Tender Places: unsettling settler-colonial relationship to land through place-based, creative, and pedagogical practice

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Exegesis Abstract

Humanity is living through a time of major ecological crisis exemplified by anthropogenic climate change and planetary-wide ecological system collapse. This is a driver for widespread and intersecting humanitarian and social crises including resource wars, famine, mass migration, and displacement. These entwined ecological and social crises are underpinned by global colonial capitalism that fuels systems of violent and inequitable extraction of wealth and resources from lands, people, and creatures. Indigenous and settler scholars acknowledge that addressing and dismantling colonialism is essential to effective action on the impacts and drivers of climate change, and other ecological and social crises, and the development of sustainable societies for the future.

The research proposes that for settler individuals and communities to take action against ecological and social violence, they must develop ways of being, doing, and knowing that attend to the issues of colonialism and extractivism. For settler-colonists, engaging with and through place is particularly important due to the centrality of land and the subsequent ongoing role of colonialism in severing, masking, ignoring, and denying the relationship between land and people's embodied identities and lived experiences.

Tender places uses creative and pedagogical practices to examine the moral responsibilities of settler people in the time of ecological and social crisis. The research seeks to develop tools, processes that support anti-racist and anti-colonial creative practice that respond to ecological crises. The development of these tools and process has occurred through iterative engagement with a constellation of feminist, anti-colonial, Indigenous and queer scholarship including the work of Deborah Bird Rose, Max Liboiron, Claire Land, Ambelin Kwaymullina, Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang. The practices and ethics of engagement with anti-colonial and Indigenous literature are outlined within the exegesis.

This doctoral research is undertaken as creative practice led research, with a 50/50 split between the creative product and the exegesis. I recommend viewing the work after reading the exegesis. As the creative works were created in three iterations, presented in multiple locations, and include an ephemeral durational installation, I've produced a website to create a permanent record of the work for assessment and documentation purposes. You can view the creative work here: https://tenderplaces.net/.

The creative practice was undertaken at the Ilparpa Claypans, a series of 12 ephemeral claypans, located on 'crown land', 13 km southwest of the township of Mparntwe/ Alice Springs, in the Northern Territory, Australia. The popular recreational site was chosen due to my decade-long relationship with this place, and my distress over the impacts of dumping, four-wheel driving, and invasive weeds witnessed over this time. I undertook this research through the lens of Australian settler culture, as a queer, female, fourth generation Northern Territory settler of Irish, Scottish, and German descent. I bring my lived experience as an artist and activist to this inquiry.

Through the research, I developed a practice of reading, walking, and making at the Ilparpa Claypans, as a method by which to investigate the use of critical race and environmental humanities literature as an agent of defamiliarisation, with the aim to disrupt the settler gaze within place. I documented new ways of seeing and being with/in place, which emerged from this disruption through field notes, photos, and creative works. These creative translations informed the development of three artworks reflecting on the impacts and responsibilities of settler people and cultures to the Ilparpa Claypans.

Postcards from the Claypans was the first iteration of creative practice at the Ilparpa Claypans, which took place from May to June in 2019. In this iteration, individual walks were documented on individual postcards and mailed to individual peers in different parts of the world.

The second work, *Shadow Work* is an autoethnographic map of settler experience and the impact on the Ilparpa Claypans was developed in January, 2019. This map is comprised of twelve cyanotypes created from dumped refuse and weeds found at the claypans.

The third work, *Testing Ground*, was an 18-day durational performance installation, which positions the researcher's body in service to place through daily visits to the Ilparpa Claypans to remove buffel grass (an invasive weed) and dumped items. These recovered items were used to create an installation that made visible the impacts of the ecological harms on the Ilparpa Claypans, alongside a soundscape created from field recordings and a public process journal of the 18-day practice.

The exegesis locates the research inquiry theoretically and methodologically, and articulates the process, findings, and impacts. The autoethnographic component of the exegesis draws on the creative works, reflective writing, field notes, and formal research documents, to examine the development and use of arts and place methodologies and methods as a research process. Creative and reflective writing are used throughout the exegesis as a mode by which to locate the reader with my lived experience of place and process throughout the research lifespan.

This exegesis, Tender Places, identifies and contributes processes for settler people to reflect on their complicity individually and collectively in ongoing colonial and extractivist drivers of entangled ecological and social violence. The methods and methodologies utilised in this project can aid the development frameworks of moral responsibility for the action that addresses these violences in order to restore social and ecological justice.

Student Declaration

I, Kelly Lee Hickey, declare that the PhD thesis entitled 'Tender Places: unsettling settler-colonial relationship to land through place-based, creative and pedagogical practice' is no less than 18,000 words and no more than 40,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work. I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University's Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures.

All research procedures reported in the exegesis were approved by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee Approval Number HRE19-114

All professional editing in this exegesis was undertaken by Jeremy Garnett at Top End Editing to Standards D and E, in accordance with the standards cited in the Australian Standards for Editing Practice.

Signature  *Date* 22/08/2022

For the ancestors and the descendants.

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List of Acronyms

AUS STS	Australian Science and Technology Studies
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ANU	Australian National University
APA	Australian Postgraduate Award
CLEAR	Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NT	Northern Territory
STS	Science and Technology Studies
UV	Ultra-violet light

Chapter 1 – Introduction: Orientating to The Research

Creative practice and the exegesis

Within creative research, the exegesis can communicate how and why an artist made particular decisions and reflect on the impacts of the decisions, in ways that can contribute to broader knowledge disciplines (Stewart, 2001). As an artist, creative practice has been a primary tool for grappling with large, intractable problems. My process of doing this in my creative practice before entering the academy was personal and emergent, often led by my experiences with and in the world around me, interfacing with my internal world of thoughts and emotion. Upon entering the academy, I adapted this method of being led by my experiences and emotions to being led by theory, a method I later came to understand as a refusal of method through the work of Elizabeth Adams St Pierre (2019). Over the past three years, I've undertaken a range of creative experiments and produced a suite of three creative works through an iterative practice of reading, walking, and making. These creative works were made with the explicit and self-conscious knowledge that they would be analysed for meaning within an academic framework, as well as being re-presented within my communities through public exhibition and mail art.

Within this exegesis I've chosen to focus on practices and provocations because they are generative and malleable; they can be tried on, shifted, and changed to suit different bodies and places and circumstances. Together with the suite of artworks, this exegesis offers an account of some of the ways I went about exploring the dynamics of settler colonial relationships to land, and generative potential of disruptive creative research practices. The creative works, and to an extent, the entire PhD, can be understood as the detritus of a creative process; the skin left behind from a speculative process of locating oneself as culpable within the catastrophic muck of colonialism and nonetheless holding onto 'the possibility of decent action' (Rose 2013, p. 215).

This introductory chapter uses personal storytelling to orientate to the research. I begin by situating myself as a fourth generation settler, and give an overview of the precipitating personal factors that led me to undertake this creative research. I go on to examine the rationales and risks of the auto-ethnographic approach. This is followed by a series of definitions of key concepts used within the exegesis.

Following this chapter, the exegesis makes three major movements. The first movement within Chapters 2 and 3 situates the work within settler colonialism and presents a series of unsettling provocations. Chapter 2 of this exegesis situates the work with the settler colonial land relations, outlining my specific location as a fourth generation Northern Territory settler and why I've undertaken the research from within this location. Within Chapter 3, I present a series of queering provocations that I mobilise within the creative research to unsettle the monolith of settler colonialism.

The second movement articulates the methods and methodologies used within the creative research, and provides an account of how these were enacted within the development of the three creative works. Within Chapter 4, I position reading as a disruptive practice within the creative research, and articulate an ethics of situated reading practice through an examination of the risks and opportunities of settler engagement with Indigenous knowledge. In Chapter 5, I articulate the role of artistic practice within the research, locating my practice in relation to other artists, and present principles of making that guide the creation of the creative products in the field. Chapter 6 provides an account of the development of the three creative works at the Ilparpa Claypans through iterative practices of reading, walking, and making.

The third movement examines the impacts, limitations, and questions for further inquiry arising from the research. In Chapter 7, I re/situate the research within my broader life as an activist and an artist as a way of thinking through the research impacts and dissemination. In Chapter 8, I

re/present the key findings of the research and reflect on its limitations and opportunities for future practice.

A world on fire: Precipitating the research

> *Back in 2016, I hit an impasse. Not my first. I'd been dangerously anxious-depressive for 18 months and unwell for at least six years. I was floundering, like a fish on a deck gasping for breath. Looking around me I no longer saw water, but a world on fire. I moved cities to try and dislodge the breathlessness. Somewhere in the depths of a Melbourne winter I told a psychologist that if I kept on managing bigger and bigger public heath projects for more and more money, I'd probably end up killing myself. I didn't have an answer when he asked me what I wanted to do instead. Instead of dying, I became pigeon – feral, flighty, hungry. I travelled and read voraciously, all the time scrawling long lists of questions in notebooks and on my phone. I found questions at protests, in author talks, at seminars and conferences, in journals, at exhibitions. I've written hundreds of questions in the past five years. All are iterations on the questions of:*
>
> *Who am I and what am I doing here?*
>
> *How and where do I belong?*
>
> **Reflective Journal, 2021**

Place is perhaps an unusual focal point for my research. I left home at 16, and since then have lived in scores of share houses. The longest I've stayed in one house in the past twenty-three years is three years. Throughout this PhD I was beset by housing insecurity, moving multiple times, sometimes between cities, trying to find a place to belong. Despite my constant movement, two relationships to place remain enduring – my connection to Larrakia and Wulna land around Darwin, where I was raised and where my family has lived since my Irish ancestors settled there in 1913, and

Arrernte land, where I have lived for thirteen years, since my late twenties. Each of these places holds specific memories, emotions, and ways of being that I can only access when I am in them. It is impossible to choose between them, and so I move between them, tending my relationship to places that make me.

Upon graduating from university in Melbourne in 2007, I returned to the Northern Territory and began working in public health during the heyday of the Emergency Intervention, when the Northern Territory was awash in Federal Government funding targeted at Aboriginal communities, administered by external agencies, many of them large, settler led, national or international, NGO's. Over a decade of practice in public health, I became aware of an undercurrent of race and colonialism that underpinned service design and delivery. Predominantly young, white, professional settlers would come to the Northern Territory to 'work with Aboriginal people', and would implement programs which, at best, adapted centralised government policy to local circumstances, with varying degrees of efficacy and harm. By the time I left public health in 2017, I was profoundly disillusioned with the trend towards top-down projects that centralised power and resources in professionalised, often white, management positions and outsourced project delivery and risk to non-professional community members working low and often lower paid hours.

I came to this research in 2018, after a decade of practice in the public health sector, and in disillusionment with the feeling of the world being on fire and not knowing what to do about it. My subsequent involvement in the campaign against fracking in the Beetaloo Basin was exposing me to the entanglement of colonialism and extraction, and unsettling my assumptions about 'doing good' and 'saving the world'. I knew that, as a white settler person, I had a fair amount of responsibility for the unfolding crisis, but I didn't know how to translate that into 'response-ability' (Haraway 2016, p. 37–38). I had some inkling that my creative practice and unsettling questions about my relationship to place held clues to the answers to my questions. Mostly I felt like what I'd done in the past wasn't working, and I was searching for something new.

My initial proposal to Victoria University in late 2017 was to undertake a creative postgraduate research project, using the Independent Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing as the main source material for a series of found poems about extractionism and colonial land use. Since 2016, I have been involved in the anti-fracking movement in response to my growing concerns about the negative impact of fracking on communities in the Beetaloo Basin. These concerns included threats to water security, endangered species, land access, and sacred sites, as well the broader contribution of methane to climate change. The research shifted away from fracking as I became more involved with the Beetaloo Basin campaign. Conscious of the potential for extractive relationships between research institutions and community, I didn't want my peers or experiences within the campaign to become 'research subjects' or to tether my participation in activism to my research in the academy. Instead, I chose to use creative research methods such as walking, photography, and working with found objects to explore my own colonial relationships to land at the Ilparpa Claypans, which are located near where I live in the township of Mparntwe/Alice Springs.

