the setting plaster. The latter as it warmed disturbed the head-lice which, brindled, black and yellow, ran over the fabric on which the head of the subject rested. one cannot speak too highly of the co-operation of these people and their obvious desire to assist, although knowing

> little or nothing of our language and learning our requests through the lips of a native interpreter. The ordeal in the case of the older men at least was probably not very dreadful when compared to the initiation ceremonies experienced during their youth, although it entailed the preliminary removal of all facial hair, including the luxuriant beards.
>
> Skin colours and eyes (using glass replicas) were matched by Campbell, a routine carried out with all natives dealt with on this and other expeditions; these data ensured accurate colouring of the casts. After experience with un-spoilt and passive aborigines, face and bust casts were made of more sophisticated individuals on mission stations and in the field nearer Adelaide.
>
> In 1932 some of our facial casts were exhibited at a "Man and his Ancestors" Exhibition in Melbourne, the first time they were displayed in Victoria. Others were sent abroad as exchanges, particularly to Dr. Suk, in return for the casts previously supplied by him.[181]

I'm actively resisting this flight of ideas, their casting and doubling. I really don't know what to do with the information. It informs and backfills my knowledge of coloniser. While Haraway says; 'the colonial imagination is not an abstraction', I struggle with the abstract way I process these ideas. Hale's, Birdsell's and Tindale's work sits abstractly in relation to the lived experiences of my family and our country and the attempted institutionalisation of our beings.

[181] Tindale quoted in: Hale, H. M. (1956). "The First Hundred Years of the Museum - 1856-1956." Records of the South Australian Museum **12**: 152-153.

I try to enter the archive again. Fresh in my mind- the ways in which my abjection is reminded to me by the contemporary archivists- the museum experts, the government officials, who may also be Nunga. Nunga's enforcing the subjection and administering it to fellow members of their communities while earning a wage. Performing in the role of the good-civil-servant and *expert* and having a 'job for life' or (un)happily participating in the machine. For these servants of the state; the policies enforced; are enforced upon; become part of one's personal mission, the (un)questioned actions of subjection; we are deserving; we are participating; we are lawful, we are human. Like the terminator, half your brain is occupied by the machine. Foucault may describe this devotional civil-servant activity as the condition of middle management mechanisms in the dispersal of power through governmentality.

In our imagined archive opera; how we learn to hate ourselves: down among the wild men. There are people you meet in the 'Offices of the Records' or in the 'Department of -' who presume themselves as the living extension of the arm of the administrative state, and who continue to execute the *lawfulness* of what they file, approve, deny and stamp. At some point that resistance was crushed for some of us. These are the records of the crushing. The essence of ideas reduced to a sentence; our lives reduced to a few lines.

The importance of our (Nunga) living responses to this archive of abuse become for me as vital as air. Our responses disarm representative processes that have been imposed upon us. This cycle of representation into and out of institutionalisation risks the creation of a paradox of response and reiteration of that which perpetuates the

original oppressive representation and subjection. Our gaze is never fully acknowledged. Our resistance is actively forgotten by the State. What happens when we deliberately re-insert ourselves inside the record? When we speak from a context of who we are and what we would like to see for our futures; our sovereign voices are central to this discussion.

As Audra Simpson states:

> […] if we take this historical form of ethnological representation into account, we might then be able to come up with techniques of representation that move away from "difference" and its containment, from the ethnological formalism and fetishism….I am interested in the way that cultural analysis may look when difference is *not* the unit of analysis; when culture is disaggregated into a variety of narratives rather than one comprehensive, official story; when proximity to the territory that one is engaging in is as immediate as the self. What, then, does this do to ethnographic form? I will argue that when we do this type of anthropological accounting, "voice" goes hand in hand with sovereignty at the level of enunciation, at the level of method, and at the level of textualization. Within Indigenous contexts, when the people we speak of speak for themselves, their sovereignty interrupts anthropological portraits of timelessness, procedures, and function that dominate representations of their past and, sometimes, their present.[182]

Simpson engages us in a discussion on situated relational sovereignty. The borders of colonial-settler-states the United States and Canada divide her peoples' territories.

[182] Simpson, A. (2014). Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 97.

Simpson's ideas interrupt particular forms of sovereignty and disciplinarity, and challenge particular forms of de-historicisation.

In her 2016 production, *One Billion Beats*, Dr Romaine Moreton, Goenpul Yugerra of Tjerangeri (Stradbroke Island) and greater Brisbane, Bundjalung and Bidjara of northern New South Wales and Queensland, generously speaks, performs, sings, projects and describes, her insights into the enormity of the racist and hateful representational cinematic archive as a body of largely under- researched-white-representational history of Aboriginal peoples of this country[183]. *One Billion Beats* represents in many ways an assemblage and entanglement of cinema, stories and music and was based on research undertaken by Moreton over many years within the collections contained at the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra. This theoretical performative work demonstrates an unpacking of the visual/ cinematic history of colonialism. *One Billion Beats* breaks down these once-mass-produced mainstream and 'popular' racist celluloid/ cinematic representations of our ancestors, and intimately articulates how these representations have been informed and shaped by 'anthropology' and race-science. This work weaves these large ideological movements of power with the personal, situated and embodied experiences of Moreton and other Aboriginal families and communities. We can begin to get a picture of the enormity of these historical representations and their power over us and how our histories are entwined with these subjections. This is the important collective work of Indigenous storytellers and artists. Deluze and Guattari describe the artist's work in transforming knowledges:

[183] Moreton, R. (2016). One Billion Beats. Campbelltown Arts Theatre, Binung Boorigan.

> The writer twists language, makes it vibrate, seizes hold of it, and rends it in order to wrest the percept from perceptions, the affect from affection, the sensation from opinion- in view, one hopes, of that still-missing people…[184]

The Bound/Unbound collective work has particular focus on the racist representational 'spells', as described by Moreton, that have been cast by the coloniser, across Mirning, Antikirinya/ Yankunytjatjara, Yidinyji/ MBararam, Narungga lands; across Aboriginal land; over what is now called Australia. Whilst our stories and histories lie unspoken and ignored we are all *still-missing people*.[185]

The methodologies, mechanisms and processes of archival documentation that include surveillance and empirical knowledge production, visual aesthetics, cinematic, photographic and documentary conventions, as well as the impact of (neo)colonial legal and administrative structures of control, continue to shape our physical bodies as well as the lived economic and material realities of our communities. These legal and administrative processes rely upon archival practice, a continued re-cycling of the image of the Aborigine within the colonial archive. Alternative visual, cinematic, artistic representations and collections, stories and practices can disrupt this (neo)colonial flow of ideas. Our collective work is about disconnecting from violent processes that do not underpin our present and (re)creating self-determining intimacies with our pasts, presents and futures. Weheliye articulates:

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[184] Gilles Deluze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy*, trans. By Graham Burchel and Hugh Tomlinson, London: Verso, 1994: 76, cited in Rancière, J. (2009). The Emancipated Spectator, Verso: 55.
[185] Moreton, R. (2016). Interrogating Western Media Art Forms in One Billion Beats Technologies of Memory and Affect. Flinders University, Romaine Moreton.

> I am asking whether there exists freedom (not necessarily as a commonsensically positive category, but as a way to think what it makes possible) in this pain that most definitely cannot be reduced to recognition based on the alleviation of injury or redressed by the laws of the liberal state, and if said freedom might lead to other forms of emancipation, which can be imagined but not (yet) described. [186]

Nunga peoples are not building upon a body of ethical knowledge about us. Scraping back the midden heap of debris of colonised Australia you 'discover' that ideas the colonisers have inflicted upon us will not bio-degrade. Racist ideas are not scientific or representational '(un)truths' that break down over time. (Neo)colonial capitalist-heterosexual-white-patriarchal-democracies are not a self-correcting systems of wellness, our land/body shows us this[187]. We continue to resist.[188]

This ordering of imperial-logic and rational-control is then justified and constructed through the contrasting ideas about the lawless- savage-primitive, irrational-uninhibited as outlined by Sigmund Freud and then Audra Simpson:

> It is no doubt true that the sharp contrast that *we* make between thinking and doing is absent in both of them [i.e. neurotics and primitives]. But the neurotics are above all *inhibited* in their actions; with them the thought is the

[186] Weheliye, A. G. (2014). Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 18-19.
[187] See Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, 'Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?', in McKittrick, K., Ed. (2015). Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis. Durham & London, Duke University Press:12.
[188] Aboriginal peoples 'proof' of ongoing connection to country is often evidenced by 'middens' these are continually being destroyed in the progression of contemporary Australia.

> complete substitute for the deed. Primitive men, on the other hand, are *uninhibited*: thought passes directly into action. With them it is rather the deed that is substitute for thought.[189]

> Indigenous sovereignty carried the residue of savagery. As a perception rooted a deep history of Occidental reasoning, reasoning that constructs our notion of sovereignty, Aristotle (and his progeny) have perceived savagery as a condition of beastlike association that is defined as being without law (Aristotle [350BCE] 1995)[190]

How are these deeply ingrained ideas about *lawful civilisation* and dehumanised *lawless savagery* and the contested assertion of colonial sovereignty acknowledged, understood, administered and performed within repositories like the South Australian State Records? Many of the administrative, logistical, authoritative processes remain the same as when they first started cataloguing us under the Aborigines Protection Act, it's the same system in place. It asserts the same mechanisms of governmentality as those that were first imposed upon my great-grandmother, and before her, her mother who walked from the Kimberly to the Nullarbor over 100 years ago. When I examine the old records held about our families and communities it is clear that systems of punitive surveillance and control continue to dominate our lives[191]. There is popular imagery to go with these ideas.

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[189] Sigmund Freud (1913), *Totem and Taboo,* quoted in Seshadri-Crooks, K. (1994). "The Primitive as Analyst: Postcolonial Feminism's Access to Psychoanalysis." Cultural Critique **28**(Fall): 175-218.
[190] Simpson, A. (2014). Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 141-142.
[191] See for example, any of the *Protector reports* in South Australia, see also: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1997). Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families. Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia. See also: Behrendt, L. (2017). After the Apology. Sydney, Australia Pursekey Productions Pty Ltd**:** 80 mins.

Racist Texts (2014) books, dimensions variable

I try to collect all the *racist texts* I can find and they mount up in my office around me. I wonder what to do with them, the never-ending accumulation of hate? I decide to pile them up in a single towering pile in the gallery, like a crumbling pillar of unstable enlightenment, the collection continues to grow. It reminds me of everything that we have had to deal with as people. The bullshit of a complete narrative. The ridiculousness of the texts *en masse* and when you open them you can find random excerpts like the following from the famous 'explorer' Edward John Eyre crossing my grand-mother's country, a narrative that makes me want to laugh and cry at the same time:

> The frightful, the appalling truth now burst upon me, that I was alone in the desert... The horrors of my situation glared upon me with such startling reality, as for an instant almost to paralyse the mind. At the dead hour of the night, in the wildest and most inhospitable wastes of Australia, with the fierce wind raging in unison with the scene of violence before me, I was left, with a single native, whose fidelity I could not rely upon, and who for ought I knew might be in league with the other two, who perhaps were even now, lurking about with a view of taking away my life as they had done that of my overseer. Three days had passed away since we left the last water, and it was very doubtful when we might find any more. Six hundred miles of country had to be traversed, before I could hope to obtain the slightest aid or assistance of any kind, whilst I knew not a single drop of water nor an ounce of flour had been left by these

murderers, from a stack that had previously been so small.[192]

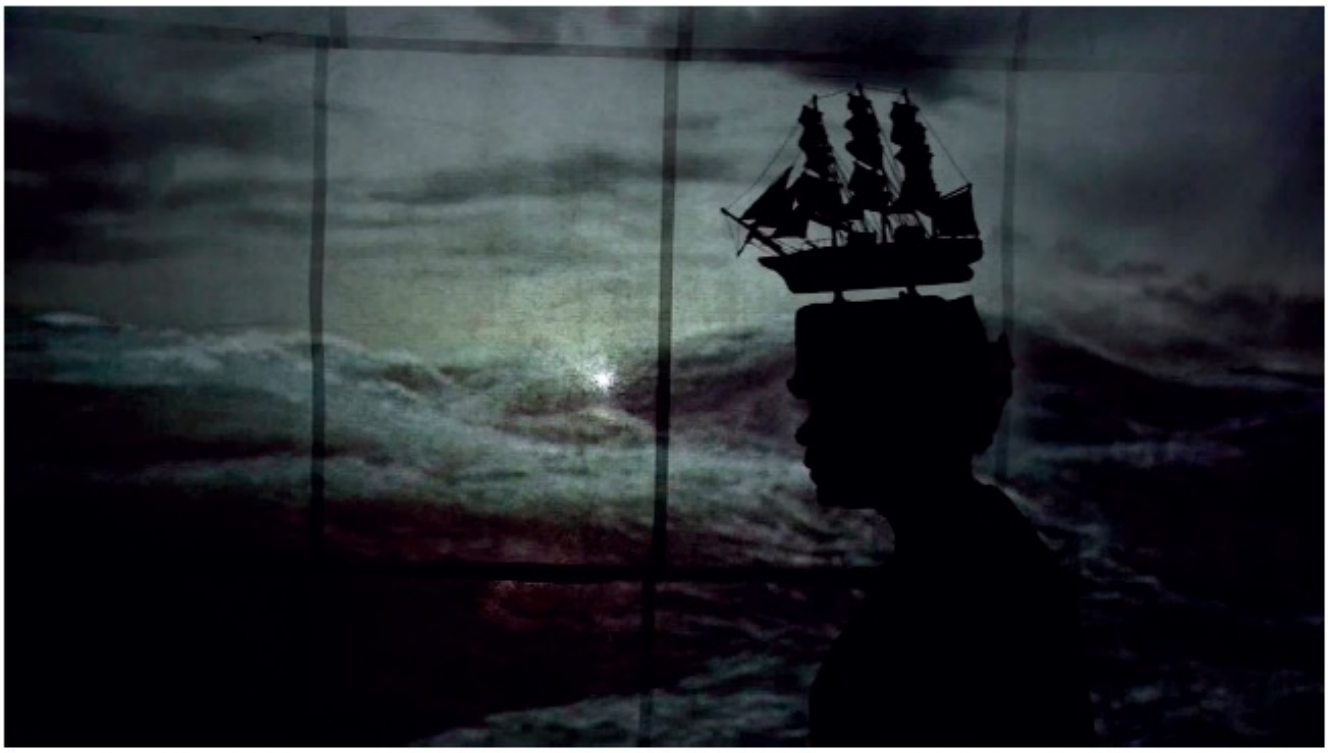
This stack of racist texts continues to be our shared inherited burden. It is in the appropriation of our lands and bodies that we can trace our 'modernity' through our 'savage' being as the ideological and physical fuel that powered the generation of the 'wealth' of the so called 'first world' 'lucky country'. Moten and Harney describe the unpaid labour of bodies, the movements of desire:

> Modern logistics is founded with the first great movement of commodities, the ones that could speak. It was founded in the Atlantic slave trade, founded against the Atlantic slave. Breaking
> from the plundering accumulation of armies to the primitive accumulation of capital, modern logistics was marked, branded, seared with the transportation of the commodity labor that was not, and ever after would not be, no matter who was in that hold or containerized in that ship.[193]

[192] Thiele, C. (1976), The Bight, Rigby, Adelaide: 24-26.
[193] Harney, S. and F. Moten (2013). The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study. Brooklyn NY, Minor Compositions: 92.