A burning question: Situating the work within personal experience

> *This work is underpinned by my fraught and enduring love for the place which I am from, but struggle to belong. As a fourth generation settler I have no other home, and though many other places have their charms, I never really feel the earth. But in feeling this earth, I know that my belonging will continue to be occupation until we unravel these tangled histories of colonialism and justice can be seen. The urgency of this work is heightened by the escalating changes to our environment – I write from a winter that is degrees warmer than any we have on record. I recall Indigenous academic Tony Birch saying that love is a primary motivator for action on environment. Perhaps until we belong to what is beneath us, we will continue to extract it without care.*
>
> **Masters Inquiry Email to Prof. Christopher Sonn, 16th August 2017**

This work began with a personal question about how to respond to a world that is on fire. The pursuit of answers to this question led me back to the culture of settler colonialism, and my entanglement in the destruction of place and people as an Australian settler. I undertake this research from this position of personal entanglement, acknowledging that colonialism, and its associated harms, are a settler problem. Rather than it being something 'out there', located within the bodies of an Indigenous or settler other, the issues are 'in here', and can be found and analysed through the lens of my settler experience, including that of my settler body. Green, Sonn and Matsebula (2007) discuss the value of research practices that expose Whiteness and challenge its legitimacy and reproduction. As a white settler person within a research training program, researching within my own culture, indeed on myself, feels like an appropriate place for me to begin to ask questions about colonialism, and set about finding ways to answer them.

This research is set in the Northern Territory, Australia, specifically on Arrernte land, near the township of Mparntwe/Alice Springs. The Northern Territory is a site of settler fear and desire. Films such as *Top End Wedding, Crocodile Dundee*, and *Sweet Country* all export narratives of vast, wild landscapes and frontier style interactions between Aboriginal people and settlers. People often come to the Northern Territory to work with or encounter Aboriginal people and culture. So much so that a recent Northern Territory Government (2019) marketing campaign 'Boundless Possible' exemplified these portrayals, presenting the Northern Territory as a vast and ancient place full of opportunities – simultaneously spacious enough for the projection of settler dreams, and full enough of people and resources to fulfill them. By contrasting narratives of 'Ancient Culture' with 'Cutting Edge Innovation' to entice professionals to the Northern Territory for work, the Territory has been rebranded as a modern frontier, filled with opportunities to simultaneously connect with and extract from place.

As a fourth generation Territorian settler living within the highly politicised and settler mythologised Northern Territory, I undertook this research to investigate my responsibilities to the

land and its people through a disruptive exploration of my relationship with the land through a creative practice of reading, walking, and making. I understand this creative research as 'unsettling' – a term I use to explain the process and outcomes of exposing and reckoning with my situatedness and responsibilities as a settler colonist living on unceded Aboriginal land. 'Unsettling' has multiple threads of meaning within my research. The first is a process of un-settling – destabilising and working against 'foregoneness or naturalisation' (Tuck & McKenzie 2015, p. 3) of settler colonialism. Unsettling is also an embodied and intellectual positionality and experience of undertaking the research. I unsettle through the self, through speculative gestures and making in dialogue with other knowledge. This work makes me feel unsettled in my body, in my mind. It results in a restlessness in my legs and gut, a change in the way that I sleep, wake, and show up in the world.

I decided to centre on my personal experience within the research, partly because the question was personal and located in my cultural responsibilities, and partly because I sensed the emotional risks of undertaking this work. Autoethnographic research, with its focus on personal stories, moves away from a focus on the lived experience of others, and instead focuses on 'the epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of certain culture and/or possessing a certain cultural identity' (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011, p. 276). Working with personal stories within the tradition of autoethnography offers deeply situated ways of knowledge making that account for the researchers' subjectivity (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011) The focus on the personal reduces the risk of researchers acting as authorities on other cultures, or exploiting relationships with others for personal and professional gain, a theme which I further expand on in Chapter 2 (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2010, p. 274).

Almost at the beginning of this journey, I came to an epiphany that some things are beyond the scope of postgraduate research. As this work was done within the rigid procedural and temporal framework of graduate research, I've had to reckon with the limits on what can be done within the

framework of the university, which is an institution of settler knowledge making (Tuck & Yang, 2012). As creative practice-led and auto ethnographic research, this work is personal, and therefore bound by the limits of my body and its circumstances, including the time, place, and relationships in which this research is nested. I've learned many things about my situatedness and the responsibilities implied by my location and have had to choose what to include out of the many things I've made and learned and thought. Much has been left out for the sake of clarity. I have had to omit that which is too personal to be generalised, too collective for a single authored document, too slippery for an institution to assess.

The pervasive invisibility and permissiveness of Whiteness poses particular challenges to this settler centred, autoethnographically informed creative research. There is the risk of presenting a redemptive account of myself as 'a good settler' in which I fail to implicate myself for past and present colonial or racist behaviours (Land 2015). These may be presented as 'moves to innocence' – tropes enacted by settlers in order to avoid the uncomfortable reality of being part of a violent and ongoing regime of occupation (Tuck &Yang 2012). Similarly, there is a risk of engaging in performative self-effacement or presenting a confessional, in which the white subject is recentered in a public account of confessing privilege without actually having to undertake action to address the systemic drivers that confer these privileges on some bodies, and not others (Smith A 2013).

Autoethnography as a form of witnessing enables a process of meaning-making and transformation for both the researcher and the research audience (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011, p. 280). In choosing what to tell I've focused on those stories which expose my grappling with my relationship with land as a multi-generational, white settler woman. Autoethnography, as a practice of 'bringing our ghosts into the present where they can produce both material and emotional effects' can be at times 'ugly and downright frightening' (Herrmann 2014, p. 334). My interest in exposing the mechanics of reckoning with my inheritance of a culture of dominance and separation is to provide potential pathways for other settlers to do the same, because 'my experience – our

experience – could politicise your experience and mobilise you, and us, into action' (Adam & Jones 2011, p. 110). Through acts of exposure, disruption, reflection and representation, this creative research aims to expose and disrupt the often invisible, embodied experience of Whiteness and, in doing so, work against it.

Definition of key terms

This research is contextualised within the lived experience of settler colonialism during the time of social and ecological crisis. Here, I offer definitions of key terms related to colonialism and identities that I use throughout the research.

Colonialism is a 'practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another' (Kohn & Reddy 2017, para. 1). Colonialism is founded on European theories of racial superiority and white supremacy (Nayar 2015). Generally used within postcolonial studies to refer to European empires, often based on physical settlement, the term refers to the administrative, economic, military, political and cultural structures used to claim and exploit the land and resources of other people's lands (Nayar 2015, p. 31). Colonialism is an ongoing process of reproduction of these structures within the colony (Tuck & Yang 2012).

Settler colonialism is 'a form of colonialism in which outsiders come to make a new home on land that is already occupied by other humans' (Tuck & McKenzie 2015, p. 3). This is a particularly violent form of colonialism, with control of all aspects of Indigenous peoples lives, territory, and resources being a fundamental feature of settler colonialism (Tuck &Yang 2012; Nayar 2015).

There are a range of terms used by Indigenous people within Australia to identify themselves (Janke 2019). I use the term 'Aboriginal people' within this text to refer to Indigenous people from mainland Australia, as this is the term used by Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). When referring to a person or people who use a name, for example belong to/identify as a specific language group, I use that term – Arrernte people, for instance. I use

the term ‘Indigenous people’, to refer to First People’s internationally. Those people living on other people’s land within settler colonies are referred to within this text as ‘settlers’, ‘settler colonists’, or ‘settler societies’. When I use collective nouns within this document, such as we, our and us, as a settler person, I am referring to other settler colonists, particularly fair skinned, multi-generational settler colonist people.

Decolonisation refers to a broad range of actions and processes ranging from ‘the loosening of colonial-imperial connections and control’ over the colonies by European powers, to the ‘cultural-intellectual-philosophical attempt to escape colonial thinking’ (Nayar 2015, p. 45), through to the complete return of all land and resources to Indigenous people (Tuck & Yang 2012). This research is aligned with the intellectual and cultural work that settlers need to undertake to ‘decolonise ourselves’ (Land 2015, p. 162), through the ‘unmaking of regimes of violence that enforce the disconnection of moral responsibility from time and place’ (Rose 2004, p. 10), including self-education, giving up privilege and public political action (Land 2015).

Attending to Tuck and Yang’s (2012) critique of the wide adoption of the term ‘decolonising’ within social justice discourse, the term decolonisation is not used in relation to these acts and intentions within the research. This term is used within the research to refer to the ‘the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always been differently enacted and understood; that is, *all* of the land, and not just symbolically’ (Tuck & Yang 2012, p. 7). This research is therefore positioned as part of the work that settlers need to undertake in order to participate in the process of decolonisation.

The *extraction industries* refers to ‘the people, companies, and activities involved in removing oil, metals, coal, stone, etc. from the ground’ (Combley 2011). *Extractivism* describes the process in which the land, people and all forms of life are turned into resources, and a source of profit (Klein 2014). Klein positions extractivism as ‘the opposite of stewardship, which involves

taking, but also taking care that regeneration and future care continue' (2014, p. 169). Extractivism, and extractive capitalism are underpinned by colonialism, which facilitates the transfer of the lands and life of Indigenous people into profit producing corporate resources through processes of erasure, such as claims of *terra nullius*, state and corporate surveillance, and corporate and legislative opacity (Gómez-Barris 2017).

Ecological and social crisis is the term I use to refer to the impacts of human made change on the biosphere, and the social crisis that emerge from these changes. A range of terms are in use for the current unfolding ecological crisis – Plantationocene, Capitalocene, Anthropocene, Chthulucene – that marks the end of the period of favourable conditions for life provided by the Holocene (Haraway 2015). The Anthropocene, one of the most widely used of these terms refers not just to climate change, but a 'wider set of entwined events including acidification of the oceans, the loss of soils and fertility, the loss of rainforest and of course the rampant consumption that fuels the work of tearing up and wrecking the planet' (Rose 2013, pp. 208–209). This term has been criticised as furthering the nature/culture divide, and ignoring impacts of capitalism on the planet, and the situatedness of different people's contribution and experience of these changes (ed. Moore & Parenti 2016). In response to these critiques, Rose proffers that the Anthropocene offers a 'dark mirror', exposing human agency as 'grotesque – an agency that outstrips its capacity to manage itself, that wrecks, pillages, loots and destroys, that has very little idea what it is doing, and that carries with it, in contradiction to all reason, an expectation of immunity' (Rose 2013, pp. 209–210). The kind of human agency that Rose (2013) writes about is specifically bound up with colonial capitalism, which extracts wealth from the land, and she presents alternative models of custodianship informed Indigenous ontologies as fundamental to sustaining life in the Anthropocene.

Like Haraway, I believe that the existing term of the Anthropocene is both 'too big and too small' to describe the current planetary moment and the processes unfolding (2015, p. 160), and that situated understandings of what these processes might mean for different people, places and critters

is still limited and emergent. Therefore, I don't align myself with the term 'Anthropocene' and instead use the phrase 'ecological and social crisis' to refer to these entwined processes. Within this text the term 'climate change' refers to anthropogenic climate change, as described by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC; IPCC n.d.).

Chapter 2 – Situating the research: Settler colonial land relations

This place-based creative research is an encounter with my entanglement in divergent and shared histories, presents, and futures (Rose 2004). As a settler, my relationship with place is located in a social and environmental 'web of division and entanglement', characterised by sustained division and violence against people and nature (Rose 2004, p. 186). Within this chapter, I situate myself and the research the broader settler colonial land relations of the Northern Territory. I present the Northern Territory as a colonial resource frontier, mobilising theories of cheapness, social denial, and shadow places to explain the narratives of extraction operating around projects like the Beetaloo Basin Gas Development, which I have been involved in campaigning against. I go on to situate myself within this settler colonial resource frontier and explain how settler colonial land relations presents significant barriers to dialogue and collaboration between Indigenous and settler communities and cultures. Given these significant barriers and my location as a remote, away from base, settler graduate researcher, I position the settler focus of the research as a refusal to undertake research in collaboration with Arrernte people without adequate resourcing, and examine the generative opportunities of this position.

Through this chapter, I move back and forth between the global and the local, the broader confluence of time, and the specific moments in which this research has taken place. This movement is a form of echolocation; a way of telling the reader where I am by calling out to what is around me to locate myself because subjectivity is central to the autoethnographic and practice-led nature of the work. I move back and forth between my lived experience in place, and broader theoretical contexts to build connection and solidarity between my situated ways of knowing and being, and writers and thinkers in other places. This practice of moving back and forth between personal experience, and the experience and knowledge of others is underpinned by the situated knowledge-making practices that are foundational to the work.

The Northern Territory as a resource frontier

> *We assert our claim to country by our right to exploit it, and the right to turn others away. Despite being one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change, we continue to ride dark waves of coal and gas exports that break in the atmosphere and in our aquifers, and in violent clashes between anti-mining protesters and police.*
>
> ***On the Ground*, Reflective Essay, 2018**

The disconnection between people and land is not only a driver of climate change, but it also informs how we experience, understand, and respond to it. Modernity produces a vision of an already dead world, able to be carved up and redistributed to feed a growing economy (Klein 2014). This deadening of the world removes the impetus for ethical engagement with life, resulting in the brokenness of place and people (Rose 2004). Severance or denial of relationships between people and country is understood as foundational to colonial systems of domination and control (Donald 2010; Kessaris 2006; Rose 2004). As Terry Ngarritjan Kessaris (2006, p. 12) explained 'colonialism is the severance of healthy connections between the land and its people and the replacement of disrespectful connections with land and a contrived, forced and damaged connection between privileged and non-privileged groups of people'. This severance denies the interconnectedness between peoples, country, and more-than-human entities (Rose 2004), reducing them to resources for extraction and exploitation, leading to catastrophic ecological damage and collapse, including, and exemplified by climate change (Klein 2014). Rose (2004) extended these understandings of severance within the Australian colonial mind to include the separation of the present from the past and future, removing the potency and power of action and responsibility from the now.

Within the Australian settler state, the right to extract wealth from Aboriginal lands is predicated through all levels of policy and engagement and is particularly salient to Northern Australia. The 'Developing the North' white paper focuses on 'unlocking the North's vast potential'

(CoA 2015, p. 1). This occurs through the removal of barriers to corporate investment and providing 'secure, tradeable land titles' (CoA 2015, p. 3) that enable business access to Aboriginal lands. The approval of gas fracking in the Northern Territory's Beetaloo Basin (Cox 2018; Marks 2018), is a potent example of the application of these colonial narratives. The Beetaloo Basin gas reserves were a focus of the Federal Government's 'Gas Fired Recovery' program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the narratives of jobs, economic recovery, and securing low-cost energy cited as the key drivers and outcomes of this investment (PMA 2021). The State's right to access gas resources as a response to escalating power prices and the need for economic development are used to legitimise unwanted and dangerous shale gas fracking (Vanovac, Damjanovic & Mitchell 2017; Wild 2018). Despite widespread community opposition and concerns about the impact of fracking on regional culture and environments (HFT 2018), the Northern Territory government lifted the moratorium on fracking in 2017, to the acclaim of the Federal Government (Cox 2018; Marks 2018).

A developing extraction narrative is the viability of gas as a low cost and lower emissions fuel to support Australia's energy transition (PMA 2021). However, leaked documents from the Environment and Energy Federal Government department to Emissions Reduction Minister Angus Taylor raise concerns that emissions from the Beetaloo Basin have been significantly underestimated and threaten Australia's obligations under the Paris Climate agreements (Bardon 2020). The ongoing use of the narratives of jobs, growth, and cheap energy reflects the power of cultural narratives in enabling the control and destruction of communities and country by external corporate and government interests (Ashton & Breen 2021). At the time of writing, in September 2021, fracking in the Beetaloo Basin remains a site of community opposition, including a legal challenge and senate inquiry into grant-making and approval processes to extraction company Empire Energy (Lee et al. 2021).

Policy framing, such as 'Developing the North', position the Northern Territory as a resource frontier. Frontiers are created by and are essential to, capitalism and its pursuit of cheapness. Patel

and Moore (2018) argued that the pursuit of cheap things is central to capitalism, and is entwined with colonialism and frontier thinking. Cheap was defined by Patel and Moore as 'a strategy, a practice, a violence that mobilises all kinds of work – human and animal, botanical and geological – with as little compensation as possible' (2018, p. 22). Cheapness is the process by which capitalism turns the many 'undenominated relationships' that make up the world into profit (Patel & Moore 2018, p. 22). Through the lens of cheapness, frontiers are essential to capitalism, which thrives on 'transforming socioecological relationships' – the web of life – into profit (Patel & Moore 2018, p. 19). As each wave of exploitation is met with resistance, cheapness becomes a way of solving problems, through the creation and exploitation of resource frontiers (Patel & Moore 2018).

These narratives of development and cheap opportunities are used to gloss and condone violence against people and the land, both historically and in the future. Despite widespread awareness and concern about the localised impacts of climate change on economic and ecological well-being, citizens of many wealthy nations go about their lives as though it does not exist (Norgaard 2011). Climate change can be perceived as an elsewhere occurrence; an amorphous, and incomprehensible global phenomenon unfolding in perpetually Othered lands, bodies, and times (Rose 2013; Nixon 2011; Norgaard 2006). Writing on social denial within climate change impacted regions in Norway, Norgaard (2011) details that despite a high level of education and awareness of the drivers and impacts of local climate change, there is a disconnect between people's experience, understanding, and actions. Norgaard framed this 'socially organised denial' (2011, p. 409) as a 'double reality' (2011, p. 404), characterised by a failure to integrate knowledge into social action. People draw on socially (re) produced 'stock stories' to protect themselves from the existential crisis associated with the impending realities of climate change (Norgaard 2011, p. 406). This socially organised denial enables the global middle and upper classes to continue their standard of living without having to recognise or respond to the impacts of their lifestyle on other people's bodies and lands (Norgaard 2011).

Global corporate capital relies on an Othering of people and places 'that to their extractors somehow don't count and therefore can be poisoned, drained or otherwise destroyed for the supposed greater good of economic progress' (Klein 2014, p. 169). This process is inherently entangled with colonialism with ever-greater areas of the world seen as 'disposable peripheries being harnessed to feed a glittering centre' (Klein 2014, p. 169). Val Plumwood used the term 'shadow places' to describe the hidden places that support economic well-being, and the way relationality and responsibility to those places are denied. Drawing on Bill Neidjie's conceptualisation of one's place as the site/s that grow and sustain one, Plumwood (2008) argued that those of us living western, modernist lives are sustained by multiple, often invisible, shadow places that sustain our material and economic well-being. She described 'the disassociation of the affective place … from the economic place that is such a feature of global market as another manifestation of the mind/body dualism that has shaped the western tradition' (Plumwood 2008, p. 141). Sites of extraction across the Northern Territory, including the Beetaloo Basin, the Tanami Gold Mine, and the proposed Singleton Station development, constitute shadow places, forgotten or ignored 'elsewheres', which directly and indirectly support the economic well-being of people in other places. Plumwood called for a 'place honesty and responsibility which involves countering remoteness and denial' (2008, p. 148). This involves attending to relationships to those sites in which we live and have a felt sense of connection, as well as those unnamed and unseen places which support us materially (Plumwood 2008).

The value of the land and people affected by large scale, externally driven projects, such as gas fracking in the Beetaloo Basin, are undermined by the cheapening of the ongoing relationships that have sustained life within this region for thousands of years. Indigenous leaders have refused the need for fracking to create jobs in their communities at the expense of the protection of land (Bardon 2017b). Senior Mudburra man, Raymond Dixon, highlighted fracking companies' conversion of relationships into profit at an anti-fracking protest at an Origin Energy AGM, saying 'For you [the

land is] a resource to make money, for us it is our spirit, our songlines … our identity for who we are' (Fryer 2019, para. 7).

The diasporic settler colonial experience of dis/connection to land

> *As I grew, so did a desire for elsewhere. Unable to locate myself in popular culture, I migrated south to find a place that fit. I spent chunks of my early twenties couch surfing the east coast and churned for years in Melbourne's cold belly. Finishing Uni, I returned home to find Darwin on the precipice of a mining boom. When a chance work trip took me south to the desert, I finally found somewhere to belong.*
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> *Like many of my peers, I have a revolving door relationship to country that sits in stark contrast to that of the Arrernte people who have lived with this land forever. A friend, who owns a house and a business, starts looking at maps when the days and money get too dry. Others, farmers, went where the rain was regular and the land was still cheap. Despite it being cheaper to own than rent here, I sat on a deposit for years, watching housing prices fluctuate and the rental market get squeezed. I'm not sure what I fear more, being indebted to a bank or to a place.*
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> ***On the Ground*, Reflective Essay, 2018**

I am a fourth generation Northern Territory settler colonist. This is an unsettled identity. Generations into settler colonialism my attachment and knowledge to a Gaelic homeland is limited to Catholic baptism and schooling, the continuance of ancestral naming practices and limited geological knowledge obtained through Irish census papers. As a settler colonist living on unceded Aboriginal land, I am part of a violent, centuries long occupation of other people's land and as such any belonging I feel to place is fraught. My Irish ancestor's emigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was preceded by the centuries-long occupation of their homelands by the British, which continues to be unresolved in the present day. Despite this long and ongoing history of conflict

between my native Ireland and British aristocracy, my ethnic Gaelic identity is absorbed into Whiteness, with all the privileges and complicity this entails. Growing up there was never the romance of the frontier that some people associate with Northern Australia, just the complexity of living in a system where racial difference was drilled into me, despite multiple and different social encounters, and places of cultural overlap. As a researcher, I am investigating the entangled relationality of this cultural positioning and seeking possible alternatives to the culture of colonial violence, land theft, and extraction.

My family history on Larrakia and Wulna land, in and near Darwin, is one of both 'love and violence' (Rose 2004). My great grandparents arrived in Australia from Ireland in 1913 and moved to Darwin soon after. Irish trade unionists, they were relatively poor but politically active, starting a small second furniture auction house and participating in the local council and workers union. My great uncle Leo was a well-known mariner working across the North Australian coastline from the 1940s through to the 1960s, working closely with and developing decades long friendships with a number of Aboriginal men, including Bunitj elder and story teller 'Big Bill' Neidjie (whose work is referenced by Val Plumwood (2008) in *Shadow Places and the Politics of Dwelling*). Leo's brother, Vincent, had multiple encounters with police for violent behaviour and wrote a letter to the paper threatening violence against Aboriginal people unless the Department of Native Affairs increased control.

My father grew up close to the land. Like many who grew up in working class families in post-war Darwin, he has relationships with people from all different racial backgrounds and still speaks a lot of Top End Kriol. He taught me to love 'Country' through fishing, hunting, and just being out on the water and in the bush. He knew how to pay attention to the land and the seasons, being aware of the teachings of the tides and the wind. He also worked as a 'driller' in the mining industry and collected the core samples that opened many places in the Territory to mining. That was how we became middle class – on the back of the mining industry.