The Art of the Ancient Near East
KENNEDY OF CAPE YORK
Daisy Bates
MANKIND
EARLY ARTISTS OF AUSTRALIA
Some Scots Were Here
TRADITIONAL MODE OF PRODUCTION
AUSTRALIA'S HERITAGE
WANDJINA
AUSTRALIA SINCE THE
THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES
THE GREAT KAKADU MYSTERY
ALLIGATOR RIVERS PREHISTORY
COOBOOL CREEK

In Bound /Unbound Sovereign Act I, we worked from inside the enclosure of the collection, from inside the archive built for the society of the representational spectacle. This work asks how does this subjection/abjection feel?



Ali Gumillya Baker, *Tall ships Part 2*, 2014, video loop, performed by Faye Rosas Blanch, Natalie Harkin and Michael Bonner, video by Ali Gumillya Baker


OCCUPIED
AND
ENJOYED


ATTENTION

Ali Gumillya Baker (2017) sovereignGODDESSnotdomestic, Natasha Wanganeen (performer). Archival digital print in lightbox.

Artmaking, Storytelling and Servitude: Context 2

My Great Grandmother Gumillya (Camelia on her marriage certificate), the *G* pronounced in between a G and a K (*Kam-il-ya)*, was born around 1875 at a place called Eucla on the Nullarbor Plain. Her father's name was George Muckrie. In 1932 aged 57 years she married the father of her children, white man Charles David Boxer in Penong. Charles Boxer had at least one other relationship with an Aboriginal woman on the West Coast, who also had children by him.

My grandmother May Boxer was born in 1911 in a wiltja built for her birth in the scrub just outside what was a former colonial-ration-station, now predominantly a ghost town, Fowlers Bay. At around the time of my grandmother's birth many Mirning were seen to be starving to death as much of the land with the sparse food resources on it had been parcelled up and given to/taken by white people to farm.[194] Nana May was sent away from her mother to work as a domestic servant in the home of a white family, 'the Dignams', in the ration outpost of Fowlers Bay in 1917 when she was six years old. My great-grandmother Gumillya who lived and travelled around her country outside of Fowlers Bay was only ever allowed to have one 'half-caste' child with her at any one time. My Nana May was allowed to attend a small amount of primary school at the one room school in Fowlers Bay where she learnt basic literacy and numeracy and the rest of the time she worked as a domestic for the family. The Dignam's took in many of my Nana's siblings and trained them to be domestics. Apparently 'Daddy Dignam' used to get out the 'stock whip' when he was angry, but

[194] See Peggy Brock (1993), Outback Ghettos: A History of Aboriginal Institutionalisation and Survival, Cambridge University Press: 65.
I am also related to these white colonial farmers, as my grandmother eventually married my grandfather Jeffery Miller whose family were one of the first white 'landowners' in Penong.

my Nan always said they were ‘nice people’. Obviously she knew of Aboriginal family and broader community whose circumstances were more violent and oppressive than those faced by her immediate family. She knew only too well about reservations, missions, and shootings of Aboriginal people who ‘trespassed’. My grandmother understood hunger. She knew that she was hated for her Nunganess and more than this the white people hated that she was ‘half-caste’; my grandmother was required in this pact of survival to hate herself. As articulated by Stoler, this was a severe colonial landscape of *governance over the personal*:

> The belongings of race, religion, and citizenship in part dictated colonial entitlements. But those in turn were dictated by local knowledge and close encounters. Racial affiliations varied with who slept with whom, who lived with whom, and who acknowledged doing so; who was recognised as one's child and by whom one was nursed, reared, and educated; who was one's spiritual light and by whom was one abandoned. In the case of those labeled "mixed-blood" or "half-caste" children... a demonstrated disaffection for one's native culture and native mother were critical gatekeeping criteria for European membership. Evidence of disdain or estrangement and sympathy for thoughts and things native were basic to the white community's entry requirements. Those thresholds of racial membership, sexual access, and colonial status were not "private" sites of respite or retreat. In recluse and repose race was put to the test. In these "tense and tender ties" of empire, relations of power were knotted and tightened, loosened and cut, tangled and undone. These ties are not microcosms of empire but its marrow.[195]

[195] Stoler, A. L., Ed. (2006). Haunted by Empire; Geographies of Intimacy in North America. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 3.

For me to read about this brutally personal colonial history has at various times in my adult life almost been an out-of-body experience. I want to know/ it hurts to know. I feel it in my bones/ I inherited this pain-shame-hate. I have to know/ I can't un-know. My search to understand our intimate geographical histories, and in particular the circumstances that face my family and Mirning peoples on the West Coast of South Australia will continue for the rest of my life. I will never walk away from this and it is this research to which I bring my whole body.

I'm sitting and looking at the table my mother gave to me when I moved out of home. Mum inherited this old wooden table from her Aunty Ruby, one of Nana May's older sisters. Ruby was born in 1899. She never married and spent 40 years of her life as a domestic servant for the Policeman in Norwood, a now middle-class suburb of Adelaide. The old table that my family and I sit and eat at is one of the few things Ruby received after 40 years of unpaid domestic work. There is a record of this unpaid work on her Protector of Aborigines file at the South Australian State Records; Ruby Boxer worked for 40 years without any form of payment. [196] This unacknowledged and largely unknown Australian history of unpaid Aboriginal domestic service can be found throughout Australia. The *Unbound Collective* share understandings of what this domestic servitude has meant for our families and the impact upon all Aboriginal people who spent their whole working life working within the coloniser's enclosure and had little rights and were given nothing financially/materially in exchange for the labour. The wealth of this country was built

[196] See GRG52/1/0/0/1943/19. South Australian State Records.

on this labour. Natalie Harkin's research focuses on the relationships of these histories to our presents:

> Archival-poetics works to expose state-shaped assimilation policies, particularly those targeting Aboriginal girls for removal from their families, and those enabling indentured domestic labour. The historical, social and political contexts of such policies are critical to understanding intimate and paradoxical relationships with the colonial archive, and its seething impression on contemporary life. Emotion and intuition compels such archival-intimacy, particularly when reckoning with traumatic, contested and buried episodes of history that inevitably return to haunt.[197]

We have been (dis)possessed again and again.

> The dehumanizing impulses of colonization are successfully acted upon because racisms in these countries are predicated on the logic of possession.[198]

Great Aunty Ruby's indentured labour in her working life is not an isolated incident, this is part of our country's history of slavery of Aboriginal people and for those white people unsettled by this logic of possession it brings a determined amnesia. There are legal actions that have been undertaken in Queensland where it was also

[197] Natalie Harkin, Abstract: http://www.historyofemotions.org.au/media/259314/feeling_the_past_program-3.pdf. Accessed 25/10/17, 8.11pm.
[198] Moreton-Robinson, A. (2015). The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press: xiii.

common practice to not pay Aboriginal people, or for people's wages to be kept by the 'protectors', see for example, The Stolen Wages Campaign[199].

The Cultural Work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists

I have come to understand that the best ways to speak about our lived, shared, personal and largely unknown histories within the university lectures I have given within the school of Australian Studies is to show work by Aboriginal artists who speak to these historical moments/facts/events/ legislation and bring our shared emotional/ personal connections to these artworks. We team teach these topics together as Aboriginal academics; each of us contributing to the lecturing in various personal and political ways. As stated by fellow Unbound artist Natalie Harkin:

> Many Indigenous writers feel compelled to tell and re-tell personal and shared histories in as many ways as possible, and identify writing and creative acts as a duty, responsibility and obligation to tell their versions of the truth.[200]

The use of the sovereign voice of artwork in the *telling* and *re-telling* allows for the repetition of the affective magnitude of these truths to be communicated again and again. If we do not use these story telling techniques of our ancestors, the burden of this knowledge would be too much for any one person, the pain too great.

In the lecture's I have delivered about "Race and Representation" in the university I will often weave talk about personal family history, local, national and international

[199] http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2015/05/29/queensland-begin-stolen-wages-compensation-process, see also Meeting of Commonwealth and State Ministers, held at Canberra, 3rd and 4th September, 1951. NATIVE WELFARE. Canberra, by Authority: L.F. Johnston, Commonwealth Government Printer.
[200] Natalie Harkin (2016), 'I Weave Back to You': Archival-Poetics for the Record: 35-36.

Indigenous history and visually demonstrate these ideas by showing works of Aboriginal artists. For example, I teach about Gumillaroi artist REA, who did a series of photographic screen prints about Aboriginal domestic servants using text[201]; as well as Leah King-Smith who took historical photographs out into bush land settings and re-photographed these powerful historical images of Aboriginal domestics overlayed with reflections of trees and water[202]. I regularly reference artists Julie Gough, Brenda Croft, Judy Watson, Romaine Moreton, Vernon Ah Kee, Michael Riley, Ian Abdulla, Darren Siwes, Julie Dowling, Tracey Moffatt, Lin Onus, Yhonnie Scarce, Warrick Thornton and poets; Jack Davis, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Kevin Gilbert, amongst so many, many other amazing Aboriginal artists who keep stories of our experiences as living memories. These artists and the knowledge of their creative works has at various times saved my life. This brave and articulate art practice movement should in many ways be seen as one of the most valuable gifts that can be given to the world. The commitment by artists to shed light and insights on these hidden histories of our ancestors and as storytellers and communicators to be brave and speak out about injustice and hope and where we need to focus our attentions should be seen as the treasure that it is; and universities should seek to provide space for Aboriginal artists to engage in this work. Toni Morrison communicates these ideas clearly:

> I want to remind us all that art is dangerous; I want to remind you of the history of artists who have been murdered, slaughtered, imprisoned, chopped up, refused entrance; the history of art whether it's in music or written or what

[201] Rea (1992). Look who's calling the Kettle Black. http://nga.gov.au/retake/retake_art2/gal8.htm**:** digital/ photographic print.
[202] King-Smith, L. (1991). Patterns of Connection. Victorian Centre of Photography, Melbourne and the Australian Centre of Photography, Sydney in 1992**:** photo- compositions.

> have you has always been bloody; because dictators and people in office and people who want to control and deceive know exactly the people who will disturb their plans; and those people are artists; they're the ones that tell the truth and it's something that society has got to protect; but when you enter that field,…. It's a dangerous pursuit; somebodies out to get you; you have to know it before you start and do it under those circumstances because it is one of the most important things that human beings do; that's what we do[203].

The collective work of *Bound/ Unbound Sovereign Acts* can be seen as our collective honouring of these larger political contexts of artmaking and resistance. This ongoing work can also be understood as bound within and traversing the intersections of western artistic measures and mediums, traditions of performance/installation art. This work considers the powerful relationship between ideas of performing and creating 'high' art, and 'aesthetics' as a western measure of both; 'racialised cultural worth' and 'racialised authenticity' and in doing so, it traces the link with these ideas to the focus of 'collecting-cultures', both as, a process- driven mechanism of the perceived progress of colonialist 'civilisation' and modernity; and as the physical collection as an archive of *proof* of successful colonialism that is simultaneously situated (local) and globalised (universal).

Is a deconstituted, deconstructed, (de)collection an act of decolonising? Our artwork collides with the histories of collection that originate with the violent, possessive 'curiosity' of 'racial difference' and form the visual evidence of ideas about race that swept the planet. We create in order to transform.

[203] Morrison, T. (2016, 10th June 2016). "Art and Social Justice Panel." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3hhoyTbP6A

I am inspired by one of artist Lorna Simpson's photographs *Waterbearer*, a photographic image of the back of a black woman holding a plastic milk bottle, a work that makes visual reference to a painting by Dutch 'master' Vermeer, and it is exhibited with the following poem text:

> *She saw him disappear by the river*
> *They asked her to tell what happened*
> *Only to discount her memory.*[204]

Lorna Simpson beautifully articulates in this image and text how histories are rendered invisible and unimportant and because of this our collective memories are being erased in a digital text and image world. We require our own keeping places of memory, and these artworks provide a form of keeping place.

In 1993 I enrolled in an undergraduate degree in Visual Arts at the University of South Australia. During my four-year degree and subsequent honours program at the art school there was **not one** instance where we as students were taught by an Aboriginal person about Aboriginal knowledges, art/ culture or history. Claudia Rankine conveys this (in)visibility:

> Not long ago you are in a room where someone asks the philosopher Judith Butler what makes language hurtful. You can feel everyone lean in. Our very being exposes us to the address of another, she answers. We suffer from the

[204] Simpson L.(1986), The Waterbearer. Photograph, in Simon, J. (2013). Lorna Simpson, Prestel Verlag GmbH & Co KG: 39.

> condition of being addressable. Our emotional open-ness, she adds, is carried by our addressability. Language navigates this.[205]
>
> For so long you thought the ambition of racist language was to denigrate and erase you as a person. After considering Butler's remarks, you begin to understand yourself as rendered hypervisible in the face of such language acts. Language that feels hurtful is intended to exploit all the ways you feel present. Your alertness, your openness, and your desire to engage actually demand your presence, your looking up, your talking back, and, as insane as it is, saying please.[206]

In many ways this negation and silencing as well at the same time the rendering of us *hypervisible,* as described by Rankine, is the shared experience of many Aboriginal peoples; our ongoing knowledges of an oppressive erasure in these cultural spaces inspires the continued work of many Aboriginal people. Throughout my youth I have felt so angry. I've had to work out a way not to be defined by this anger. When I was a small child I was interested in the infinite. I spent hours looking at the sky. Then I grew up learned about infinite injustices.