Growing up in Darwin in the 1980s and 1990s I received mixed messages and experiences about racial relations. I was surrounded by both the upsurge of land rights and hope for Reconciliation, the embodied Yothu Yindi's hit song *Treaty*, and a highly visible an ongoing, dehumanising public campaign to remove Aboriginal people from public places through crackdowns on rough sleepers and other people camped on the beaches and parks in and around the city. Sent to a predominantly Aboriginal boarding school, I was encouraged by the teaching staff to socialise with the few other white girls there. As I grew into adulthood, I encountered different social scenes in Darwin where 'Whiteness' was subverted, asserted, or invisibilised, depending on whether I was hanging out with the homeboys who painted graffiti in the stormwater drains, my cousin's neo-Nazi friends, or the 'lefty' funk musicians at the university bar. Being female, young and often homeless, I was often more concerned with securing my own safety than interrogating racism, so I tended to move with and reflect the views of whatever social group I was in at the time.

As I grew older, I distanced myself from my family of origin and the Top End settler culture I grew up in. Whilst living in Melbourne, I became involved in the arts and spent many years bouncing between cities on the east coast and in the south of Australia, performing poetry and working on writers festivals and events. As I became acculturated to urban, white-and-white-collar, middle class culture I became more aware of the specificity of my cultural location as a Northern Territory settler and the ways that Northern Australia was fetishised as a wild frontier. I felt different to friends who had grown up in the suburbs of Melbourne and Sydney, and sensed how I was often still read as being different by others. I stopped using Kriol words and shunned the food, knowledge, and ways of being that had connected me to the land I had grown up on.

For many years movement was my norm. Until I recently purchased a unit in Mparntwe, I travelled regularly and experienced frequent housing insecurity. Between 2010 and 2019 I caught an average of 30 flights a year and moved house every nine months or less. The experience of land ownership has alleviated some of the practical barrier to feeling settled in place, but raised deep,

intractable questions about purchasing a title to stolen land. Even as travel is limited due to COVID-19, I continue to cross cultural and geographical divides as I move between my family of origin in Darwin and my chosen family in Mparntwe and other places, albeit digitally.

Grappling with land relations and settler moves to innocence

> *Wedged between the ongoing violence of colonialism, which dominates settler/Aboriginal relations and realities, and the increasing violence of extraction industries against present and future generations of human and more than human life, the Northern Territory is a site of amplified trauma and resistance. In this region of the settler colony, the knowledge and impacts of living on someone else's land are painfully apparent, as are a multiplicity of ways in which settlers engage with and around the social facts of colonialism. For many settlers, engagement with Aboriginal people takes place within the context of employment within the natural resource and community service industries, with work taking place with, for, and on Aboriginal people and lands, entangling the perpetuation of colonial policy and control with personal economic livelihood and sometimes, the reason for being in place.*
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> **Reflective Journal, July 2018**

My experience of being unsettled in place is not unique among settler colonists. Kim Mahood, writing on her love for Central Australia, expresses a similar feeling of being torn between places. "When I am there," she writes, "I'm alive with an intensity I feel nowhere else. But to live there permanently would require a sacrifice that I'm not prepared to make" (Mahood 2016, p. 2). Writing from Turtle Island/North America, Lucy Lippard described herself as 'a nomad with a serially monogamous passion for place' (Lippard 1997, p. 6). Despite many Americans having fragmented personal and familial relationships to place (Lippard 1997, p. 23), Lippard located the American settler experience of movement as a search for an *Axis Mundi* (Lippard 1997, p. 27). This

migration between places may be reflective of the unsettled settler identity. We are not of this place, but we live here. We may claim it, but it can never be ours. This state of being unsettled is anchored in settler colonialism and has profound impacts for our relations with the land and Indigenous people.

Settler colonialism, where the 'outsiders come to make a new home on the land that is already inhabited by other humans' (Tuck & McKenzie 2015, p. 3) has an explicit focus on the capture and exploitation of land, requiring the widespread and continued transmission of stories and systems of displacement and severance. Tuck and McKenzie traced the origins of settler disassociation from place to Descartes and the nature/culture divide (2015). They articulated how settler colonial societies are fostered on denial and ignorance towards land, as to consider land 'would require consideration of genocide' (Tuck & McKenzie 2015, p. 3). Robbie Thorpe identified the lack of settler connection with the land as fundamental to the current ecological crisis that endangers all life in this land (Land 2015, p. 221–223).

The primacy of land and connection are at odds with the materialistic and individualist narratives of settler colonialism, with many Australians only being able to take action once the threats have become immediate and quantifiable (Graham 1999). With 'sacrifice zones' expanding in response to dwindling supplies of fossil fuels and the globalising impacts of climate change, the threats and impacts of the ecological change are becoming 'immediate and quantifiable' for many previously unaffected (settler) communities. The current global ecological and social crises provide both urgent contexts and need to address and redress the ongoing colonial violence towards country and people (Birch 2017; Rose 2013). Whilst acknowledging the catastrophic impacts of these crises, Rose (2013) proposed that they may present a large enough threat to modernity to unmake it, enabling different ways of relating to people and place to re/emerge.

Establishing the 'new forms of connectivity required to address ecological and social crisis' is fraught by ongoing colonial violence and occupation, and the narratives that sustain these (Rose 2004, p. 286). The widely used forms of place-making in Australia, heritage, and tourism are often used to deepen and legitimise colonial narratives and 'authorised heritage' of Whiteness, conquest, and separation (Smith, P. 2013, p. 105). Markwell et al. expressed this as a placemaking of forgetting, with 'selected stories commonly serving to sever links with images of a past that may bear negative stereotypes, but which also possess instructive, if sometimes unpalatable, truths about the politics of place' (2004, p. 459).

Writing on the 'long and bumbled history of non-Indigenous people making moves to alleviate the impacts of colonisation', Tuck and Yang wrote that 'this joining cannot be too easy … solidarity is an uneasy, reserved and unsettled matter that neither reconciles present grievances or resolves future conflicts' (2012, p. 3). Reflecting on intercultural encounters and collaborations within her practice, Somerville described the potential for local places to act as a 'contact zone' between Aboriginal and settler peoples; 'a material and metaphysical in-between space for the intersection of multiple and contested stories' (2010, p. 338). Encounters within the contact zone are unsettling. This dialogue requires the vulnerability of holding '… one's self available to be surprised, to be challenged, and to be changed' (Rose 2004, p. 130).

The long and ongoing presence of colonial violence and racism poses significant challenges to dialogue, connection, and solidarity work between Aboriginal people and settlers (Birch 2017; Donald 2010; Green & Sonn 2005; Kessaris 2006; Land 2015; Rose 2004). Patterns of domination and extraction can manifest as 'wholeness hunger' (Rose, 2004, p. 181). Tuck and Yang detailed the tropes that settler societies generate and use as 'moves to innocence to prevent them from engaging in the discomfort associated with giving up land and other privileges gained and maintained through colonialism (2012, p. 3). Aboriginal people, lands and cultures can be sites of settler desire, construction, and projection for appropriation, salvation, and consumption (Graham & Johnson,

2015; Rose 2004; Smith, A 2013). Engaging in meaningful and equitable dialogue with Aboriginal people requires 'the dismantling of a colonial fantasy' (Birch 2017, para. 32). This is a radical and inter-generational project for settler societies built on the continuation of cultures of ignorance, theft, and denial (Birch 2017; Rose 2004; Tuck & McKenzie 2015). This dismantlement must be grounded, not in appropriation, charity, or fetishisation, but a genuine desire for justice for land and people (Birch 2017; Land 2015; Rose 2004).

Settlers must learn to inhabit the land in ways that respect it as already occupied by other people's stories, cultures, and ancestors, orientating ourselves to the situated and intersecting histories, presents, and futures, of the places where we live (Birch 2018; Rose 2004). Engaging with and through place as a settler, especially places of loss and destruction, 'opens a gateway to conflict and further moral dilemma' (Rose 2004, p. 51). In the Australian context, Indigenous (Birch 2017; Graham 1999; Kessaris 2003) and settler (Mathews 1999; Rose 2004; Somerville 2010) scholars have asserted that there can be no belonging to place or reconciliation of the fragmented and diasporic settler identity without frameworks of moral responsibility and reparative action that address the ongoing reality and impacts of violent settler invasion and occupation of Aboriginal land.

Settler graduate research and the ethics of refusal

> *Like many other white people in my circles, I have struggled with the segregation within the (Mparntwe/Alice Springs) community. Many of us try and be 'good white people'. Some of us highlight personal connections with Aboriginal people as signs that we/they are not racist or to promote cultural capital. I too have done this.*
>
> *I have often not known how to be a 'good white person' and become stuck in the self-flagellating narratives of white guilt. I have withdrawn from working within Aboriginal communities due to conflicts about the morality of this work when operating as a 'white expert' within a government funded system. Clare Land's chapter on*

friendship illuminates how the desire for friendship or collaboration with Aboriginal people can lead to coercing people into participating in projects or organisations in order to gain the right 'optics'.

This brings up the issue of the need to involve Aboriginal people in the project, particularly where I am not invited as a researcher or artist. Reflecting on Land's writing around the need for white people to educate and hold each other accountable, I'm interested in the ways in which we can work in parallel for the aims of anti-racism and decolonising.

Reflective Journal, June 2018

As I began to think through what anti-colonial place pedagogy might look like from a settler location, I encountered many questions; What kinds of questions can settlers ask? What kinds of practices and provocations might unsettle our relationship to land? How do we respond meaningfully to the claims of Indigenous people that we encounter through processes of self-education?

This research responds to the need for settlers to make visible and challenge colonial land relations, engaging questions of moral responsibility towards the past, present, and future (Rose, 2004). Through this research, I offer practices and provocations that support settler people to take seriously the claims made by Indigenous scholars about land relations and settler responsibilities to respond meaningfully to these claims. I consider this part of the work settlers need to do before, and alongside, building relationships with Aboriginal people, be they personal, work, or activist relationships. These practices are disruptive – aimed to interrupt the reproduction of settler colonialism so that we may begin to glimpse possibilities of a world beyond colonialism, and the kind of actions that might support the bringing forth of the world. As practices, they need to be undertaken repeatedly, meeting the sustained reproduction of colonialism with sustained disruption.

This research does not work directly with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples to identify collaborative, intercultural or Indigenous led anti-colonial or decolonising approaches, nor does it reinterpret Indigenous archival data or other cultural artefacts. Focusing on the settler experience is the result of a refusal to instrumentalise personal relationships with Aboriginal people for the benefit of myself within the university, settler sites, without adequate resourcing or support. This refusal to undertake community-based research without adequate resourcing provides a generative tension in the work. It questions the desire for settlers and settler institutions to have personal relationships with Aboriginal people as part of the practice of solidarity (Land 2015). It engages the question as to kinds of anti-colonial or solidarity actions settlers can undertake themselves, the sites of anti-colonial or decolonising learning and discourse available to settlers outside of personal relationships with Aboriginal people, and the limits of these

My choice to undertake this research without collaboration with Arrernte people, who are the Traditional owners and custodians of Mparntwe/Alice Springs, was an ethical response to the situatedness of the research. As a PhD researcher, I didn't feel ready or resourced to ethically undertake collaborative research. Throughout my professional life in public health, the arts and community development, I've witnessed many people coming into the Northern Territory to do research and projects with Indigenous people. This attuned me to the different kinds of research relationships that existed between settlers and Indigenous people, and the ways these were enacted. The kinds of projects that I respected were in response to a particular community need or interest – ranging from language to mental health and with Indigenous people in senior and leadership positions. These projects were well resourced and occurred over long times frames, often employing multiple researchers across organisations, with a variety of knowledge backgrounds and experience.