It was during the course of my research as an undergraduate honours student within the art school and then as a postgraduate master of arts student that it became profoundly clear that ideas of *art* and *culture* were all informed either overtly or indirectly by the entangled polarised ideas of race (primitive) and culture (civilized enlightenment). As Gonzalez asserts in *Subject To Display*:

[205] Rankine, C. (2014). Citizen: An American Lyric. Minneapolis, Graywolf Press: 49.
[206] ibid: 49.

> Olu Oguibe has observed that within colonial discourse, art and aesthetic sensibility were crucial signifiers of the civilized state and constituted the unbridgeable distance between savagery and culture.[207]

There are moments of breathtaking racism, of intense scrutiny and of continued negation. There are also intense expectations about how your identity as the Aboriginal will be present/ absent and *managed* at all times. Again I ponder Haraway's statement, 'the colonial imagination is not an abstraction[208]'. I didn't imagine they were thinking these things about me. They told me they were thinking these things. They told me again and again. Sometimes I got into physical fights, I got into many verbal and ideological arguments, I was always wanting to get more understanding, free myself up. My journey with this language feels abstract. Rankine describes the type of anger:

> You begin to think, maybe erroneously, that this other kind of anger is really a type of knowledge: the type that both clarifies and disappoints. It responds to insult and attempted erasure simply by asserting presence, and the energy required to present, to react, to assert visibility will alter the ways in which one is perceived.[209]

[207] González, J. A. (2008). Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art. Massachusetts, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press: 78.
[208] Haraway, D. (2000). How like a leaf: an interview with Thyrza Nichols Goodeve/ Donna J. Haraway, New York, Routledge: 9.
[209] Rankine, C. (2014). Citizen: An American Lyric. Minneapolis, Graywolf Press: 24.

For my entire school and university education I would feel at any time that I could be randomly cut open by these racist, oppressive and colonising ideas and words; like a theoretical-open-wound that keeps being opened. Heart pounding in the open cut chest at a conference. Like going into the representational battle-ring. The white people seemed less personally and emotionally impacted, they liked to remain detached from these ideas, after all *emotionality* is not scholarly. I am interested in the ideas of savagery or primitive that are reinscribed in contrast to civilized-enlightened-scholarship. Like the time at art school in the print making studio when the white mature-aged German student stated:

> Her: "**your** people- they **ate** their half –caste babies. It's true, I've read it."[210]
>
> Me: unable to form sentences that adequately articulate my distress, I just start to shout "LIES, NOT TRUE, CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?" (rush from the room, heart-beating fast breath trapped within chest, trapped-within-this-white-university, trapped within ideas) I feel unable to recover from this attack I just need to learn more. I feel as though she sees me and my family as disgusting and sub-human. I don't have the words.

This above turning point drove me to read more and more to be able to understand why this narrative of the cannibal savage is so powerful and to be able to articulate

[210] Daisy Bates, First 'Protector' of Aborigines on the West Coast of South Australia, wrote about this alleged cannibalism, Bates also wrote things like; "The only good half-caste is a dead one" and was quoted by Pauline Hanson and One Nation in their book saying we were cannibals. Daisy Bates expressed these views throughout her time working with Aboriginal people, my grandmother May remembers being told to stay well away from Bates, she wrote in newspaper articles and in her book; Bates D. (1938) The Passing of the Aborigines: A Lifetime Spent Among the Natives of Australia, Murray. see also Hanson P.L. (1997), The Truth: On Asian Immigration, the Aboriginal Question, the Gun Debate and the Future of Australia Ipswich QLD. P. Hanson.

why became a driving motivating force. I knew *racialisation* was not being addressed at all in my degree's curriculum, despite the fact it purported to be universally about all *Visual Culture*. None of these white lecturers thought it was important to learn about the history of white-race privilege, or the violent recent history of the place where the university was located. What is the thick emotionally-oppressive, threatened, theoretical hatred and ignorance here? This is the hatred that makes white people not be able to look at you, to feel disgust, want to save you, or sometimes morbid jealousy: they hate that you have found a way through their false claims of knowledge superiority and singularity. This is the hatred that turns us Nungas mad, makes us become paranoid alcoholics. It makes us feel as if much of what we say is burdensome and depressive, and the continuing colonising ignorance requires Aboriginal people to be pitched as the country's possessive conscience, we are their spirits-of-the-land.

At art school I begin my search in the library, on the slides and electronic data-bases, in the bound journals and books, I search for artists that speak to me of the history I was not being taught in my Institutional education. These histories are known and shared by our families and communities, but local and national Aboriginal histories remain largely excluded from knowledge production by the broader nation. I come across so many Aboriginal, Native American/ Canadian and Black artists like: REA, Destiny Deacon, Gordon Bennett, Jimmy Durham, James Luna, Kara Walker, Carrie Mae Weems, Lorna Simpson, Tracey Moffatt, Michael Riley, Leah King Smith, Lin Onus, Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Postcommodity, Ginger Riley, Richard Bell, Warrick Thornton, Paola Balla so many, many more. These are our philosophers and writers and singers too; Romaine Moreton, Irene Watson, Aileen Moreton Robinson,

Kevin Gilbert, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Larissa Behrendt, Leanne Simpson, Tony Birch, Gary Foley, bell hooks, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Kerri Hulme, Sweet Honey and the Rock, Gloria Anzaldua, Sally Morgan, Aunty Veronica Brodie, Tiddas, Warumpi Band, No Fixed Address, Archie Roach, Kev Carmody, Ruby Hunter, Briggs so many more. All these artists expressed what I was yearning to hear. They all free us from the sticky trap of lies. Still at university they were not/are not on the white lecturer's reading lists.

I remember finding the image of James Luna exhibiting himself in a glass museum case in the San Diego Museum of Man it documents a performance piece titled *'Artifact Piece'*. I found this image in the 1990s before the internet was full of so much information, at a time when libraries and bookshops were some of the only places you could find rare ideas from far away. I remember reading about Luna's *Artifact Piece* performance and feeling so excited thinking about his political comment back at the museums who had collected our bones. I remember thinking about how this little performance had changed my world. Now when I teach students about his work, I remind them that a small performance in the Museum of Man in San Diego in 1989 is still being spoken about all these years later on the other side of the planet. These are hopeful ripples and you never know how far small actions and moments of change and memory can take us. I remember reading about Luna's descriptions of those in his audience in the museum who had assumed he was dead as he lay so still inside the glass case. Their shock when they saw his breath. Our living cultures of resistance.

I also remember when I first heard Kara Walker in an interview I watched on Art21 describe perfectly the abjection she experienced. In her talking and picture making

and describing, she does an amazing thing for me, she releases me from the burden of having to defend my people, she releases me from my continued abjection of myself. Walker speaks about growing up as a young Black woman in the South of the United States, and as a young woman she read all the white American classic-grand-narrative novels like *Gone With the Wind*[211], she identifies these racist texts as a form of inspiration for her work:

> Now, a lot of what I was wanting to do in my work, and what I have been doing, has been about the unexpected. You know, that unexpected situation of kind of wanting to be the heroine and yet wanting to kill the heroine at the same time. And, that kind of dilemma, that push and pull, is sort of the basis, the underlying turbulence that I bring to each of the pieces that I make, including the specifics: the mammy characters and the piccaninnies and the weird sorts of descriptions. At one point Scarlet in her desperation is digging up dried up roots and tubers down by the slave's quarters and she's overcome by a "niggery" scent, and vomits. [Kara LAUGHS] And its scenes like that that might go washed over by the sort of vast, epic structure of the story, but that is an epic moment for me. What does that mean? And why is there an assumption that I should know what that means? And where does that idea come from, you know, why is that smell so overpowering?[212]

Through my early and initial attempts at making 'art' in this historically violent-silencing-colonial-outpost on Kaurna land I learned quickly and with further clarity the

[211] Mitchell, M. (1936). Gone With the Wind, Macmillan Publishers.
[212] Kara Walker, http://www.pbs.org/art21/watch-now/segment-kara-walker-in-stories

nature of ‘white subjection’, a type of endless narcissism. I make my way through Aboriginal lands and see those white people who look at Aboriginal people like strangers and act as though they own everything, that somehow the whole world and everything in it is their birth-right. Everything is knowable, ownable and they have a right to experience what it all means.

It is only with members of Indigenous communities who understand dislocation, dispossession, attempted genocide, and hard-earned knowledge of being, those eyes become the places where we can look to find out about love and love lost.

The Bound/ Unbound creative work has always existed in the possibility of changing the way we might understand or interrupt the processes of our own abjection/subjection/ representation, how we can struggle with this and in the act of embodied performance, in creatively sharing stories, in those moments we can be free, or the *possibility* of our freedom cannot be denied to us.

> The situation for those who live in the society of the spectacle is thus identical to that of the shackled prisoners in Plato's cave. The cave is the place where images are taken for realities, ignorance for knowledge, and poverty for wealth... To know the law of the spectacle comes down to knowing the way in which it endlessly reproduces the falsification that is identical to its reality… That is why a genuine 'critique of critique' cannot be a further inversion of its logic. It takes the form of a re-examination of its concepts and its procedures,

their genealogy and the way in which they become intertwined with the logic of social emancipation.[213]

The ways the stories are told affect our imagining of ourselves into the future and into the past. New ways to tell old stories or old ways to tell new stories? Can artistic practice help us in finding justice from these racialised assemblages of power imbalances? Romaine Moreton speaks of the untold acknowledgement of 'celluloid ancestors', those who were forced to perform representational narratives of derogatory and violent conquest, representations of primitive and as performative agents in this exchange we must acknowledge these ancestors that were caught in the colonising lens. Moreton speaks of a representational 'spell' that has been cast over the whole country in relation to its view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. She reminds us all that it is our responsibility to bring each other out of this spell through new forms of decolonising story-telling.[214]

For the Unbound Collective the performative cycles cast spells that are often marked with music sung at the beginning and end of our performances by our sister Ulalka who sings us back into a warmth and love and in the present through an intergenerational honouring of the gentleness of her mother Ngitji Ngitji's poems:

Dedication Poem

To my tjamu, grandfather

[213] Rancière, J. (2009). The Emancipated Spectator, Verso: 44-45.

[214] Moreton, R. Interrogating Western Media Art Forms in One Billion Beats**, Keynote** Public Lecture, Technologies of Memory and Affect Conference, Flinders University, Adelaide, 17/2/17**.**

Love beyond expression,

Forgive my intrusion.

Hope has come at last

To explain your past;

To promote your culture,

For children of our future.

So they can learn your philosophy of life:

In this our country,

Live as brother and sister

Without hate of colour or race[215]

Mona Ngitji Ngitji Tur

Simone Ulalka Tur has the following reflections on the Dedication song and its use in Act I of the Sovereign Act series:

> The Dedication offers a call to grandfathers, Elders, ancestors to teach our children, to learn and be strong in culture, to understand our history and to see a future. Ngunytju was a cultural Elder and interpreter. Most of her life was dedicated to cross-cultural teaching and was generous in desire for Reconciliation. [216]

Ulalka cites a previous interview with her mother where Ngitji Ngitji states:

[215] Tur, N. N. M. (2010). Cicada Dreaming. Adelaide, Hyde Park Press: III

[216] Tur S.U. (2017) Unbound manuscript. Flinders University, 3/10/17.

> It is amazing how the bridge that one forms in one's life is crossed over and over again by different people and how the circle of connection and belonging keeps expanding. [217]

It is in the discussion about the nature of *privilege* with my sister Ulalka that I understand that like love or suffering, privilege's meaning is always relational, remade, contextual and moveable, specific and assembled, based on balances of power and agency and in the moment. We as Aboriginal women know the feeling of 'white privilege': it is all around us. Whiteness describes and inscribes ways of being in the world, and these ideas are actualised into our spaces. We ask ourselves: Is it a privilege being free of historical, political, physical and material suffering? We seek to separate these ideas out and understand the conditions of privilege that Weheliye describes as an assemblage of colonial and racialised ideas about the rights of the white individual man, or white human. To live and have peace, is that a privilege? The possibility to forget, to be selective, or to remember and be memorialised - is that privilege? To be indifferent and complacent? To be liberated and confident? To be an individual? To not be dispossessed of self? To not allow one to be dispossessed of the self is apparently the ultimate form of white sovereignty[218]. To not have your identity articulated negatively again and again by others? What is the nature of suffering? Can we measure and represent pain? Can we re-imagine how to understand pain? Leanne Simpson and Alexander Weheliye offer the following insights:

[217] Tur, N. N. M. (2010). Cicada Dreaming. Adelaide, Hyde Park Press: 147.
[218] Butler, J. and A. Athanasiou (2013). Dispossession: The Performative in the Political. Cambridge, polity.

bringing up trauma from my life made therapy-lady cry, especially if it was "aboriginal" themed. she said "aboriginal" a lot, and i knew she was trying to be respectful so i planned on letting it slide until the breaking point and then i was going to let her have it in one spiralling long manifesto. therapy-lady liked to compare my life to refugees from war-torn countries who hid their kids in closets when airplanes flew over their houses. this was her limit of understanding on colonized intimacy. she wasn't completely wrong, and while she tried to convince me none of us had to hide our kids anymore, we both knew this wasn't exactly true. i knew what every indian knows: that vulnerability, forgiveness and acceptance were privileges. she made the assumption of a white person: they were readily available to all like the fresh produce at the grocery store.[219]

[…] incarnations of racialized minority discourse offer pathways to distinctive understandings of suffering that serve as the speculative blueprint for new forms of humanity, which are defined above all by overdetermined conjurings of freedom. Overall, I am asking whether there exists freedom (not necessarily as a commonsensically positive category, but as a way to think what it makes possible) in this pain that most definitely cannot be reduced to mere recognition based on the alleviation of injury or redressed by the laws of the liberal state, and if said freedom might lead to other forms of emancipation, which can be imagined but not (yet) described.[220]

[219] Simpson, L. (2015). Islands of Decolonial Love: Stories and Songs. Winnipeg, ARP Books: 79.
[220]Weheliye, A. G. (2014). Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 18-19.