I didn't co-research with Arrernte people, because I didn't think it was possible to undertake collaborative research in an ethical way, given the resourcing I had from the university and my situatedness as a postgraduate trainee researcher. This belief was grounded in my own practice

background in public health, the arts, and community development, by the standards prescribed by the AIATSIS guidelines, and by the explicit risks in engaging in collaborative research outlined by Tuck and Yang (2014) and Max Liboiron (2021b). This decision was grounded in a refusal to ask people to participate in a highly prescribed and procedural form of institutionalised knowledge making without adequate compensation. It was an acknowledgement of the limits of my own agency within an institutionalised training program that was simultaneously removed from my lived and research location, and upon which I relied to pay the rent through the provision of an Australian Postgraduate Award, which included a stipend. This refusal within my specific research setting does not mean that there are not ways and places of undertaking ethical collaborative or Indigenous led research within the academy. Nor does it mean that I do not or will not engage in other forms of learning or relationships with Aboriginal people prior to, during or after my candidature. It just means that I didn't think it was an ethical decision within the situatedness of this particular graduate research project.

As a graduate research training program, the PhD program is a particularly situated epistemic and pedagogic process, with impose limitations on the kinds of research that can be undertaken within it. Refusal provides a means of setting limits on the academy (Tuck & Yang 2014). Research training within the academy is training with settler colonial knowledge production (Tuck & Yang, 2014). Universities, as colonial institutions reproduce colonial structures that assume colonial access and assimilation of Indigenous stories, knowledge and participation (Jones & Jenkins 2014; la paperson 2017; Liboiron 2021b; Tuck & Yang 2014). As inexperienced researchers, PhD candidates can be pressured into extracting or performing narratives that reinscribe existing colonial power relations (Liboiron 2022; Tuck & Yang 2014) As a graduate researcher, I was aware of not wanting to reproduce colonial relations where I felt entitled to peoples time and knowledge to fulfil my own goals, especially goals within a colonial academic research institution.

Indigenous leadership and self-determination are foundational to the AIATSIS code of ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (AIATSIS, 2020). Although I had supervision located in Moondani Balluk, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unit at Victoria University, this department had no relationships in Mparntwe/Alice Springs, and so could not provide appropriate scaffolding or networking with the Arrernte community who are the Traditional Owners of the land on which I live and work, and on which I undertook the research. This meant that all the procedural requirements for ethics, such as the establishment of reference groups and host organisations needed to be established independent of the university, requiring significant time and input from already busy Arrernte organisations.

Truly collaborative research 'is risky for graduate researchers whose thesis might be refused… It requires an ethics that can cause loss, rather than only gain, for researchers' (Liboiron 2021b, p. 145). As a recipient of a full APA scholarship and stipend, I was expected to complete my PhD candidature in three-and-a-half years, after which time I would lose my living allowance. Completion of the PhD degree involved progressing through a series of time bound, procedural, milestones that demonstrated research progress. Failure to meet these milestones would result in suspension or loss of my scholarship, without which I was unable to do the degree. The rigid temporal and procedural requirements of a PhD program place specific pressures on community-based research, limiting the capacity for co-authorship, redirection, or even abandonment of parts or all of the research in response to shifting community needs and aspirations (Liboiron 2021b).

Within my creative and community development practice, I am committed to pay Indigenous people for their input and expertise into any work I do. The $2,500 budget provided to me by the university for research funding across the entirety of the PhD research was completely inadequate to compensate people for the sustained processes of consultation and feedback that meaningful engagement on a research project involved. Recognition of these limitations included an understanding that asking Arrernte people to participate in research about colonialism, and settler

relationships to place was emotionally and intellectually demanding 'border work' in what Somerville & Perkins refer to as the 'Discomfort Zone' (Somerville & Perkins cited in Somerville 2010, p. 339). This was work that I could neither pay for or offer assurances of benefit or control, given that a major outcome was to funnel the research into a dissertation for the performance of PhD assessment. It just didn't seem fair.

Generative opportunities of refusal

As I will explore in the discussion, the absence of Indigenous collaboration on this research poses limitations to the kinds of knowledge that can be produced in this research. However, as Tuck and Yang (2014) pointed out, refusal can also be generative, creating opportunities for different questions and narratives to emerge. In refusing to reproduce colonial entitlement to Aboriginal time, knowledge, and concepts by asking Aboriginal people to participate in an under resourced and potentially extractive research process within the settler academy, I opened other questions about the kinds of actions and processes settlers, such as myself, can take to disrupt our colonial relationship to land. Characterised by the kinds of questions asked, and the values that inform these questions, anti-colonialism can be practised by all kinds of people and does not require the direct engagement of participation of Indigenous community members (Liboiron 2021b, p. 133). Asking what kind of unsettling or anti-colonial actions I could take as a settler led me to ask what kinds of anti-colonial approaches could be learned or developed through and for my specific location as a fourth generation, white settler.

Liboiron advocated 'specificity as a methodology of nuanced connection and humility, rather than a way to substantiate uniqueness' (2021b, p. 22). This specificity recognises our different responsibilities and domains of action. This recognition of difference enables the possibility of 'solidarity without a We' that flattens power relationships (Liboiron 2021b, p. 24). Liboiron's (2021b) writing on specificity prompted me to consider the kinds of research questions, positions,

and responsibilities that can arise within settler led anti-colonial research. Acknowledging difference and difficulty of connection, Liboiron asked us to move forward, with our different commitments and obligations, even as we are 'impossible bedfellows….an ethic of incommensurability that digs into difference and maintains difference while also trying to stay in good relations' (2021b, p. 137).

Choosing land and place as the site of this inquiry is the acknowledgement, and even embrace of 'the commons of awkwardness, intimacy and complicity' (Berlant in Neimanis & Phillips 2019, p. 135). To undertake place research as a settler is to operate with the ground zero of settler-colonial theft and extraction alongside ongoing Indigenous resistance and resilience. It is to work within the spaces that 'bring us together and pull us apart' (Neimanis & Phillips 2019, p. 135). This work experiments with what Neimanis and Phillips referred to as the act of 'cleaving' (2019, p. 135). It is interested in 'splitting and severing' the hegemonic of settler colonialism to expose alternative relationships to land, whist 'sticking fast' (Neimanis & Phillips 2019, p. 135) to the ongoing social reality, impact, and enactment of these relationships in everyday life, and the possibility of life beyond this/the response as well. This position comes from the search for alternatives that arise from the understanding that 'either/or hasn't gotten us that far in collectively addressing the fate of our planet or the messy ecologies we find ourselves in' (Neimanis & Phillips 2019, p. 135).

Conclusion

Settler colonial land relations underpin much of the ecological and social harm within the Northern Territory. These harms are evident within large scale projects, such as the Beetaloo Basin Gas Development, but also permeate individual land relations. This research responds to the need for settler colonists, such as myself, to make visible and challenge these colonial land relations. Recognising the limits of this research project's situatedness, I have chosen to focus on exploring the potential to disrupt my colonial ways of relating to land. Part of this responsibility is to take seriously the existing calls by Indigenous people for settlers to dismantle the colonial cultures of land theft,

violence, and denial. Within Chapter 3, I mobilise queer theory to disrupt the perceived monolithic nature of settler colonialism, providing opportunities for my settler self to glimpse other, anti-colonial worlds, and ways of being.

Chapter 3 – Situated Beyond Binaries: Queering Provocations to Disrupt Settlers Colonialism

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Coming to the work as a Queer settler

> *How might we settlers use theories of entanglement and intimacy with/out proximity to understand both the colonial construction and reality of racial binaries in relation to country and climate?*
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> **Reflective Writing, July 2018**

I come to this work as a queer woman, who is part of a diverse queer community. This community has been my primary source of information about queer politics, and the lived experience of myself and my friends forms the foundation of my understanding of queerness. This is to say my understanding of queerness is embodied, intimate, and relational.

Being inside the queer community's struggle and being in solidarity with friends as they transition within heteronormative health, social, occupational, and cultural settings, teaches me about both the possibility and cost of confronting monolithic social narratives. I am indebted to my genderqueer, nonbinary, and trans friends and peers for teaching me about fluidity and the rejection of binary normativity. Through these relationships, I have learned how deeply embedded binary thinking is within western modernity, and that moving through and beyond this are fluid, dynamic, and diverse processes, that shift from individual to individual, throughout time.

My experience within the poly and relationship anarchy communities has expanded my understanding of consent and relational responsibility and opened me up to broader and deeper webs of relationships that reject centring and hierarchical notions of a single partner or 'the one'. Releasing fixed relationship structures and operating within fluid queer communities requires me to

be open to change within my relationships. This includes growing comfortable with relationships transitioning, ending, and failing, and constantly negotiating and navigating multiple and shifting boundaries as relationships move in and out of constellation with each other.

My lived experience of queerness has attuned me to the potential of nonbinary positions in relationship to settler colonialism. Early in my candidature, I noticed that, like a lot of my peers, I was interested in being a 'good white fella' as a way of addressing and alleviating my 'white guilt' about living on stolen land and benefiting from colonialism. I began to notice how in Mparntwe/Alice Springs, where there is a large settler population working in the Aboriginal service industry, that being or performing as 'good white fella' was often tied up with livelihood, profession, and reason for being in place.

As I began to interrogate my desires to perform 'good white fella', I became aware of critiques of this position (Kwaymullina 2020; Land 2015). I began to understand decolonising, addressing Whiteness and anti-racism as lifelong practices and processes, which requires ongoing reckoning, reflection, and change (Kwaymullina 2020; Land 2015). This made me interested in exploring positions of opposition to the structures of colonialism, extraction, and white supremacy that acknowledge my position as a settler colonist, whilst attending to the possibility of other, more morally response-able ways of being emerging.

Queer theory, with its refusal of binary normativity and embrace of uncertainty (Grzanka 2019), offers another destabilising lens through which to approach settler colonialism. A comfortability with failure, and partial ways of knowing, enable me to experiment with alternative ways of being in relationship with people and land without needing to have fixed or universal answers (Adams & Holman Jones 2011; Grzanka 2019). Adam and Holman Jones (2011) positioned their practice at the intersections of reflexivity, queer theory, and autoethnography as a process of

telling personal stories in a culturally relevant way, that disrupt and destabilise harmful norms and leave space for the incompleteness of any one way of knowing, that invite revision, refusal, return.

This practice of queer, reflexive autoethnography resonates with my research aims of disrupting settler colonialism through a series of iterative creative experiments at the intersection of my body and place. I move slowly, and with uncertainty, starting with a personal question and spiralling out into conversation with other knowledges, and then spiralling back in as I translate these knowledges into the situated knowing of my body in place through creative acts of making. I repeat this practice over and over, using different materials and mediums to enact different ways of knowing, creating an assemblage of partial, deeply situated, and speculative ways of understanding and 'becoming other' with/in place (Somerville 2010, p. 340)

Within this chapter, I present a series of queering provocations that I have mobilised to unsettle the monolith of settler colonialism within the research. Despite presenting as an impenetrable social monolith/fact, I argue that because colonialism requires constant reproduction, it is therefore open to disruption. Acknowledging the risk of making 'moves to innocence' (Tuck & Yang 2012), I seek out ways of 'reconfiguring my self-interest' (Land 2015), and orientating towards the cracks in colonialism (Walsh 2015) that might provide clues to other anti-colonial worlds that already exist (Hemphill 2021; Walsh 2015). In refusing the binaries of white guilt and/or colonial denial, I propose more fluid approaches emerging from queer theory, such as 'Radical Tenderness', and 'The Closet' as modes of understanding the disruptive grappling with settler colonialism that I undertake through the research.

Destabilising the monolith of settler colonialism

> *In my darker moments, I'm scared I only know how to be a coloniser, that I don't have the story for anything else.*
>
> ***On the Ground*, 2019**

The current global ecological and social crises provide both urgent contexts and need to address and redress the ongoing colonial violence towards the land and its people (Birch 2017; Rose 2013). Whilst acknowledging the catastrophic impacts of these crises, Rose (2013) proposed that they may present a large enough threat to modernity to unmake it, enabling different ways of relating to people and places to re/emerge. This research unsettles and denaturalises settler colonialism, by creating fleeting, iterative, and situated experiments in alternatives to settler colonialism, how they might be experienced, and the impacts of these experiences on the settler identity.

Settler colonialism presents as a monolithic structure. It is reproduced daily through the naturalisation of itself, and denigration and erasure of anything Other (Tuck & Yang 2012). Settler colonies, such as Australia, are founded on racism and white supremacy, which manifests in settlers as Whiteness – a form of racist social organisation which places white people in dominant positions and grants white people unfair privileges while rendering these positions and privileges invisible to white people (Green, Sonn & Matsebula 2007, p. 390). Whiteness manifests differently in different contexts. It is fluid and adaptive to change; it can endure significant changes, like the overturning of apartheid in South Africa, and maintain itself as a form of racism that is hard-wired into settler colonialism. (Green, Sonn & Matsebula 2007, p. 395).

Despite its monolithic presentation, settler colonialism is not natural, or of place. To be a settler Australian is to be *'*A-Stray-Alien … wandering lost, rootless, a stranger to this land, constituted by a spiritually and ethically bereft dominant culture*'* (Thorpe in Land 2015, p. 221). I read Thorpe's description of the settler identity as fluid, restless, and therefore open to the possibilities of change. Liboiron further expanded on the illusion of the monolith of settler colonialism, saying that rather than colonialism being a 'hard wall which one throws one's soft body against', it has 'jagged edges' that provide points of intervention (Liboiron 2022). Furthermore, Liboiron (2022) pointed to sites where systems are being reproduced at a high rate, as possible points

of intervention and change (2022). In attending to colonialism as a structure that is being reproduced, we may be able to identify and enact disruptions to its reproduction (Liboiron 2021b).

Bayo Akomolafe spoke of the *Otherwise* that exists within cracks of the totalitarian structures of colonial capitalism (Hemphill 2021). Positioning colonial capitalism as claiming its power from its ability to find, name, and know everything, he offered an invitation to examine other sources of power that might be residing in these cracks. Writing from Abya Yala in South America, Catherine Walsh (2015) wrote of the Otherwise as 'a lived pedagogy and praxis … grounded in interrelation of all nature' that lives in the cracks and fissures of coloniality (p. 12). This Otherwise is constantly being 'invented, created and constructed' within these cracks and fissures (Walsh 2015, p. 17). Walsh asked us to attend to these cracks and their processes of formation, growth, and expansion, and how these cracks might be linked to one another (Walsh 2015).

Recognising the unease and instability of settler colonialism enables me to trouble my settler-colonial identity. I understand this process as looking for cracks in the structure of colonialism. This research is a practice of attending to the cracks and exploring the potential lessons to be found within them. Cracks are unstable, speculative spaces. To enter the cracks of colonialism as a settler is to be un-settled – to have one's certainty and resting place shaken up and dislodged with no certainty about the impacts or benefits of this process. To begin to investigate cracks in the structure of settler colonialism is to find and investigate cracks within myself as a settler person. This requires acknowledging the failure of settler colonialism and the associated narratives of modernity, patriarchy, and white supremacy to provide an ethical, life-sustaining cultural framework.

Responsibilities arising from queering the Gaelic settler identity

> *To acknowledge climate change and/or colonialism is to enter into a metaphysical crisis which is ontological, existential, and relational. The identity is ruptured – the whole world is ruptured – the mythologies which have sustained us fall*

away and we are not only adrift in a sea of form-less-ness, but with the knowledge that we have been complicit beneficiaries in a system of severance and violence.

Reflective Journal, February 2019

Understanding difference in situatedness is key to being able to enact change. One component of this is recognising that there is no 'clean slate', that 'research and change-making … are always caught up in the contradictions, injustices and structures that already exist' (Liboiron 2021b, p. 21). Settlers must begin to act in compromised locations (Liboiron 2021b) and within the impossibility of a shared conversation (Birch 2017). Working within the compromised space of settler colonialism requires an attunement to situatedness as a way of understanding our responsibility to 'enact good relations … and account for our relations when they are not good' (Liboiron 2021b, p. 24). Understanding our responsibilities and obligations as relational requires us to acknowledge that how we account for and enact these responsibilities is determined by our situatedness. As Liboiron (2021b, p. 21) explained, 'an elder daughter has a different obligation to the mail carrier'. Understanding and working from our situatedness works against the monolith of settler colonialism by creating the opportunity for relations of solidarity that enable settlers and Indigenous people to work towards anti-colonial aims without collapsing the incommensurate differences of experience and responsibilities (Land 2015; Liboiron 2021b).

Negotiating situatedness as a white settler can be tricky. As Coultas pointed out, there is no redemptive white identity, however, we can strive to be anti-racist, recognising Whiteness, but not adopting a white identity (2021). Land (2015) dedicated a chapter to the usefulness and limitations of identity categories within Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations. The identities of Indigenous and non-Indigenous are important social and historical constructs that are instructive for understanding colonial power relations, and claiming these identities can play an important role in constructing collective identities and movement building (Land 2015). However, 'to routinely think in and

uncritically invoke these terms is to be beholden to colonialist logic' (Land 2015, p. 85). Land offered 'a theoretical framework for analysing ways of being and relating … of holding two frames (of identity) in tension and being urged to listen for Indigenous agency and innovation' (2015, p. 107).

Deborah Bird Rose troubled the binaries situatedness within the Anthropocene by using Noir Literature's positioning of characters who are 'less clearly delineated between mean and clean' (2013, pp. 215–216). She proposed that within the Anthropocene, we are 'part criminal, part detective and part victim' (although she does not situate the we, I assume she means fellow settlers), and explored this positionality of entanglement within the causes and impacts of ecological collapse as a call for 'decent action' despite the ongoing suffering and loss (Rose 2013, p. 216).

Blurring the lines between 'mean and clean' (Rose 2013, p. 216) can be mobilised as a 'settler move to innocence' in which I use my Irish settler identity as a 'positioning that attempts to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt and responsibility without having to give anything land or power or privilege' (Tuck & Yang 2012, p. 10). As Green, Sonn and Matsebula wrote, 'escape is a trope of Whiteness' (2007, p. 404). As a settler Australian, I am free to choose when and how I relate to my ethnicity, and claiming my Irish ancestry can be a form of colonial flight if it positions me as colonised, rather than the coloniser. Padraig O'Tauma, poet, theologian, and former leader of Corrymeelya, Northern Ireland's oldest peace and reconciliation organisation, explicitly warned against Irish settler-colonists using their Irish identity as a way of dodging culpability for the impacts of their occupation of other people's land (Marton 2019).

Rather than alleviating me of responsibility for settler colonialism, I am interested in the potential of mobilising Rose's allegory to examine my cultural positioning as a settler of Gaelic descent in enabling a 'reconstruction of self interest' through the linking of the struggles against colonialism in 'Australia' with those of my ancestors in Ireland (Land 2015, pp. 225–228). Through

these linkages, acting in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander struggles against colonialism as a settler Australian can be seen as transgenerational solidarity and responsibility. I operate within a lineage of resistance, and this mobilises me. I am responsible for upholding my ancestors' legacy of anti-colonial struggle, and for addressing the ongoing impacts of my family's own collusion with the colonisation, through the occupation of Aboriginal land. This 'reconstruction of self interest' opens new possibilities for 'different modes of relating: modes marked by a greater sense of mutuality' (Land 2015, p. 226). This is also a process of allowing for the incompleteness of either Irish or settler identities to explain me and open up hybridised spaces and new possibilities of how I might relate to my ancestors, my descendents, other people, the more than human world, and the land.

Radical tenderness: being 'loving and critical at the same time'

> *How do we sit in spaces of discomfort, with a willingness to be fallible? How do we expose these processes to each other, so we may be more willing to make mistakes? How do we surrender knowing to learning, certainty for the possibility of becoming something else?*
>
> **Reflective Journal, November 2020**

Radical Tenderness is articulated as 'being loving and critical at the same time' (D'Emilia & Chavez 2017, para. 1). The Radical Tenderness manifesto has origins in embodied practice. It was developed by D'Emilia with performance troupe Pocha Nostra and Daniel Chavez in 2017. D'Emilia later expanded this work in collaboration with Vanessa Andreotti as part of The Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures collective, through the development of the Co-Sensing with Radical Tenderness text document, and cards (D'Emilia & Andreotti 2018). This principle of being 'loving and critical at the same time' was pivotal to the development of this research practice. Early in my candidature, I reflected on how ill-prepared I felt as a settler to begin to confront and disrupt colonialism, and how

the unravelling of modernity felt like an apocalypse. Radical tenderness became a means to 'Stay with the Trouble', to borrow Haraway's (2016) phrase.

The critical aspect of radical tenderness has been necessary for identifying, confronting, and interrogating the embedded colonialism within my body, life, and practice. I've encountered this aspect of being critical within anti-racist and settler solidarity spaces, where examining one's beliefs, behaviours, and privileges are frequently used practices. I believe these practices are useful and necessary for settlers to undertake, however, I have witnessed them be impacted by internalised perfectionism and binaries of 'good' and 'bad'. This either/or thinking and perfectionism are identified with the racial justice movement as being characteristics of white supremacy with organisations and organising (Okun n.d.). The settler desire to distance themselves from racism or work from an idealistic decolonised state, whilst still living in a settler colony, can be seen as '*terra nullius*' thinking – the colonial desire to work from 'a clean slate' that ignores and/or erases existing relations (Liboiron 2021b).

Andrea Smith (2013) said that the practice of white 'confessions' of racism and white privilege can become performative and serve to recenter the white subject. Smith (2013a) discussed how these models of confessing privilege can 'shift our focus from building social movements for global transformation to individual self improvement' (p. 278). Instead, Smith encouraged focusing on how we operate within structures of oppression and how these are reproduced and fostered forms of 'loving rather than punitive accountability' (2013a, p. 278), that build and grow collective power, and create the capacity to imagine worlds beyond white supremacy and colonialism.

As I started to engage in this creative research, I encountered places in myself and in the land which I began to think of as 'tender'. Tender is a word with multiple and seemingly conflicting meanings. Two of the meanings resonated with the work – being loving and kind, and being vulnerable and sensitive to pain (ed. Butler 2018). These definitions invoke sites of wounding, whose

vulnerability and sensitivity call attention to the need for care. These aligned with my feelings about the research. The external realities and my internal response to climate disruption, and the unfolding ecological and social crisis drew my attention to the broader wound of colonial violence and extraction. Pain, existential and material, communicates that something is wrong. A third meaning of tender is to offer forth (ed. Butler 2018). This meaning has its origins in the Latin *tendere*, which means to stretch (ed. Butler 2018). As I continued through the research, this third meaning grew in relevance, as extending care to the 'tender places' within myself, the land, and my culture required me to stretch beyond my current ways of doing, being, and knowing. These multiple meanings point to the possibility of presencing the existence of colonial violence alongside the possibility of love and care.

The co-existence of love with criticism moves the inquiry beyond the binaries of 'good' and 'bad' (D'Emilia & Andreotti, 2018). Andrea Smith spoke about forming new relationalities and the need to allow our practice to keep changing, to account for ways of being that we have not imagined yet (2013a). Within the research, this practice of love manifests as a belief in connection and the capability of settler people to move towards what bell hooks calls 'the will to meaning', which is the 'capacity of humans to make community, to make connection, to love' (hooks 2009, p. 29–30). This commitment to showing up for the possibility of 'the will to meaning' within myself, whilst doing the work of critiquing settler colonialism, has enabled me to lean into the discomfort of being an entangled beneficiary of a system that is against my values.