Simpson's description of her conversations with therapy lady resonate with many experiences of Aboriginal peoples regarding who can rightfully witness this pain. Weheliye describes the *overdetermined conjurings of freedom* of what whiteness or modernity or capitalism says it offers; which in many ways articulate some of the issues we face when we begin to imagine how *decolonial* narratives can become. Tracing the history of creative resistance to colonial possession and oppression, provides a lens to be able to view histories of trauma and evil that also allow space in the process of viewing for creative reflection and release. When the purpose of the research is not to reiterate/compound the violent trauma of colonial ideologies of inferiority or perpetuate representations of poorly formed social policy, research can begin to acknowledge the intimate connections that are there, emotional and personal histories, method and historicisation of collective practice and creative resistance. These are important goals for universities. These creative-resistances can be located in multiple spaces.

I started out by wanting to know everything the colonisers have kept about us, and held over us. I wanted to mine the archive for every last word and justification that had been written. I wanted to understand *why* these stories about us were kept. Where these stories came from and why their narratives were so powerful they kept driving me. What was the smell of their hatred, why did it make me feel like this, why was I bound to continue on this path? How can collective-decolonising-methodologies help in working into intimate spaces and traumatic histories?

> To undertake is to bind oneself to the performance of a task, to pledge or promise to get it done.[221]

It's really a sickening path to walk; to bind yourself to enter the archive-of-hate. It makes us unwell to read the mass-individual ways of the white colonising researcher. My research problem began with a promise I made to one of my old Aunts that I would find my great-grandmother's face cast and repatriate it back to country, and now this beautiful Aunty has passed away, and I am left with my word. When I think about our lives together and important the stories we carry within us, some things haunt. My Aunty was afraid that Gumillya's cast and story would be forgotten within our family. That we would collectively forget. Our memories of each other will never be lonely.

> When my mother looked for herself in books all she could find were hateful descriptions written by the coloniser.[222]

> We are compelled to respond[223]

By the time I was an adult at university in the 1990s there were many published texts that had been produced by Aboriginal people of my grandmother's and mother's generations. These texts told stories that were familiar to me, they are a human balm to hold and remember. These works contain the treasure that has been left to us,

[221] Lynch, T. (1997). The Undertaking: Life Studies from the Dismal Trade. New York, Penguin Books: xix.

[222] Unbound Act 1 (2104), Ali Gumillya Baker, performance with Faye Rosas Blanch, 24/08/14
[223] Unbound Act II, Natalie Harkin, West Beach interview, 2015.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=ctvu6zqfiBQ

you have to listen out for and hold onto stories that speak to you. Alice Walker writes in the *Temple of My Familiar*:

> They believed that all that has ever happened is stored as memories in the human mind, or in the head granary of those who alone on earth think of what is just. The life of my people is to remember forever; each head granary is full. The life of your people is to forget: your thing granaries ("museums"), and not yourselves, are full. I can tell you truthfully ("eyes steady, heart calm") that meeting your people was a terrible shock ("small children running away"). Your people are most afraid of what you have been; you have no faith that you were as good as or better than what you are now. This is not our way ("path"). Not only were we as good in the beginning as we are now, but we are the same ("two grains of sand, identical")[224]

The place my mother's family comes from is now commonly known as the Far West Coast of South Australia, it is far west from where I sit and write this. But when you are there on the body-country it is not west of anywhere.

My great-grand-mother was born on the edge of the Nullarbor Plain at a place called Eucla (Yirkla). When I think about this country of my great-grand-mother I think about the sand dunes and the desert and the sea and the infinite stars in the night sky. In my mind I am like a bird and I travel high above the country. The enormous space. Sky, land, sea, edges of one vastness continued with another.

[224] Walker, A. (1989). The Temple of My Familiar. London, The Women's Press.

> When the outer world and the sky meet the water the two become one[225]

There are many stories of this place for my family. Beautiful stories of whales and little lights from outer space, meteorites and deep underground water in deep-magical hidden caves. There are also stories of the chaos-of-invasion and the hunger, desolate shame, physical and sexual abuse and the horrors of globalization and dehistoricisation that descended. Ross Gibson describes these isolated entanglements of the present:

> In their story we learn about the following topics: rootlessness and poverty-struck itinerancy; the imposition of imported law; the geography of vastness, deluge, heat and erosion; the rural culture of firearms; a landscape composed of devolving ecologies; the mind altering pressures of isolation; nervous, nocturnal predation; prejudice and violence visited upon Aborigines; sex grabbed perfunctorily and illicitly; regionalist resentments; migrations impelled by the shove of hopelessness and bitterness rather than the allure of optimism.[226]

This work of *Sovereign Acts II* is located in the present. At this time in Ceduna and Yalata there is a kind of protectionism based on an *Intervention* to welfare-card-restrictions that still fails to address the intergenerational colonial cultural trauma at the heart of our communities[227]. There are major youth suicide problems and out of

[225] O'Brien, Uncle Lewis Yerloberka (2016), landscape poem embedded into the concrete of the Student Hub, Flinders University. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-361VyPWZ4&t=66s

[226] Gibson, R. (2002) *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland*, University of Queensland Press: 49.

[227] Davey, M. (2017). Cashless welfare card treats Aboriginal people 'as third-class citizens'. the guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jan/10/cashless-welfare-card-treats-aboriginal-people-third-class-citizens, Guardian News and Media Limited. Tuesday 10 January 2017 06.14 AEDT.

family child removal is at record highs[228]. These facts speak of communities in crisis. The public policy that is offered provides few long term or visionary solutions; the cultural landscape of 'health-care' and 'education' are bound in a white 'emergency-response' stance that is fixated on bad statistics and aspirational objectives to being-like-white-people without any acknowledgment of what has come before. This is an insufficient response. This research is also our collective offering for a critical-creative response. Not just critical, not just creative, but an attempt at rebalancing.

[228] See for example: https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/child-protection-and-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-children Also see the concerns raised in: Behrendt, L. (2017). After the Apology. Sydney, Australia Pursekey Productions Pty Ltd**:** 80 mins.

Unbound Collective, Baker A., Tur S., Harkin N., Blanch F. (2015), Sovereign Love Poem # 4, & Sovereign Love Poem # 5 . Installation at 10 sites around Tarndanyangga (Adelaide Plains)

Bound /Unbound Sovereign Acts: Act II De(script)ion

Sovereign Acts II occurred as a series of Bus Stop installations and accompanying love poems around the suburbs of Adelaide as well as two performances and projection events on North Terrace CBD Precinct. The first performance was for the opening night of the TARNANTHI Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the back of the Art Gallery of South Australia. The second and main performance was outside of the South Australian State Library and at the back of the South Australian Museum, in front of one of the oldest colonial buildings on North Terrace, the Armoury building. The following descriptions focus on the second and main performance of this series of works.

As in Sovereign Acts I, Bound/ Unbound Act II begins with the opportunity for our audience to participate in our collection of names and 'data'. The audience can enter their name onto the endless list of the Bound/Unbound Museum Register, once discarded and then reclaimed. In return, each audience member is offered a folded message from a woven basket, like a possible fortune; there are a range of messages that one could receive. These small slips of paper contain our '*Sovereign Love Poems'* and are a collective reconfiguration and response to the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of Indigenous peoples on *the record* in this colonised space[229].

[229] Unbound Collective, (2015), *Sovereign Love Poems*, each poem given to an audience member when attending a performance after signing into the discarded museum register.

Imagine a love beyond what we are told we are on Kaurna Land	Feel the earth beneath your feet leave traces of love on paths well worn we are on Kaurna Land	Walking country Fills me with love we are on Kaurna Land
Be still the silence is waiting there is always love we are on Kaurna Land	In this moment listen and love ever-present we are on Kaurna Land	Winds carry whispers from a lifetime long ago breathe deep and love we are on Kaurna Land
We are your blind-spot the invisible made visible the absent made present with love we are on Kaurna Land	Love-possibilities offer hope risk is worth taking we are on Kaurna Land	Remember love conversation Our Old people remind us we are on Kaurna Land
Sovereign Acts Occupy and Enjoy All about love we are on Kaurna Land	captured by too many collections and colonial (mis)representations	If these walls could speak your breath would slow stop your heart we are compelled to respond
there is always resistance endless paper trails data cards beating hearts	We choose to repatriate our Old Ones in projects of hope and life hopeful and transformative	sovereign self-powered self-determined performance here on Kaurna land
we will mine these institutions of power the museums the government acts the policies we offer new narratives our	infinite possibilities to transform beyond the archive-box this is our version of a new/old-telling	consider these ideas of the bound and unbound together we await what unfolds are you ready? we can all emerge
We project we disrupt in order to transform we connect to multiple sites of past-present-future and we share this space with	Occupy and Enjoy Here we can repatriate love For our ancestors	The paperbark, the milky way and the everyday
Protection (ACT) We are compelled to respond	Who speaks, who listens? I was left here for dead Instead I lived	Invisible made visible Or families Beautiful lands our histories
Sovereign Acts Expose the violence of the colonial archive	On Kaurna Land Sovereign self powered Self determined	On Aboriginal Land We will mine these institutions of power

We will be re-inserting the performance and its artefacts including our presence into the perpetual archive. The audience (family, friends and communities) will be written into the pages of *this* constructed history. We have reclaimed the space and we circle the 'heart of the matter'[230].

We women, sisters, artists, friends, community continue the work of Sovereign Acts I, where we imagined what it meant to be inside the archive looking out. This time, this Sovereign Act II is what it means to be collectively on the outside of the institution looking in. We are sovereign women of earth; imagined again without fence-borders, our deep relationality and long told stories of place walk with us. In this space there is nothing between us and the stars. We return the gaze upon us and shed from us like a cocoon all manner of abjection; we project little and big illuminations onto the outside back walls of the South Australian State Library, South Australian Museum building and Armoury Building along the North Terrace precinct of Adelaide, South Australia. On Kaurna land. What are the possibilities of our relational sovereignty?

We acknowledge that as Aboriginal people we are surrounded, as Aileen Moreton Robinson writes;

> These cities signify with every building and every street that this land is now possessed by others; signs of white possession are embedded everywhere in the landscape. The omnipresence of Indigenous sovereignties exists here too, but it is disavowed through the materiality of these significations, which are

[230] Minh-ha, Trinh T. (1996). The Undone Interval: Trinh T. Minh-ha in conversation with Annmaria Morelli. The Post-colonial question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons. I. Chambers and L. Curti, Routledge: 3-16.

> perceived as evidence of ownership by those who have taken possession. This is territory that has been marked by and through violence and race. Racism is thus inextricably tied to the theft and appropriation of Indigenous lands in the first world.[231]

In this performance we project our collective words and pictures back onto the space and onto the people gathered around, we respond to our ancestors call from within the archive, within the institutional walls; we project our responses to the flat surface of institutional-knowledge-production and subjection, their colonial wall, their colonial enclosure, our self-powered lights, responding, creating, refracting and directing the space, to the limestone/ sandstone quarried sacred stone wall. The walls absorb our knowing. We have always been here.

> The past, like the future though, is not closed. But "erasure" is not what is at issue. In an important sense, the "past" is open to change. It can be redeemed, productively reconfigured in an iterative unfolding of spacetimematter. But its sedimenting effects, its trace, can not be erased. The memory of its materializing effects is written into the world. So changing the past is never without costs, or responsibility.[232]

The walls are between us- that which separates the outside and the inside. The walls of the buildings built on Aboriginal land, we question the ideas of whiteness in the 'cultural precinct' and the walls of authority. The seat of 'Adelaide establishment',

[231] Moreton-Robinson, A. (2015). The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press: xiii.
[232] Barad, K., et al. (2012). "Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers"; Interview with Karen Barad." New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies.

colonial architecture as civilizing progress, knowledge /power /aesthetics/ governmentality. The remaking of these ideas again and again.
The colonial outpost cultural precinct, with buildings copied from the mother-monarch-coloniser, all in a row, along the grid of the map of the constructed city enclosed by parks. On Kaurna Land. North Terrace; Church, Train Station, Casino, Parliament, Government House, (more statues of old-dead-white-men) War Memorial, Library, Museum, Art Gallery, University, Hospital, Botanical Gardens. Behind these buildings stand other buildings; of significance to Kaurna and other Nungas from South Australia: Ration Buildings *buildings to starve you*, *buildings to administer your children being taken away*, Protector buildings, Physical Anthropology buildings, *buildings to dissect bodies and take bones and blood samples*, buildings for mounted police to ride out from, to protect the white-settlers, to create the representation of civilisation where we now stand, to push Aboriginal people outside the perimeters of the buildings, past the gardens and the park lands, push us out into white administrative world, the wild world of stolen lands, *where if you trespass you are shot*. Buildings built on top of ancient fresh water springs. We mark these buildings with our performance.

Sovereign; our voice, our love, our response, illuminating the space, the words exist there and then they are gone. We exist, we are here, we remember. Our thoughts have always been here.

There is a woven consciousness of theoretical presence/absence across time place as articulated by Anne Riley:

> my working through what I emotionally labour for – the affect of when I am often left speechless or shocked by what is not being understood- is somatically explored, recorded… It is the kind of conversation I want to have with the institution. Why have I been erased? Why have you forgotten your place and responsibility on this land? What is the place of love here? These questions are examples of the types of dialogue I desire, what I want to be asked without having to prompt the asking: in what way can I be placed in a space where I won't need to work emotionally, where I won't have to perform the labour of what is kept invisible- the legacies of dispossession and theft that no one talks about or wants to touch thus far.[233]

The way that Riley speaks of her emotional dissatisfaction with the colonised space of 'culture' and the type of dialogue she desires is representative of broader ongoing and often unrecognised or invisible work of many Indigenous peoples reeling under the ideological weight of where we find ourselves. As Moten and Harney describe:

> In the clear, critical light of day, illusory administrators whisper of our need for institutions, and all institutions are political, and all politics is correctional, so it seems we need correctional institutions in the common, settling it, correcting us. But we won't stand corrected. Moreover, incorrect as we are there's nothing wrong with us. We don't want to be correct and we won't be corrected. Politics proposes to make us better, but we were good already in the mutual debt that can never be made good. We owe it to each other to falsify the institution,

[233] Riley, A.(2016) Indigeneity and the Work of Emotional Labour: Įladzeeé: Pulse in the Wrist. Mice Magazine. http://micemagazine.ca/issue-one/iladzeee-pulse-wrist accessed 12/06/2016 12:36PM

> to make politics incorrect, to give the lie to our own determination. We owe each other the indeterminate. We owe each other everything.[234]

The way that Moten and Harney speak of the *indeterminate* that we owe each other, that which is lacking from the neo-liberal modernist *future planning*, and *administration* also relates to Indigenous knowledge production in this cultural landscape/space of intra-action. Our knowledges that resonate through time as truths are not 'fixed' and 'unchanging' as a museum display with accompanying label, but instead are ephemeral and inherited and changing with the moment of the telling and voice of the teller and the light in the sky and the relationality of the collective. We are outside these walls. These situated *knowledges* of indeterminacy can also be related to post-structuralist ways of understanding, but for us these philosophies always are inherently of country[235]. These are Indigenous understandings, and were well understood by our research active ancestors[236]. When speaking of indeterminacy, of the unknowable intra-action of people and events and place, it is important to clarify that we are not speaking of forgetfulness or arbitrary identity construction that fails to name colonialisms' dehistoricising as the missing moment in 'the dialectic of modernity'[237]. This work seeks to be the antithesis of that forgetfulness.