Remembering to practice love whilst being critical aligns with Deborah Bird Rose's (2004) assertion that hope requires that we understand violence is not the only thing we are capable of. Rose (2004) described decolonisation within the settler context as 'the unmaking of regimes of violence that enforce disconnection of moral accountability from time and place' (p. 210). Rose viewed the process of decolonisation as a refusal of fragmentation, severance, and punctuation between peoples, place, and time. She calls on settler people to restore life-giving connections with and between

people and country as an expression of moral responsibility. Her later work on extinctions (Rose 2013, 2017) highlighted the practical and moral importance of restoring and celebrating life-giving relationships between people, species, and country, even in times of catastrophic deathscapes, where there is much that cannot be saved.

The closet and gestures

> *The body holds trauma and attuning to it through a series of returns we no longer need to enact the unconscious desires of our shadow.*
>
> **Reflective Journal, January 2021**

Within queer culture and research, 'the closet' is a site and process of emergence and retreat, with queers 'negotiating strategically and unexpectedly' between self and other, exposure, and retreat (Grzanka 2019, p. 2). In my own experience as a queer person, I move in and out of the closet, sometimes multiple times a day, choosing to reveal aspects of my identity in certain situations, and conceal it in others. This movement in and out of the closet is an ongoing strategy of negotiated identity that many in the queer community use to survive, thrive, and make change (Adams 2016).

The model of moving in and out of knowing and unknowing, exposure and concealment, has underpinned my research process. In conceptualising the closet as a process, Sedgewick 'argues that to think of the closet in binary terms, and to limit its relevance only to the study of gay life and culture is to ignore how the closet affects and is affected by Western culture writ large' (Sedgewick cited in Grzanka 2019, p. 3). Grzanka (2019, p. 2) drew on Eve Sedgwick's epistemology of the closet as 'a process' rather than a site, as an example of a queer research method. This conceptualisation of the closet provides an unsettling method/ology through which to understand how I might stay grounded in the hard realities of settler colonialism, whilst simultaneously gesturing to other ways of being, doing, and knowing that refuse to accept that colonialism is the only reality there is.

Just as heteronormativity is a condition of the queer closet (Adams 2016), so too is colonialism a condition for the closet within my research. It is the invisibility of Whiteness that requires me to step outside of the closet to experiment with different ways of being. 'The closet' within my research is my Whiteness, which manifests as a place of unknowing, shame, and confusion about colonialism that motivate the need for change and disruption. From the closet of self, I move outwards, into the world, engaging in an embodied exploration of disruptive ideas within place. Having gathered up new insights, knowledge, and experiences, I return to the closet for reflection, feeling into the new illuminated unknown and unknowable parts of myself that I have encountered through my excursion. This reflection births new questions, and so I venture out of the closet and repeat the process again.

For queer folks, coming out of the closet presents a challenge to dominant narratives, but this challenge comes at a cost (Adams 2016). In using the allegory of the closet within this work, I acknowledge the incredible pain and loss that closets have caused the queer community (Adams 2016). Coming out of the queer closet and coming out of the colonial closet are differently situated experiences, with Whiteness potentially providing more of a shield against negative consequences of questioning colonialism than I might experience as a queer woman questioning the limitations or harms of heteronormativity. Despite certain incommensurability between these experiences, the cyclical process of grappling, exposing, and retreating within the process of negotiating the closet provides a useful allegory for understanding the wrestling with colonialism within the research.

Conclusion

Although colonialism can present as a social, cultural, and political monolith, its constant need for reproduction provides opportunity for disruption. Alternatives to colonialism already exist in other places: cracks and the Otherwise not always visible to the colonial gaze host Otherworlds and become sources of power. Within this research, I seek out fluid spaces of in-betweenness where I can

take responsibility for the historic and ongoing harms of colonialism in which I am entangled as a settler colonist. I do this whilst also accepting that other worlds and ways of being have always been present and made anew. In Chapter 4, I examine reading as a source of disruption and the potential of Indigenous scholarship to rupture the settler colonial world view. Chapter 3 has attended to the risks and opportunities of reading Indigenous writing as a settler person and presents an ethic of situated knowledge making as it is mobilised within the research.

Chapter 4 – Reckoning with Reading: The Opportunities and Risks of Disruptive and Dialogical Reading Practices

Introduction

This research has been a process of reckoning with my location as a settler living on unceded Aboriginal land. This process has been un-settling and uncomfortable, thrusting me into spaces of conflict and not knowing. The reckoning takes place at the intersection of my white Australian settler body and Arrernte land in Central Australia, specifically Mparntwe/Alice Springs. I undertake this work as a fourth-generation Australian of Irish, Scottish and German descent. I walk, think, and make with this body on Arrernte land, mostly in and around the township of Mparntwe/Alice Springs, where I have lived and practised for over a decade.

For theory to become useful or meaningful to me, I've had to translate it into embodied and located knowledge, through walking, making, and writing. This process of translation shifts both myself and the knowledge – new ideas and understandings are exposed in the shifting assemblage between body, knowledge, and place. To understand these shifts I've translated the embodied and located knowledge back into something that can be understood by the broader culture, in the form of art works and exegesis. Moving back and forth from my subject position to that of others through iterative acts of reading, walking, and making, I've learned to 'read hard, write hard and think hard' (St Pierre 2019, p. 6) about the multi-headed tangle of ecological and social breakdowns. This process has been 'unsettling, disruptive, confusing', and much of the time I haven't known if what I am doing is research (St Pierre 2019, p. 7). It certainly hasn't felt as tidy as it is written up here. In the field, my research has resembled Donna Haraway's SF, 'following a thread in the dark … picking up threads and dropping them … a practice and a process' (2016, p. 7).

In this chapter, I discuss reading and situated knowledge making within the research. I present the need for settlers to engage in critical self-reflection and self-education through my own experiences in activism. I then discuss the risk of settlers engaging extractively with Indigenous knowledge, and the development of epistemic ethics through this research practice. I conclude by re-presenting reading as a disruptive and dialogical practice within this creative research.

Disruptive dialogues: A situating story

Writing, it has been claimed, is a method of knowing and knowledge making (Richardson & St Pierre 2000). Some of the story of the research can only be known through the writing, through the gathering up of thoughts and processes and artefacts, and locating them back within the theory. Personal storytelling forms an important component of this creative research practice, as it provides a vehicle to communicate how and why, as an artist and researcher, I made particular decisions, as well as the impacts of the decisions, in ways that contribute to broader knowledge disciplines (Stewart 2000).

When I began this PhD exegesis, I was so strongly bound up in narratives of exceptionalism and individualism that I could only imagine 'saving the earth' or 'watching it burn'. Western Environmentalism has a long history of essentialising relationships between land and people within the modernist nature/culture divide (Klein 2014). Modernity, and environmental movements, are awash with big slogans and big campaigns. I grew up in the environmentalism of the 1980s and 1990s, exemplified for me by 'Captain Planet' – a cartoon series where superheroes with elemental powers fought dirty polluters to save the planet. I grew up wanting to save the planet too. I carried this desire of wanting to save the planet into my activism.

In late 2017, I was asked by a friend working in an environmental organisation if I could work with them to develop some creative strategies for the anti-fracking campaign. Delighted at the opportunity to be involved, I eagerly began to contribute my knowledge and skills by coming up with

ideas for different projects and actions that communities could take and worked to secure funding for these. I got frustrated when my 'hard work' wasn't 'being recognised' and decisions were made without or despite me.

It took me a while to realise how 'being involved' equated to 'centring myself'. In my desire to be useful I was at best a hindrance and at worst harmful. This urgency and need 'do something' is typical of white activists seeking solidarity with Indigenous causes (Foley 2010; Land 2015). Ambelin Kwaymullina characterised this kind of behaviour as being a 'Saviour' (2020, p. 44).

Saviours
cannot yield space
They like to centre stage
claiming responsibility
for any Indigenous success
expecting Indigenous people
to be grateful/for being saved
from the structures
behaviours
attitude
that settlers create
sustain
benefit from

Ambelin Kwaymullina, *Behaviours*

Critical self-reflection needs to take place alongside and ongoing to public political action to reduce the imposition of (often unconscious) Whiteness onto Indigenous struggles (Land 2014, p. 164). I was fortunate to have friends in the campaign who repeatedly reminded me not to project

my vision onto other people by making project planning decisions without community involvement. I was also fortunate to work alongside skilled movement leaders, and witness the patience and attention that they gave to facilitation and inclusive project planning as they built alliances between Traditional Owners, pastoralists, tourism operators, and environmentalists. As a process of self-reflection, the creative practices I was experimenting with as part of my PhD exegesis enabled me to reflect on and understand the lessons I was receiving through my activist practice. Slowly, I began to release the story of my own exceptionalism and find ways to surrender. This has enabled me to develop a more a humble way of practising allyship that recognises the limitations and responsibilities of my situatedness as a white settler.

Through this research project, I developed a practice of reading, walking, making, and writing as a way of thinking through my relationship and responsibilities to land as a settler person. This process was necessarily settler focused and undertaken within my own body, as an ethical response to the limitations and expectations of the PhD graduate research program. As a remote artist and academic, living in a town of 28,000 people, more than 15,000 kilometres from any major metropolitan area, being able to think at a distance is an extremely useful skill. As a settler person, wanting to learn about the historical and contemporary mechanics of colonialism and its impacts, without burdening already busy Aboriginal people or assuming access to Indigenous people's time, being able to take responsibility for my own education is an essential skill. As someone deeply acculturated into extractive reading and knowledge consumption practices (Tuck & Yang cited in Liboiron 2021), finding embodied and emplaced ways to engage with ideas and translating them meaningfully into my life is critical to unlocking the transformational potential of situated knowledge making (Haraway 1988) and settler self-education (Foley 2010; Land 2015).

I developed the process of reading, walking, and making to engage with unsettling ideas. This process had three intersecting elements, that were undertaken sequentially, in iterative cycles, through the creative field work process between 2019 and 2021. Reading was a method of engaging

with situated knowledges that could expose, unsettle and/or disrupt the narratives of colonialism, extraction, and white supremacy that are woven into the fabric of my life/being, as a settler person. Walking was a method of taking these ideas out into the field and thinking through them with my body in place. Making was a method of documenting and translating the impacts of the walking and reading practice as a series of material gestures towards different ways of knowing arising within the research. The practice of public presentation of creative works brought these gestures into the public sphere, providing opportunities to bring the 'situated gestures' of the work into conversation with community members. I understand these practices of reading, walking, making, and writing as a way of thinking with others – human and more than human – about settler colonialism and relationship to land, at the intersections of the creative arts and the academy.

Central to this process of reading, walking, and making was Rose's ethic of recuperative work required for decolonisation 'the moral claim, the response, the recognition of connection, the commitment' (2004, p. 31). Within the research, I read the work of Indigenous scholars as witnessing, which worked against the monological erasures of people, place, and cultures perpetrated by settler colonialism. Reading as witnessing required a me to meaningfully engage with the ideas within the text, to feel them in my body and respond with an action, a commitment. As Rose (2004, p. 31) wrote, 'to acknowledge the existence of such claims is itself a provocation, Response to a claim is itself a call – of refusal, of violence of further claims of responsibility'.

Through this research I have engaged with the claims of Indigenous scholars by listening through reading, situating the knowledge in body and place through walking, and responding by making and writing. Reading in this way can work against the monological narratives that characterise war, colonialism, and domination, and calls us into recuperative work of listening, witnessing, and seeking out alternatives to violence (Rose 2004). Through witnessing, engaging, and being changed by the words of Others, I become response-able for my learning and action against colonialism, whilst remaining attuned to the leadership and sovereign authority of Indigenous people.