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[234] Harney, S. and F. Moten (2013). The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study. Brooklyn NY, Minor Compositions: 27.
[235] see for example the introductory statements in Ngarrindjeri Nation Yarluwar - Ruwe Plan: http://media.wix.com/ugd/01b606_0dbc738b1cb24f69867b58eed2c166ff.pdf
[236] Smith, L. T. (2013). Live Up to Our Talk. He Manawa Whenua Conference. University of Waikato. accessed 15/07/16, indigenousknowledgenetwork.net/2016/07/07/linda-tuhiwai-smith-live-up-to-our-talk/
[237] Bhabha, H. K. (2001). In a Spirit of Calm Violence. After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements. G. Prakash. Princeton, Princeton University Press: 327.

I lay awake at night thinking about the moment to begin the performance, the exact time between light and dark, the time when the sun sets, dusk. Our dusky bodies in the treelike skin of paperbark, glued with flour, sugar, water and conversation and love and cups of teas, amongst our children, around the fire. Large paperbark skirts made of survival and imagination and determination and intent, our infinite landscapes that wrap around us, wrap us up, embraced our roundness. We become those who have risen from the earth at the moment of light going into night, with Edwardian looking colonial largeness and bark stuck on wire mesh, mesh that was used to make chook pens and grow passionfruit. I often think of the conversations over cups of tea with my Nana's and Aunties:

> She said to me: *I'm not word smart, but I can fix a fence and make a fire and make a rabbit stew.*
>
> She said to me: *Forget your worries*.[238]
>
> I ask: *What does it mean to forget your worries?*

We are tied with ribbons and material binding and lit with lines of tiny lights. Self-powered and sovereign. We emerge beside the white marble modernist architectural pillars of the back entrance of the State Library building with our Uncle Lewis Yerloberka O'Brien wrapped in his possum skin cloak over his black suit. Uncle Lewis speaks as the light disappears. He speaks about the whiteness of the precinct, about how Kaurna are represented in the space, he speaks about the ideas of knowledge and enlightenment and civilization, of old exclusions and new beginnings. Uncle Lewis speaks to the audience gathered around us he says:

[238] personal memory of conversations with my Nana May and Aunty Shylie 1998.

Light Horse Memorial Trough on the corner of North Tce. and East Tce.

Recognising the role of horses in the First World War

Ityimaiitpinna lived in the Botanical Gardens in winter

His name means father of mushrooms. Mushrooms are white

Royal Adelaide Hospital has Light Ward

Colonel Light was the surveyor of Adelaide, they painted him White

but his complexion was dark

Adelaide University *Sub Cruce Lumen* meaning the light of learning under the southern cross

The Braggs won the Nobel Prize for Crystallography in 1915 Using X-ray

They attended Adelaide University, Lawrence Bragg taught light was a wave for three days

and light was a pulse for two days at the RI Institute in London

Then he taught it was both

Lawrence Bragg is the youngest Nobel Prize winner at 25 years of age

The Festival ran Northern Lights last year and lit the buildings on North Terrace

The Library is a place of Enlightenment as is the Museum

The Institute Building on the corner of Kintore Ave. and North Terrace

Today we have the Kaurna word *Tarnanthi* meaning 'first light, to appear'

A new beginning. [239]

[239] O'Brien, Uncle Lewis Yerloberka. Opening Speech for, Bound/Unbound Sovereign Acts II performance, TARNANTHI, 14th October 2015.

Uncle Lewis Yerloberka O'Brien speaks of physics and light and whiteness, and enlightenment and discovery and exclusion and dark and civilization and progress and Kaurna history, all entangled in the present, in his deeply philosophical way. His words resonate with white feminist physicist Karen Barad:

> time is articulated and resynchronized through various material practices. In other words, just like position, momentum, wave and particle, time itself only makes sense in the context of particular phenomena. So what is going on here is that physicists are actually making time in marking time, and that there is a certain way in which what we take to be the "past" and what we take to be the "present" and the "future" are entangled with one another. What we have learned from this experiment is that what exists are intra-active entanglements.[240]

We are entangled and intimate with these white institutions, because *they* pushed us and pulled us both physically and ideologically into and out of the space, *they* took false ownership over our bodies and lands they can never fully understand, we are intimately connected to those who continue to take our children away, those who continue to tell us our bodies are ugly and animal like. We are up-close still, us close to them, up-close to us, we can all find our way back together.

We hold old rusted metal billy cans containing blocks and shards of dry ice so cold it can burn the skin, and with little jugs we pour our warm water over our shivering, crackling, rattling billies and the rush of the ice-steam inside our cans bubble and

[240] Barad, K., et al. (2012). "Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers"; Interview with Karen Barad." New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies.

spew forth the misty-magical stew. Condensed frozen Carbon Dioxide steam that rises and falls in perfect theatricality from within the rusted can. We begin to walk, to circle, the large shared silence of many bodies envelopes us, we direct our feelings out through the intensity of our eyes, looking outwards, our necks lifted tall, our backs straight, we promenade around the rope enclosure and those who have gathered around us. What does it mean to en*act sovereign*?

A silent film: Ulalka performs Dedication song in front of a massive silent video of herself singing without sound. Inawanji plays the violin. The music speaks of layers of knowledge and emotion, and together they all sing about culture and life. The image and the text are out of sync.

FROM A GREAT HEIGHT I SAW YOU FALLING
BLACK AND INDIAN ALIKE
AND FOR YOU SHE PLAYED
A SORROW SONG[241]

> However, in order for the complex of sensations to communicate its vibration, it has to be solidified into the form of a monument. Now, the monument in turn assumes the identity of a person who speaks to the 'ear of the future'. And that speech itself seems to occur in two forms. The monument transmits the suffering, protest and struggle of human beings. But it does so by transmitting apparently what is opposed to it: the 'earth's song', the song of the inhuman,

[241]Patterson, V. (2000). Carrie Mae Weems, The Hampton Project. Williamstown, Massachusetts, Aperture in association with Williams College Museum of Art: 8.

> the song of the forces of chaos that resist the human desire for transformation.[242]

To be brave and speak. The difficulty of the un representable moment of emotional intensity.

> The labour of art thus involves playing on the ambiguity of resemblances and the instability of dissemblances, bringing about a local reorganization, a singular rearrangement of circulating images.[243]

We are massive in this country, we are present here, we are giants of our histories. Colonialism is a shallow 'I' at the end of this time, a peripheral greed, an aesthetic of a globalised culture that has lost the capacity to love. Our survival, despite all this evil, requires endurance and intimacy.

> 'All this talk does nothing to change the reality that there are so many barriers blocking the paths that would lead us to any space of fulfillment that it is impossible to go forward if one lacks the will to transgress'…
> 'The body is the boundary most of us are unable to move against to recover the dimensions of the self lost in the process by which we are made to behold the fixed locations, by which we are bound in conformity against our will in many facets of our daily lives...To transgress we must return to the body.'[244]

[242] Rancière, J. (2009). The Emancipated Spectator, Verso: 56.
[243] Rancière, J. (2007). The Future of the Image. London, Verso: 25.
[244] bell hooks (1995). Art On My Mind: Visual Politics. New York, The New Press: 133.

'May our ancestors walk with us'[245]. Our love offering begins. We turn and face the towering rendered white library wall behind us and then the projected light show begins.

The entire wall is full of a momentary projected monument; thoughts; bodies; a silent speech of large words and pictures:

A silent film: Faye's beautiful black hand fills the ten-metre space of the library wall and slaps down, bang, we hit back, we are here, we know you are there, wake up observers and answer our call, the hand slaps and then like the wave receding it drags back, and then slap again.

Faye later tells me that Ann Stoler speaks about colonialism like this, like waves that hit and smash, then recede and hit again, in unrelenting waves, they came. Her hand is so big in this moment it could smash this wall down. It's just a trick of the light. These buildings were built by ideas and we can decolonise. I look for Stoler and she says:

> how relations of empire crash through and then recede from easy purview, sunder families, storm sequestered spaces, and indelibly permeate- or sometimes graze with only a scarred trace- institutions and the landscapes of people's lives.[246]

[245] O'Brien, Uncle Lewis Yerloberka. Closing words, Bound/Unbound Sovereign Acts II performance, TARNANTHI, 14th October 2015.
[246] Stoler, A. L., Ed. (2006). Haunted by Empire; Geographies of Intimacy in North America. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 1.

The projected words **Camping in the Shadow of the Racist Text**[247] appear on the library (we are standing small beneath these words)[248]. These words make reference to the declaration made during the Act I opening performance and they also speak to what it means for us being outside of the library, our collective understanding of the empirical construction of containment and exclusion that knowledge physically takes in colonised spaces. The next words; **She could not find herself in any of your books**[249] and the next; **I am No Longer Your Shame**[250]**.** Large words on the library wall.

[247] Ali Gumillya Baker quote, Act II Bound and Unbound Sovereign Acts. October 2016, TARNANTHI

[249] ibid

[250] Faye Rosas Blanch, quote, Act II Bound Unbound Sovereign Acts. October 2016 TARNANTHI.

A silent film: profile of Faye, (with a small light up chandelier earring), illuminating her beautiful face it hangs brightly shining from her ear. [251]

'Our labor is more important than our silence' says Audre Lorde[252]. Faye's face is aware of this responsibility. Sometimes our labour is our silence. Our silent scream. In our ears are the whispers of the past contained within our present. As Ranciere suggests; 'Apart, we are together', we cannot hide from anything here[253].

A silent film; Faye holds her head with her hand and runs her hand slowly, tiredly and tenderly down the side of her illuminated cheek. She checks the reality of her presence, her physical being. Her knowledge feels like a small weight hanging from her ear, an ornamental but interesting distraction. Her tired eyes speak silently of the collective weight of the horrors that have come with the evil ideas of colonialism, of knowing race. Our collective knowledge of this is both beautiful and tired. Because we share it we can just bear it in this moment. Because we share it we can carry more. Because we share it we can show you.

[251] made from an imitation Edwardian dolls house chandelier, bought on e-bay made in China, shipped from Canada and operated by a small battery also made in China.
[252] Lorde, A. (1982). The Cancer Journals. US, Spinsters Ink: 17.
[253] Rancière, J. (2009). The Emancipated Spectator, Verso: 41.

> …text which speaks to us of a sob that rises and subsides.[254]

> If we do not seek to fix what has been broken, then what? How do we re-solve to live with brokenness, with being broke?[255]

The skirts that we made for the Sovereign Act II look like cocoons. The cracking of their sound when we carefully help each other out of these outer shells. Helping each other into and out of the skirts. To be free. What does it mean to be free?

> It means that every situation can be cracked open from the inside, reconfigured in a different regime of perception and signification. To

[254] Rancière, J. (2007). The Future of the Image. London, Verso: 36.
[255] Harney, S. and F. Moten (2013). The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study. Brooklyn NY, Minor Compositions: 5.

> reconfigure the landscape of what can be seen and what can be thought is to alter the field of the possible and the distribution of capacities and incapacities. Dissensus brings back into play both the obviousness of what can be perceived, thought and done, and the distribution of those who are capable of perceiving, thinking and altering the coordinates of the shared world. This is what a process of political subjectivation consists in: in the action of uncounted capacities that crack open the unity of the given and the obviousness of the visible, in order to sketch a new topography of the possible. Collective understanding of emancipation is not the comprehension of a total process of subjection. It is the collectivization of capacities invested in scenes of dissensus.[256]

In this conservative colonial outpost, this small white city; there are great incentives to transform this space, to continue. This is our collectivisation of capacities invested in scenes of dissensus.

> *If they lied about me then they lied about everything.* [257]

> *I don't want to be an Indian any more*
> *I don't want to be an Indian for historical reasons*
> *I don't want to be an Indian for commercial reasons*
> *I don't want to be an Indian for 'Sentimental Reasons'*
> *I don't want to…*[258]

[256] Rancière, J. (2009). The Emancipated Spectator, Verso: 49
[257] Miss Lizzie, (epigraph) Walker, A. (1989). The Temple of My Familiar. London, The Women's Press:1
[258] James Luna cited in González, J. A. (2008). Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art. Massachusetts, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press: 22.

Three hundred people gathered around us. We were engaged in an active silence, full of stories and moments that transported each of us to places and times; the ancestors that brought us to this moment[259]. We were surrounded. We are never alone.

[259] personal feedback from Karen Martin after our joint *Unbound* NIRAKN conference presentation, Goldcoast, 2016.

The Armoury Building; Place

> My old mum used to say there'll be things that you'll be able to do Julie when you grow up that's not really you. That you might be able to do something that you didn't know you could do. That's an old grandmother coming through. You know so sometimes the hands that make these are not only yours.[260]

when they come to claim me name me frame me

will they slice me in half

or quarters

or one-sixteenths?[261]

[260] Julie Freeman, 2016, *Colour Theory*, NITV, broadcast Sunday 12th June 2016, 9.00pm.
[261] Natalie Harkin, p 46, 'I weave Back to You': Archival-Poetics for the record, 2016, quote projected onto the South Australian State Library wall, Bound/ Unbound Sovereign Acts II, October 2015.

The Armoury building forms part of the South Australian Museum complex on North Terrace Adelaide, and is one of the oldest colonial buildings in Adelaide, serving various purposes over the years since 1851 when it was built. Originally the building provided a headquarters for the settler-colonial-invader army. It was from this building that soldiers rode out into the native 'wilderness' and pushed Kaurna people out of the newly formed city square, 'protecting' the white 'free' settlers.

The outside walls, arched doorway, staircase, balcony and lawns of the Armoury building as well as the back wall of the South Australian State Library were identified as possible sites for *Unbound Sovereign Acts II* performance during the TARNANTHI festival. The Unbound artists discussed this site and its historical significance as a possible performance space with local Aboriginal people and researchers, in particular Uncle Lewis O'Brien who has collaborated in many of the previous events that we have collectively staged.

During the second half of the second performance for TARNANTHI we built a fire on the lawn out the front of the Armoury building, Uncle Lewis burned salt-bush and hop-bush and sweet wood and smoked the outside of the space and building. We then led the audience with our small mobile battery- operated projectors casting poems and little films; from the State Library along the back wall of the Mortlock Library and South Australian Museum to the front lawns of the Armoury building. We projected; individually and collectively; our words; onto the ground, the walls, the audience, each other; into the doorways of the Armoury building. There was also a scaffold on the armoury lawn and from there was projected onto the arched stairway of the Armoury a set of animated poems, accompanied by photographs of the Sovereign Fleet of goddesses. The final moments of this performance involved us cutting our way out and removing our bark skirts and climbing the outside stairs of the Armoury to the second-floor landing-balcony where Ulalka looked out over the audience and sang her mother's poem '*Aboriginal Heritage'* with her niece Inawanji's musical composition and accompanying violin.

it felt as though we were repatriating love for our families[262]

there are few alternative narratives to this place, this was our offering[263]

The Armoury has specific meaning for Aboriginal people because of its role as a site of one of the epi-centres for 'physical anthropology' and 'race-science' both nationally and globally. It was during this time of 'scientific' colonialism, of the evil violent 'research' that swept our collective lands that this building remains a significant site for Aboriginal peoples. The Armoury Building served as a space to dissect and de-flesh Aboriginal people's bodies to 'study' and 'trade' with other museums and university institutions nationally and internationally. We are still trying to get our old peoples returned home. Our peoples bodies were moved through this place.

We are told that the building contains a slate table where these acts of violence on our ancestors occurred. We never entered inside this building but we bathe the outside walls with smoke and projected love poems to our ancestors.

The physical-anthropology that occurred out of the South Australian Museum and Adelaide University is not a well-known part of our local history, and no-where on or in the Armoury building are there any signs that indicate what has occurred within, Cressida Fforde's research illuminates these facts in detail:

[262] Harkin, Natalie (2016), video interview, West Lakes.
[263] Tur, Simone Ulalka (2016) video interview, West Lakes.

> Less well known is that in Adelaide in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century a number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal skeletal remains and body parts were taken from the hospital morgue and university dissecting rooms and donated to collections overseas.[264]

The rationale for this global trade in human remains formed part of the research conducted by the Unbound artist collective during the lead up to the performance for TARNANTHI in 2015.[265] The knowledge of this activity directly and indirectly informed our performance. We worked carefully in and around this space to honour our ancestors.

Initially my PhD research had been a lot more directly focussed on what collections and objects and documents were held *by* these institutions. I was seeking the bust-cast made by Tindale of my great-grandmother's head and shoulders, I was seeking closure for my family. Since setting out on this research journey it has become clear that the cast would have been duplicated and 'traded', or as Foucault describes of modernity, 'doubling' occurred. These reproductions could be held in many places. So for me what has become more important to understand is the contexts of these acts of physical and ideological violence, and to respond and change the impact of this act on future generations through creative acts of strength and vulnerability and transformation. These creative performances are a direct and sovereign response to the colonial 'theft of the body', rendering the body "a territory of cultural and political

[264] Fforde, C. (2002). Collection, repatriation and identity. The Dead and Their Possessions: Repatriation in principle, policy and practice. C. Fforde, J. Hubert and P. Turnbull. New York and London, Routledge: 26.
[265] particular thanks for this research consultation goes to Steve Hemming and Gus Worby.

maneuver."[266] This has been the work, understanding how not to allow this cast to define my life. The cast is the coloniser's representation, the coloniser's ideology. While we need to understand this form of violent-ideological –attempted- colonial-sovereignty, this understanding does not provide us with freedom from its violence. It is not a place for us to dwell.

[266] Hortense Spiller cited in Browne, S. (2015). Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness. Durham and London, Duke University Press: 93.

Telling Our Own Stories

At the beginning of his article “The Museum as Method”, Professor Nicholas Thomas, writing from his desk at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University suggests:

> Museums cannot escape the association of anachronism; they connote colonial dustiness. Yet in the early 21st century they are probably more successful than ever before – they attract more visitors, they loom larger in cultural life, and they are better resourced financially.[267]

Strangely ‘colonial dustiness’ is not the first thing that comes to my mind when I think of museums. For many Aboriginal peoples and others whose cultural heritage and identities these institutions still attempt to define and contain, ‘colonial dustiness’ is not ever a sufficient description. It seems a rather sly form of trickery to hide behind this kind of representation. This description of museums continues the violent pitch of colonialism as a *natural* unfolding, with museums as innocent historical grandparents of the societies in which we now live. Museums welcoming school children through their doors to endow them with some scientific-truth-memories, a woven blanket, a carved stick, primitive man, a biscuit and a dinosaur bone. But for those of us who have survived the cold blooded epistemological violence of this invasion of our lands, these ‘collections’ represent the endeavours of thieves disguised as explorers and butterfly collectors; ‘scientists’ fervently enacting ideas of eugenics upon our beautiful black bodies. These spaces are still closely guarded by

[267] Thomas, N. (2010). "The Museum as Method." Museum Anthropology 33(1): 4.

the cynical white elite, those seeking to maintain control of the representation of the representation of history into the future.

It is with this particular *innocent* cynicism that Thomas relegates Aboriginal peoples' perspectives on *The Museum* as cultural institution as follows;

> If the issues that critical discourse scholars identified remain present, it makes a difference now that many of the poachers have turned gatekeepers. Critics, including Indigenous activists, have become curators, and the newer generation of curators has been trained by critics.[268]

The possibility of 'poachers' turning into 'gatekeepers' is a particularly divisive expression of the power relationships at play here, I was unaware that I was ever poaching/ trespassing in the colonising collections taken of my ancestral heritage, as an Aboriginal person. Thomas argues that because there are now Aboriginal people working within Museum Institutions as 'curators', and that now in many institutions consultation occurs with 'originating communities' somehow the 'issue of representation is no longer the right place to start.'[269] bell hooks describes this superior cynicism so beautifully when speaking of storytelling:

> *No need to hear your voice when I can speak about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way.*

[268] Ibid: 7.
[269] ibid: 7.

> *Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer, the speaking subject and you are now at the center of my talk.*[270]

Those who position themselves as colonisers that are our contemporaries need to be responded to. Where if not with representation do we begin with these collections? What Thomas outlines as an alternative approach is a return to the authority of *anthropologist* rambling through the fields with his tent and diary, 'only weakly guided by theory' so that he may 'happen upon' the world with 'antiquarian curiosity', this he argues is a potent method because:

> a preparedness to encounter things and consider them amounts to a responsiveness to forms of material evidence beneath or at odds with canonical ethnographies, national histories, reifications of local heritage- and subaltern narratives. In other words, "happening upon" brings the question of "what else is there?" to the fore.[271]

Thomas goes on to lament the days when anthropologists such as Margaret Mead who wrote about the 'sexual lives of primitive societies' were a part of popular culture[272]. When Mead's anthropological exploits of tromping through the jungle inquiring into 'primitive' adolescent sex lives were on bestseller lists. Thomas struggles with the fact that people no longer 'read' anthropology in books, but they

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[270] hooks, b. (1990). marginality as a site of resistance. Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures. R. Ferguson, M. Gever, T. T. Minh-ha and C. West. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England., The New Museum of Contemporary Art**:** 343.
[271] Ibid: 7
[272] Mead, M. (1939). From the South Seas: Studies of Adolescence and Sex in Primitive Societies. New York, William Morrow.

still go to museums to seek these answers about science, culture and history, progress, civilisation.

I can draw insight into Mead's attitudes toward the *colonised Indigenous* peoples as 'destroyed' peoples from her autobiography, *Blackberry Winter: My Earlier Years,* where she writes about 'The Years between Field Trips' as follows[273]:

> The stance of American Indians, a stance they had cultivated through generations of culture contact, was very alien to us, accustomed as we were to Oceanic peoples who, however dour and glum they might be, were dour and glum in ways that were more intelligible. Then there was the dismal sense that the people themselves were going backward. We got to know two magnificent old people who had been tribal interpreters; they had been educated in Quaker homes and spoke precise and fluent English. But the next generation had been sent to schools for Indians,[…] Drunkenness was rife. Broken homes, neglected children, and general social disorganization were evident everywhere.[274]

This is the calm violence of the academy, the calm violence of colonialism. These sweeping statements are used to underpin policy and law and political movements built on difference, loss and blame. I watched the speech given by the conservative UK politician Boris Johnson announcing that he would not run for leader of the Conservative party after the 'Brexit 2016' referendum vote where the UK decided to

[273] Mead, M. (1972). Blackberry Winter: My Earlier Years, Angus & Robertson Publishers: 193.
[274] Ibid: 191.

exit from the European Union. At some point in his speech Johnson boasted that the UK is a major world tourist destination, and that the British Museum welcomed 6.8 million visitors through its doors in 2015, more visitors than the entire country of Belgium annually[275]. This caused me to reflect again upon Thomas's article. What were these 6.8 million people seeking when they chose to make a visit to the British Museum? How does the museum influence the ideas of grand historical narratives? How do these visitors understand the representational and cultural legacy of colonialism and anthropology? Seeking to see the successfully displaced, colonised and pillaged wonders of the world? Seeking to witness how far we have collectively evolved from the stone age? Thomas asks:

> Does anthropology remain the discipline that informs anthropological collections- to be, in turn informed by them? What kinds of knowledge underpin the interpretation of collections?[276]

The idea that the interpretation of 'anthropology' as it was understood for the likes of Mead and Levi-Strauss in the 1950's remains the 'anthropology' still understood by Thomas' and other conservative voices attempting to dominate a *neutral objective* voice in the space of history, ethnography, anthropology as legitimate 'research' and 'disciplinary knowledge' presiding over Indigenous 'cultural difference' is disturbing to say the least. That these ideas are still published at the centre of these conversations despite all of the academic articulations from within cultural studies and the new materialist and post-structuralist critiques of power relationships says a

[275] https://www.facebook.com/borisjohnson/posts/10153796343431317
[276] Thomas, N. (2010). "The Museum as Method." Museum Anthropology **33**(1): 4.

lot about the (re)centring possessiveness of white knowledge. It also speaks of a lack of inter-disciplinarity within academia. Thomas's stance says something profound about the epistemic ambivalence recreating itself in the power relations of these institutional spaces. The issues relating to power and voice and ambivalence identified at the beginning of this research journey into the archive are still very much there. Despite this the power of the gaze has shifted and refracted, and we have all been changed in the process. As Barad articulates this is not about reflection but rather defraction:

> …diffraction patterns record the history of interaction, interference, reinforcement, difference. Diffraction is about heterogeneous history, not about originals. Unlike reflections, diffractions do not displace the same elsewhere, in more or less distorted form, thereby giving rise to industries of [story-making about origins and truths]. Rather, diffraction can be a metaphor for another kind of critical consciousness.[277]

We have never stopped being present. As Leanne Simpson says:

> *If you would just read more post colonial theory, you'd understand that your anger is part of the binary of colonialism and therefore colonial and if you just take some of the things from the settlers and some of the things from your ancestors, you'll find you can weave them into a really nice tapestry, which*

[277] Barad, K., et al. (2012). "3. "Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers"; Interview with Karen Barad." New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies.

> *will make the colonisers feel ambivalent and then you've altered the power structure.*[278]

While we interpret and represent these relationships of power we also expect greater complexity of understanding in the critical writing and curatorial institutions that surround us. As Léuli Eshrāghi beautifully articulates when describing the exhibition *Sovereignty* at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) we as Indigenous peoples now expect more from all cultural institutions, including the teachings that surround our cultural materials:

> Key to understanding and engaging with this exhibition is a humble engagement with Indigenous knowledges, art and ceremonial practices, and living sovereign First Nations peoples and territories. We are at a crossroads in the journey of settler colonial states, institutions and communities beginning relationships with sovereign First Nations across the lands and waters called Australia. Tokenised representation in all manner of art schools, panels, exhibitions and public programming of local and global Indigenous peoples is normalised. It is nowhere near ideal.[279]

Professor Marcia Langton has over a number of decades called for critical communities and increased academic engagement with Indigenous representations, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cinema and art[280], this call has been

[278] Simpson, L. (2015). Islands of Decolonial Love: Stories and Songs. Winnipeg, ARP Books: 33-34.
[279] Eshrāghi, L. (2017). "'o oganu'u tupu: sovereign territories." 4A Papers(Issue 2).
[280] See for example Marcia Langton, 1993, 'Well I heard it on the Radio and I saw it on the Television": An Essay for the Australian Film Commission on the Politics and Aesthetics of Filmmaking by and about Aboriginal People and Things. Australian Film Commission.

reiterated in different ways by various Aboriginal visual artists and filmmakers who for many reasons are resistant to the current standard of published 'criticism' as well as being cast into particular racialised and geographical categories related to the construction of Aboriginal identities and ideas of *authenticity* in Aboriginal Art, Cinema, Theatre, Literature or Song. Langton has articulated this:

> Critics find it difficult to discuss Aboriginal works because of an almost complete absence of critical theory, knowledge and sensibility towards Aboriginal film and video production. There are some important exceptions, mostly in specialist literature. It is not widely read…
>
> …there is no sizeable body of literature that provides an informed anti-colonial critique of the films and videos *about* Aboriginal people….[281]

Limited work opportunities and superficially over simplified discussions about local histories, content or knowledges coupled with being ignored by the white cultural mainstream as 'too difficult' to relate to, or 'too political' to engage with are issues Indigenous artists face throughout their careers. In globalised economies larger cities dominate arts and cultural market places, drawing Indigenous creative producers to big cities and these globalised economies fundamentally change the sovereign body and speaking positionality of art practice. We are often away from our grandparent's or great-grandparent's places of birth, and Aboriginal artists are often economically driven to produce work for mainly middle class white audiences who can afford to

[281] Langton, M. (2003). Aboriginal Art and Film the Politics of Representation. Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians. M. Grossman. Melbourne University Press: 113.

see, buy and sponsor ‘art’. In the Australian context this has led to east -coast - centric opportunities for ‘pan-Aboriginal’ ‘traditional’, ‘urban’ ‘contemporary’ content. Indigenous creative producers are often asked about their audience, especially in cinema and the expectation that the film or content will be consumable and understood by a white audience is often one criteria for production of a particular *type* of content driven by non-Indigenous ideas, curiosities or ignorance in a highly competitive and diminishing sector of funding. The arts in Australia are predominantly funded by private wealthy philanthropic individuals as well as state organisations, and the unpaid labor of many artists. Those who can afford to be educated as arts professionals and administrators and work into arts institutions and organisations are often from white middleclass backgrounds, so it follows that the ways that stories are curated, funded and criticised are often mediated through the expectations and understandings of white arts administrators and philanthropists. This equally applies to academia and cultural critique more broadly.

The structural complexities and theoretical conditions and constraints that are associated with the development of ‘critical communities’ are many. Many of these constraints are due to limited capacities within academic and institutional disciplines of art and cultures and are directly impacted through the economic investment more broadly in cultural and arts practices. If developed these ‘critical voices’ should have the potential to engage in sophisticated ‘critiques’ or criticisms of Aboriginal art and representations. This potential critical community needs to navigate the colonised political space without falling into individualised attacks that are common within the culture of white-liberal-individualism, critical attacks that fail to consider the potential for creative-collectivity or allied supportive communities of practice, and

intergenerational transmission of knowledges as fundamentally Indigenous methodologies of cultural continuance and of engaged decolonisation. Vernon Ah Kee questions the role and value of white criticism:

> As Blackfellas, if we were to develop models for criticism that service our own societies and political beliefs then the value of criticism would be clear. If we were to develop models for criticism that were designed to strengthen our communities and individual sense of self then the value of criticism would be clear.[282]

The development of critical communities should also be able to critique the epistemologically violent ideologies of 'high' culture and art, which arm in arm with colonialism serve to construct the 'savage primitive' in its polarised reflection. An 'art' community that consciously or unconsciously touts *superiority* and *authority* of 'cultural voice' and 'cultural aesthetic' and dictates the movements of and funding for artistic form and representations without ever fully considering what it might mean to be systemically excluded and objectified from the cultural/political landscape needs to be challenged; how these spaces are decolonised are yet to be decided.
While we have the following blurbs for public lectures coming from the likes of Professor Ian Mclean at the University of Melbourne, it seems we have a long way to go:

[282] Ah-Kee, V. and D. Browning (2013). "Let's Be Polite." Artlink **33**(2): 43.

> In Australia, Indigenous art burst on the Australian contemporary art scene in the 1980s without ever having been modern. It seemingly jumped from the category of primitive art to contemporary art, overnight catapulting some individuals from the pre-modern to the contemporary. One man, Warlimpirrnga Tjapaltjarri, walked out of the desert from a hunter gathered existence in 1984 and straight into the life of a professional artist. How can this phenomenon be explained?[283]

McLean and his contemporaries persist in their attempts to dictate the terms of the construction of our sovereign beings but for those who have lived through the horrific categorisation of eugenics the tables have turned. We no longer accept these descriptions. My friend and fellow First Nations Tongan artist Latai Funaki Taumoepeau responded to this statement by McLean with the following:

> The more ancient I am the more contemporary my practice. Our time is cyclical, not linear.[284]

In his paper '*Re-reading Indigenous Cinema: Criticism, White liberal guilt and otherness*, Stephen Gaunson argues that Indigenous cinema is not often critiqued on the basis of 'cinematic aesthetic' but rather critiqued on 'it's political content' as though it is important to separate these ideas of *aesthetics* and *politics* and that they could somehow exist in exclusion of each other. He argues that many university cinematic courses and non-Indigenous students/ audience members within

[283] McLean, I. (2017). Indigenous Art: Can it be contemporary art without already being modern? Mellon Indigenous Art Program. University of Virginia, College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. October 5th

[284] Taumoepeau, L.F. (2017) personal communication, Climate Century Lab, Vitalstatistix Adelaide, 29/12/17.

Australian production and education contexts leave Indigenous content out of programming and curriculum, as it does not 'fit into' the categories prescribed by cinema studies or content policy and students are uninterested or find the content 'to heavy', or perceive the area to be 'guilt ridden'[285]. This perception of Indigenous content in cinema has for many years been cited as a reason why Aboriginal representation was not a popular area of study within cinema, and also often did poorly at the box office. As articulated by Tom O Regan in his volume on Australian National Cinema:

> When Fred Schepisi's *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* came out it died in the box-office after eleven weeks. Schepisi lost a lot of his personal savings accumulated over a decade of working as a television commercials director. He was attacked from all sides. Film-maker Terry Bourke claimed this film and Weirs *Last Wave* had led Australian film-making away from commercial values and genre-filmmaking. Veteran director and former Channel 9 boss Ken G. Hall weighed in by claiming that Schepisi should have known that films about Aborigines are box-office poison.[286]

I would argue that the reason these representations were *box-office poison* and generated a lack of interest by students in relation to the content are as much to do with the white-male-filmmakers and non-Indigenous academics inability to understand representation and the complexity of Aboriginal experiences and

[285] Gaunson, S. (2013). "Re-reading Indigenous cinema: criticism, white liberal guilt and otherness." Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies **Volume 27** (6): 763-769.
[286] Tom O' Regan, 2005, *Australian National Cinema,* Routledge, London and New York: 59.

identities as they are ability of Australian audiences to be open to or engage with Indigenous stories.

A key issue that is not addressed in Gaunson's paper relates to the very notion of the construction of a 'cinematic aesthetic' and how such ideas of cultural canons and aesthetics are defined. These ideas of *aesthetics* are not politically neutral, and represent the interests of individual author(ity) and have foundational assumptions about colonising, 'civilising' cultures. How and by whom aesthetics are defined and to whom these ideas of aesthetics are shared and ultimately benefit are also intensely political positionings. There is a 'niche' market of Australian cinema that has emerged in the shadow of Hollywood and how this Australian patriarchal cinematic narrative has been funded as a nation-building-exercise that has aided colonialist and neo-colonialist agendas is another area that needs more focussed critique.

Collective Voices

Romaine Moreton's brilliant production *One Billion Beats*[287] brings creative, spoken, sung and embodied multimedia perspectives to colonial histories that have been dominated by non-Indigenous representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The production was informed by the extensive research conducted by Moreton into the film and sound histories of Aboriginal people, in particular those contained in the Australian Film and Sound Archive. These representations of our peoples continue to be largely dominated by the creative productions and pursuits of

[287] Moreton, R. (2016). One Billion Beats. Campbelltown Arts Theatre, Binung Boorigan.

white men[288], and reflect larger cultural narratives of *terra nullius*, assimilation and protectionism. The fact that so little research has been done on this National archive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation is another example of ongoing issues related to the cycles of silencing representation and (in)visibility of Indigenous voices and being. Native American Indian artist Jimmie Durham expresses this closed and colonising representational narrative cycle as follows:

> The Master Narrative of the U.S. proclaims that there were no 'Indians' in the country, simply wilderness. Then, that the 'Indians' were savages *in need of* the U.S.. Then, that the 'Indians' all died, unfortunately. Then, that 'Indians' today are (a) basically happy with the situation, and (b) not the real 'Indians'. Then, most importantly, that that is the complete story. Nothing contrary can be heard. Europeans might at least search for 'authenticity' among the primitives, but Americans already know the complete story. The narrative is complete and known and not important.[289]

The documentation of this seemingly *complete* representational master narrative as outlined by Durham in the Australian colonised context requires focused attention as argued by Marcia Langton:

> History is another problem. In film, as in other media, there is a dense history of racist, distorted and often offensive representation of Aboriginal people. Michael Leigh estimates that a staggering 6000 films have been made about

[288] See Professor Deb Verhoeven's mapping of male creatives in the film industry in Australia: http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-16/women-arent-the-problem-in-the-film-industry-men-are/8026630
[289] Durham, J. (1990). "Cowboys and ..." Third Text **12**: 10.

> Aborigines. Research and critique by the few critical writers is diminished to the size of a family of ants in comparison to the elephant of colonial representation.[290]

Goenpul woman from Minjerribah and distinguished Quandamooka Professor Aileen Moreton- Robinson refers to the lack of nuanced understandings of Aboriginal peoples representations as part of the ways that white knowledges reproduce themselves in the form of 'white possessive'[291].

Vernon Ah Kee makes important points in the discussion of 'critique' in his interview with Daniel Browning in Artlink Indigenous 2013. Beginning with his work 'Let's be polite about Aboriginal Art', Ah Kee calls for engaged and informed critique. Ah Kee expresses clearly the inability of many non-Indigenous representations to maintain sustained and informed understandings of Aboriginal politics, art, histories, ontologies without appropriating knowledges. As Ah Kee clearly states:

> I don't know if the problem is an issue of 'honest' criticism, I think it's more a question of 'denial'. I think Australia is largely a culture of denial. If this country is to maintain its facade of 'goodness', it necessarily must engineer significant levels of denial of many of the things we see before our eyes everyday and pretend they are not real, or that they are invisible. I do not know if this country is capable of developing the necessary tools required to conquer its

[290] Langton, M. (2003). Aboriginal Art and Film the Politics of Representation. Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians. M. Grossman. Melbourne University Press: 113.
[291] Moreton-Robinson, A. (2015). The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
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> culture of denial, I do know that it currently does not possess them. Australia admitting to itself that it is not a good country would be a logical first step toward a more honest criticism I would think.[292]

Ah Kee is asking complex questions of our cultural space. Who can engage in a meaningful discussion about such ideas? What becomes clear in this dialogue is that the conversation continues to come back to the same point. The context of criticism, the capacity of Aboriginal communities to engage in such discussions of knowledge/power/ culture and for those discussions to be meaningful and have real benefit for Indigenous communities. Who benefits and how cultures are defined as well as the perceived and actual benefit for speaking positions of those who make the critique are often discussions that non-Indigenous commentators fail to have when considering their own speaking position and engagement with 'criticism' of Aboriginal culture. There are I think a number of issues that could be discussed in more depth relating to this cycle of relational representation.

Australia as a settler-state along with many other colonised countries globally continues to operate within what has been recently described in South Africa as an 'ignorance contract'[293] where the majority of the non-Indigenous population actively choose not to be aware in any great detail of their own recent violent and oppressive colonial histories. This widespread identity of ignorance forms the basis of much continued physical and cultural occupation of the country[294]. The 'issue with

[292] Ah Kee, V. and D. Browning (2013). "Let's Be Polite." Artlink **33**(2): 43.

[293] See for example: Marschall, S. (2012). "Memory and Identity in South Africa: Contradictions and Ambiguities in the Process of Post-Apartheid Memorialization." Visual Anthropology **25**(3): 189-204.

[294] see the content of the 9-metre-high-stack of *Racist Texts* (2017) Ali Gumillya Baker.

education' and how representations are formed are key neo-colonial imperatives that rely on the majority of the non- Indigenous White Australian population remaining ignorant of the recent history of this country and unable to critique the foundational racist law and policy that have formed this country's cultural, political and legal landscape. This ignorance is by no means accidental or innocent and continues to serve neo-colonial purposes. It is no accident that local Indigenous history has not been not taught in the majority of Australian schools and has not been included as a standard part of a national curriculum. What happens when Indigenous artists refuse to make work for a white audience?[295] What happens when Indigenous artists refuse to work individually, when we work collectively and toward intergenerational knowledge transmission? What happens if the work in cinema or artistic practice no longer cares to speak to the non-Indigenous 'mainstream', but it speaks instead to those in Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities who listen, who are informed and are interested in the collective-critical-cultural renewal that is emerging from the shadow of the foundational-racist-texts. These texts that have (in)formed the political and aesthetic landscapes in this colonised country and many other colonised lands globally.

Any discussion of 'Aboriginality' within these broader contexts of *ambivalent ignorance* by many non-Aboriginal academics within discourses of Visual Arts and Cinema are often theoretical discussions and more often than not these discourses have been built on flawed analysis, with a myriad of essentialised assumptions or paternalistic speaking positions that protect white experts in continuing academic *expertise* and *employment*. As Langton has pointed out, there are and continue to

[295] For ideas of refusal see: Simpson, A. (2014). Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States. Durham and London, Duke University Press.

be far more textual representations of some mythical 'Aboriginality' in the archive and libraries that are constructed by non-Indigenous people than by Aboriginal people about ourselves[296]. As Alexis Wright articulates:

> So I understood that the media had enormous power to influence public thinking and how we thought about ourselves. And it was very clear to me that the stories that Aboriginal people saw as important about ourselves—a self-defined vision of the future—hardly ever featured in the media. The spirit of our voices was censured through public media campaigns in which we were condemned if we spoke about issues fundamental to us such as Aboriginal rights, treaties, sovereignty, compensation, self-government, or even if we spoke at all in a dissenting way during the implementation of the Intervention. One could go back through every Aboriginal issue through the decades and say we have been no stranger to media campaigns intended to undermine the implementation of issues of importance to us such as national land rights, native title, mining and other resource developments, or to times where we have had to fight the wedge politics of race-based elections.[297]

These continuing white-representations of how non-Indigenous Australia imagine 'aesthetics' and 'use' and 'importance' of cultural work, as well as attempts at the definition of authenticity are often the 'bad' representations in every sense of the word bad, and they are difficult and often intimidating to understand, unpack and rearticulate for both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people. These

[296] Langton, M. (1993). 'Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television...' An essay for the Australian Film Commission on the politics and aesthetics of filmmaking by and about Aboriginal people and things. Woolloomooloo, Australian Film Commission.
[297] Wright, A. (Summer 2016). "What Happens When You Tell Someone Else's Story?" Meanjin **75**(4).

representations form the basis of what many Aboriginal people have had to read about themselves should they go looking for representations of themselves in the library or museum or archive. These representations have sought to dehumanise our people, and render us illiterate and mute and (hyper)-(in)visible within the larger important narratives and debates about cultural worth, meaning and the continuing philosophical understandings around 'history' narratives and constructions of 'cultural values' like 'civilization' and 'modernity'. It is these binaries of civilised/ savage and modern/primitive, that Aboriginal people have been forced to dialogue with because our very colonised *being* serves the colonisers perceived *knowing* of these ideas. When Gaunsen accuses critical communities of not being hard enough on 'bad' Aboriginal Cinema, he fails to view this work within the contexts of the collective conversations that Aboriginal artists want to have within our communities and each other:

> The problem of Indigenous cinema has been a critical tendency to safeguard the films from critical and negative responses. There is nothing wrong with discussing a film's badness as long as that discussion delves and opens other areas of analysis and criticism. Some thing (what-ever that 'thing' may be) can only be appreciated as 'good' if there is an equal understanding of its 'bad'.[298]

Who might be in a better position to speak regarding the representation and transformation of our identities as Aboriginal peoples within contemporary cultural criticism? The worth of our cultural production within Indigenous communities is often misunderstood.

[298] Gaunson, S. (2013). "Re-reading Indigenous cinema: criticism, white liberal guilt and otherness." Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies **Volume 27** (6): 763-769.

When considering these possessive understandings and reflecting on Gaunson's lack of meaningful engagement with Aboriginal philosophy and scholarship around identity construction there is a continued ambivalence to the importance of Indigenous representations across all forms of arts and culture. Gaunson chooses to cite non-Indigenous feminist intellectual Germaine Greer when speaking about Aboriginal peoples identity construction as 'culturally learnt behaviour'[299].

Gaunson's paper suggests a need for 'Indigenous' cinema to be read within the medium and discipline of cinema studies but somehow outside the social-political contexts of the society in which that cinema was produced. This raises all kinds of complex disciplinary contradictions. While Gaunson's work does mention Marcia Langton, he fails to reference other Indigenous academics who write on issues of history, art, representation and identity, instead choosing the work of writers like Germaine Greer who make the claim, again following from Langton's ground breaking work in *I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television,*[300] that the 'concept of Aboriginality is a learnt cultural behaviour' and that cinema plays a crucial role in the construction of identity in popular social dialogues on these concepts.[301]

What then is the difference between someone like Greer making such a statement compared to Marcia Langton's work on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation? Like all cultural identities aspects of Aboriginality could be described

[299] Gaunson, S. (2013). "Re-reading Indigenous cinema: criticism, white liberal guilt and otherness." Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies **Volume 27** (6): 763-769
[300] Langton, M. (1993). 'Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television...' An essay for the Australian Film Commission on the politics and aesthetics of filmmaking by and about Aboriginal people and things. Woolloomooloo, Australian Film Commission.
[301] Gaunson, S. (2013). "Re-reading Indigenous cinema: criticism, white liberal guilt and otherness." Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies **Volume 27** (6): 763-769.

as learnt cultural behaviour, though these sweeping statements coming from non-Indigenous scholars such as Greer or Gaunsen, Thomas or McLean or Bolt fail to address the fact that *Aboriginality* cannot ever be solely defined by a set of pre-determined essentialised cultural behaviours, and that Indigenous identities are always located on specific lands, and are also located in the present. These relationships to place and each other are not all *learnt* but also inherited and non-Indigenous people cannot be the experts on what constitutes our authenticity. Aboriginal peoples have always and will continue to change the nature of the way we are as cultural beings. As Jimmie Durham so succinctly highlights we continue to resist the seemingly complete representational construction of ourselves.

While all cultural identity including artistic practice could be described by critics as *partially learnt* there is nothing arbitrary about our ongoing inherited connections, relationships and never-ceded rights as Aboriginal people with our countries within colonised Australia, no matter which legislation, attempts at Native Title extinguishment, bad policy and hollow reconciliation statements are produced. There is an ongoing need for shared cultural reckoning of our own violent political/cultural history. These are some of our collective and undeniable truths.

These conservative non-Indigenous voices occupy space and this noise continually attempts to drown out alternative perspectives or dialogue that we continue to engage in with each other. See for example the following infuriating statement by Ian McLean:

> There is nothing mysterious about what indigenous artists want. They want the same thing as most people: a fair slice of the pie. How to get it, is a much more difficult question to answer. To even find a seat at the table, indigenous art has to first be accepted as contemporary art. This has been its defining struggle in the modern era. The problem, at least until recently, was that the Western tradition of modernism circumscribed the terms of contemporary art. This meant that indigenous artists had first to prove their modernity, a Catch-22 game that they could never win without disavowing their indigeneity.[302]

Ian McLean as a non-Indigenous academic chooses to answer his own theoretical question of what Aboriginal artists *want*. This particular white knowing is utilised without bothering to quote any Aboriginal person.

In some ways this is laughable and says a lot about the arrogance of McLean's self-perceived right of voice in this space. The fact that he assumes the role of 'expert' of '*most people'* whoever they are in this context, that he chooses to capitalise Western and leave *indigenous* in lower case, and that he thinks he has a full measure of the processes of disavowal of Indigeneity, all speak volumes about the capacity of non-Indigenous writers such as Mc Lean to define Aboriginal art. There are a particular set of non-Aboriginal academics and 'critics' who benefit from being 'the expert'. These narratives of calm epistemological violence/ power can no longer monopolise the spaces of critique, interpretation and approval of Aboriginal art, identity and culture. These voices are attempting to wield the same 'protector voice' as that of the

[302]McLean, I. (2013). "Surviving 'The Contemporary': What indigenous artists want, and how to get it." Broadsheet **42**(3).

Protector of Aborigines such as Daisy Bates or Joseph Penhall, and with the sweep of a pen approve, deny, dismiss. Aboriginal artists like Vernon Ah Kee counter the narratives of McLean and Nicolas Thomas with the following refusal to engage in the terms of white criticism. Ah Kee states:

> If we don't have criticism we can only aspire to mediocrity. I just don't believe we need to keep developing models that only serve to explain our position to Whitefellas. I just don't believe we need to keep blindly using already established models for criticism that Whitefellas have developed so that they can negotiate uncomfortable subject matter on their own terms.[303]

Richard Bell, also engages in useful and important critiques of white critique and the broader art museum and representation industry in his important theoretical work *Bells Theorem*, I particularly like the section on Anthropologists:

> Indigenous cultures throughout the world have been infested by plagues of anthropologists down through the ages. Never more so than during the last three decades here in Australia. We have been the most studied creatures on the earth. They know more about us than we know about ourselves. Should you ask an Aboriginal person how they're feeling the most appropriate answer would be, 'Wait 'til I ask my anthropologist.'[304]

[303] Ah-Kee, V. and D. Browning (2013). "Let's Be Polite." Artlink **33**(2): 43.
[304] Bell, R. (2007). Richard Bell: Positivity. Brisbane, Institute of Modern Art: 31

In order to 'critique' Aboriginal art, one must first understand the ideas being represented and these understandings should be longitudinal, intra-disciplinary, sophisticated, informed as well as comparative, collective and from my perspective and for our communities they must also be operating from a praxis of love. What I mean by this is through an understanding of how my old people taught me, loved me, nurtured me and also challenged me and were critical. I was never alone in my representation of our collective selves. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, speaks about power and kindness in this way:

> I don't want us to be mean, I don't want us to behave in mean ways to each other, and I don't want to see our meanness on display when I am in places where I'm the only Māori in the room. It hurts. But the other thing is I don't think we need to be mean, we just simply need to learn the protocols of feedback and develop new ones. […] I always knew as a teacher that one of the powers that a teacher or educator has is to mess with people's minds. It is a very tapu power. But also as a researcher you have the power to mess with people's minds. And as someone who is good in the art of rhetoric you have the power to mess with people's minds. Treat that power with humility and understand that power used wrongly hurts. So it is not enough to intend to be good; it is really important to try and practice the art of being good in public talk.[305]

We can look to public institutions like State Galleries all over the world and see that there is a movement of Aboriginal curators who are being employed often for the first

[305] Smith, L. T. (2013). Live Up to Our Talk. He Manawa Whenua Conference. University of Waikato.

time in these enormous and influential public institutions and are engaged in sophisticated and thoughtful discussion on such public construction of cultural identities, for example the following statement from the recently appointed and first curator of Indigenous and Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Anishinaabe curator Wanda Nanibush:

> I don't criticize, she says after some consideration. That's not my approach. I look for avenues of transformation, and I feed them. I'm always looking to generate something, as opposed to just taking something apart.[306]

While many may continue to want to contest these ideas, we know, it is our long relationships with each other and our collective sovereignty within our countries and the lack of any formal and longstanding settlement or agreement with the coloniser that makes Indigenous peoples a threat to every other idea of Australia as a cultured, good, fair, civilized or just nation. Ah Kee challenges the differences between 'culture' and identity' emerging from anthropology as follows:

> A cultural position in Australia assumes a kind of demarcated alignment where we are encouraged to subscribe to and conform to pre-existing and firmly established systems of belief and practices called 'culture'. 'Identity' on the other hand, is a political position.[307]

[306] Berry, D. (2016) How the AGO is finally paying tribute to the Indigenous art it previously didn't appreciate, National Post, October 25th 2016.
[307] Ah-Kee, V. and D. Browning (2013). "Let's Be Polite…" Artlink **33**(2): 42

What then is important to consider about cultural production in relation to anthropology, museum practice and cultural criticism more broadly? When we think about cultural continuance it has to be about ongoing health and cultural activity as part of a contribution to the reproduction of wellbeing as Indigenous sovereign peoples.

When I reflect on the circumstances of my grandmother and great- grandmother's lives and their passing, I also reflect that as a granddaughter I want healthy representations of these women to give to my children. This is really about us all past present future. As Audre Lorde said:

> I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood. That the speaking profits me, beyond any other effect.[308]

As we journey back to lawful-relational-responsibility for our story telling of past-present-future we must continue our collaborative-loving-critical-practice. This work offers a contribution to that struggle, and will continue to collectively unfold. We will challenge and reject the hateful enactments of greed hate upon our bodies and lands. We can tell our own stories and our collective voices are gathering. We will maintain our relationships with our ancestors and leave critical-loving messages for the future. My grandmothers taught me this.

[308] Lorde, A. (1982). The Cancer Journals. US, Spinsters Ink: 17.

Future Sovereign Acts

As I drive along Marion Rd. at Netley in Adelaide on Kaurna land I often pass the industrial precinct where the South Australian Museum currently holds the part of its collections that are not on display on North Terrace. I know that in these huge sheds are the human remains of over a thousand of our old people. I also know that the majority of the thousands of people who travel past this complex in cars every day would have no idea of what is contained therein. I also know that many of those who drive past have no understanding of the genocidal practices of colonial states upon Aboriginal peoples bodies globally.

This work responds to the violent representational practices of colonisation. It artistically and collectively responds to the ways that the Protector of Aborigines records and the collections of colonial institutions contain and restrict representational understandings of Indigenous peoples. This work provides opportunities to engage in both mourning, remembering and transforming the crimes of re-articulation. This ongoing creative project asks; what is *useful* and *important* to understand about violent colonial practices of racialisation, abjection and oppression? The work asks what are the ethical conditions for freedom for Indigenous peoples who exist both within and outside of the neo-colonial settler state? How might we represent ourselves and be both empowered and collectively free? What is the essence of our lives that lies beyond government or institutional control? How can we resist isolation as Aboriginal artists and academics?

Our collective Sovereign Acts continue.

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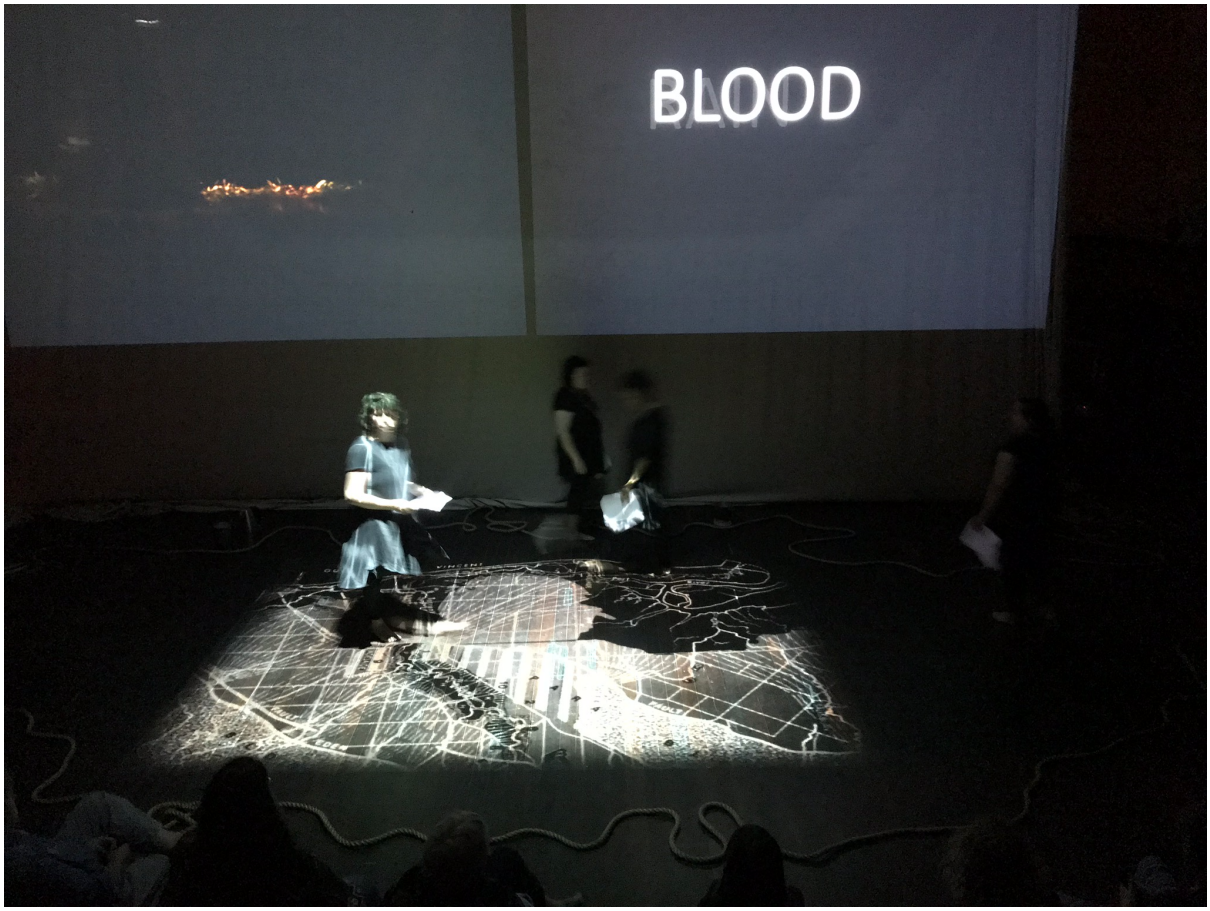


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