This mode of engaging in anti-colonial action is commensurate with Land's (2015, p. 161) ethic of 'acting politically with self-understanding'.

It's important to stress that this process of learning, reflection, and adjustment is ongoing. I haven't reached a state of 'decolonised' through this process. In adopting Tuck and Yang's (2012) definition of decolonisation being return of all land, I accept that becoming decolonised whilst living as a white settler in a settler colonial society is not possible. As Max Liboiron (2022) stated in a recent lecture on working in compromised spaces using the university as a case study, decolonis*ing* can be enacted a verb, as an ongoing process. In thinking through how I am able to enact the verb of decolonising as a result of the research, I observe that I am better able to work in solidarity with others, Indigenous people, and other settlers within this process of decolonising. The thinkers who have influenced my thinking and my practice advocate for dynamic generative practices; starting from impossibility of conversations (Birch 2017), accepting incommensurability (Tuck & Yang 2012), staying with the trouble (Haraway 2016), refusing *terra nullius* (Liboiron 2021), learning from our mistakes, and making different ones (D'Emilia & Andreotti 2018) and maintaining a sense of humour, humility, and the capacity to be wrong (Land 2014). All of these practices and approaches are required to keep on showing up over the long term, which is one of the most important factors for solidarity (Land 2014). As Gary Foley (2010) said, 'just because we plant seed, doesn't mean we will live to see the tree'. Tackling colonialism, both within oneself and in the community, is an ongoing process, requiring regular maintenance. The practices developed through this PhD research are tools with which to undertake this maintenance, and therefore are only as good as their application.

Settler access to Indigenous knowledge: risks and rationale

We need 'new ways and places to talk', Birch (2018, para. 17) wrote, regarding the necessity of white Australia to accept and embrace the realities of living on Indigenous land. Green, Sonn and Matsebula (2007, p. 409) expressed an interest in the ways Indigenous knowledge can challenge

Whiteness by requiring white settlers to 'redefine Whiteness in relation to an Indigenous "other" who is resilient and resistant'. Ambelin Kwaymullina (2020, pp. 55–56) described this as a process of 'learning to hear the noise of settler colonialism in your own head and all around you so you can hear past it to understand our voices on our own terms'.

Many Indigenous cultures emphasise relationships within knowledge production and dissemination (epistemology and pedagogy; Graham 1999; Jones & Jenkins 2014; Simpson 2014). For those of us who have inherited settler colonialism as our primary culture, there is 'the serious danger of romanticising and/or appropriating' others' visions (Haraway 1988, p. 584). Haraway's theory of situated knowledge is instructive for those of us who have inherited the roving eye of western science. In contrast to the all-seeing eye, or the 'god trick' of western science, which claims to see 'everything from nowhere', Haraway (1988, p. 581) proposed a practice of situated knowledge-making, that is embodied and local. A 'limited location and situated knowledge' (Haraway 1988, p. 583) required us to weave 'webs of connection' with others, so that through relationships and dialogue we may come to know more about others and more about ourselves.

Research as a practice of situated knowledge-making requires me to release my claims on truth and the fantasy of being in control that come along with it. Other people's knowledges, worlds, and perspectives have their own agency, protocols, and frameworks, and unravel, shift, and fold beyond the grasp of our situated knowing (Birch 2017; Haraway 1988; Simpson 2014). They are not mine to grab and grasp at and put in my pocket or essay. As Ambelin Kwaymullina (2020, pp. 45–56) asserted, ethics are required, especially for those of us indoctrinated in cultures of settler colonialism, who become 'discoverers' and treat these knowledges 'as their source material or their lightbulb moment'.

White settler scholars have a history of using First Nations knowledge as a way of improving their credibility, furthering their agendas, or positioning themselves as experts in Indigenous

communities and their struggles (Green, Sonn & Matsebula 2007; Tuck & Yang 2012). Learning from Indigenous and other people's knowledges is a form of relationality that brings responsibility with it. Listening and learning from Indigenous people and their knowledge and perspectives, even where that knowledge exists within the public domain, must be approached with caution, given the long histories of knowledge appropriation and manipulation by settlers underpinned by colonialism (Birch 2017; Osborne 2018).

Grappling with ethics and actions in situated reading practice

When I first started my PhD, I would travel the 3,000 km roundtrip from my home in the arid Arrernte lands in the middle of the Australian continent to the grey slick city of Melbourne built on the place called Naarm, which is land of the Wurundjeri nation.

My supervisor would meet me for coffee, give me a quick, heated pep talk, and gift me a book. It was like being offered a flotation device in the big swirling squall that was trying to make sense of a personal existential crisis in the bowels of the academy. I'd grasp at the reading until it sunk under the weight of my thinking, or I managed to lash it to some other ideas I'd been given or salvaged.

This was how my supervisors taught, for me. Distantly throwing ideas as life rafts, occasionally calling out encouragement, but mostly watching me scramble and seeing how I'd swim. Ideas, knowledge, theory became life rafts. I became a boat builder. I can travel further now with these lashed together knowledges than I can swimming within my own skin.

So adept was I at boat building, that it took a storm to realise that this vessel I'd built was not my flesh. During a roulette of supervisor changes (the Australian university system, particularly the humanities, is in collapse), a First Nations academic

took me to task on my use of Indigenous knowledge in my writing. It was all secondary sources, already published, big name theory – most of it. Much of it was given to me by my first supervisor, a well-regarded Indigenous professor.

Needless to say, I had a meltdown. Surely, I was allowed to cite people? Wasn't I being a good settler, reading all this Indigenous knowledge? The critical feedback unravelled me, and pointed out how much of the colonial Kool aid I still had in my gut.

Donna Haraway had already warned me about the disembodied God Eye, but it was Max Liboiron who really pointed out how hungry and extractive colonial knowledge making practices can be within the academy. In colonial capitalist society, I/we get a lot of power from knowing, doing, saying, and having everything. Knowledge is power. Knowledge is an economy. Innovation is terra nullius. The university is a plantation built on stolen land. Will my exegesis be a photo shoot, capturing me running through a field of sunflowers in my best white cotton dress and sun hat, deleting all the befores and afters from the frame?

Eve Tuck, Tony Birch, Deborah Bird Rose, Mary Graham, Donna Haraway, Max Liboiron, and others all point to relation-making knowledge practices that recognise power, boundaries, reciprocity, specificity, and vulnerability as key aspects of relating. They teach me I need to consider my relationships to people's knowledge in the same way I consider people – varied, nuanced, requiring getting to know someone, understanding where they are from. They also teach me, as Deborah Bird Rose writes, that I must be willing to be changed by dialogue with other people, places, and knowledge. Otherwise, it's just a monologue, or as we say round these parts, a circle jerk.

And so, for me, reading is a way of making kin. A way of locating myself in a web of thinkers, and saying 'these are my people, these are my relationships, these are

my friends, and ancestors, this is whose lineages I work in'.

Knowledge making as kinship also involves me saying – 'I don't roll with that crowd. I don't get invited to those parties. That conversation is none of my business. I hurt those people and now they told me to fuck off and I have to live with that.'

I have responsibilities to these (knowledge) relationships, to take seriously the things they say to me, and to take action on the ideas in the real world. I can't cite colonial theory and then not show up to protests any more than I can enjoy dinner at my friend's house and then not show up when they call for help. I have to be conscious of how I tend to these relationships, and the power dynamics of whose knowledge I can 'play with' and whose I need to learn from, and practice what Max Liboiron calls standing in allyship from over there.

Post in Finding Our Way Home Mighty Networks Group, 23 November 2021[1]

I read outside my cultural location in direct response to calls and claims by communities most impacted by colonialism for white people to educate themselves and begin to centre Indigenous and non-white world views (Birch 2017; Green, Sonn & Matsebula 2007; Kwaymullina 2020; Land 2015). However, simply reading work by Others does not suffice as sufficient ethics within creative research. When I first began to read writing outside my own cultural location, I became interested in Indigenist research techniques, such as those of Martin and Miraboopa (2003), which centred Indigenous land and kin relationships within their methodology. I thought that I was working against colonialism by using Indigenous knowledge making techniques on Indigenous land. I was well into my second year of research when my desire to use these Indigenist techniques was questioned. This

[1] Finding Our Way Home is an international online philosophy community I am part of. We use 'mighty networks' software to keep our conversation going between monthly zoom calls.

required me to engage in deep self-reflection about whose knowledge I was using within my research, and why.

Jones and Jenkins (2014) wrote on the limitations of learning 'about the Other' within the 'Indigene-Colonizer hyphen'. For settlers, much of the narrative of learning from each other serves settlers, as Indigenous people living in settler societies already knows about the coloniser culture because they live in it every day. Simultaneously, the white settler subject may be so cloaked in Whiteness and is so lacking in knowledge about the Other and their cultural protocols that they will never be able to properly hear the other (Jones & Jenkins 2014). Furthermore, listening to the voices of the Other can further reinforce colonial power dynamics through a process in which settlers assume access to Indigenous knowledge, and reinforce their position of dominance by giving an Indigenous Other a hearing without actually taking action to change colonial power dynamics (Jones & Jenkins 2014, p. 13).

Birch offered that 'difficulty, or even impossibility, is as good a place as any to start a conversation', and that 'in contrast to Eurocentric narcissism and ignorance, humility offers us a starting point' (2017, para. 10–11). This humility was also a starting point for Kwaymullina, who positioned it as 'a standard by which to assess your actions … of not stepping in … of walking slowing' (2020, p. 51). Humility is 'taking responsibility for your own learning' whilst being open to making mistakes and taking responsibility for these without burdening Indigenous people' (Kwaymullina 2020, p. 51). This responsibility requires the recognition of self-determination, that settlers are unable to assess the cost and weight of Indigenous words and actions (Kwaymullina 2020, p. 52). This links to her articulation of yielding space as a key attribute of change-makers, along with learning and actively addressing bias in oneself (Kwaymullina 2020, p. 46–47).

Navigating the ethics of engaging across and through cultural and colonial boundaries and borders is difficult, requiring risk and vulnerability by all parties (Coultas 2021; Land 2014;

Somerville 2010). This can be particularly difficult in the context of a PhD program (Coultas 2021, Liboiron 2021b, Tuck & Yang 2014). Coultas writes on the grappling with knowledge ethics, which she undertook as a white European woman conducting a social research PhD exegesis in Tanzania, as they 'refused to master the knowledge of the Other' (2021, p. 8).

> *In the case of my PhD project, I felt it a matter of ethics to both recognise but also not attempt to co-opt African cosmologies into my work ... Yet rather than attempt to "use" this work to conceptually frame my research, I instead attempted to ensure that this knowledge guided my engagements with Western relational theorising and methods, aimed at both identifying Eurocentrisms and maintaining a gaze on the borders that I am committed to refusing to cross over and master.*
>
> (Coultas 2021, p. 9)

In refusing to appropriate Others' knowledge, Coultas (2021) recognises that refusal by white settlers should be around de-occupying space, rather than a disengagement with the ideas and issues of anti/colonialism. Coultas' struggle reflected some of my own, as I grappled with how to manage the tensions between needing to centre Indigenous voices as I educated myself, whilst attending to the colonial impulse to 'read extractively' (Liboiron 2021a,). Jones and Jenkins (2021) suggested that rather than learning *about* the Other, intercultural dialogue and learning across cultural boundaries holds a disruptive potential as we learn from about difference. This learning about difference disrupts the ways that unmarked Whiteness permeates all aspects of colonial society and decentres the white subject (Jones & Jenkins 2014, p. 204). Listening to Indigenous voices can unsettle the settler colonist by forcing us to reckon with the situated and limited nature of our truth claims and world view.

Within this creative research, I focus on texts by Indigenous people that are aimed at settler audiences and available within the public domain. I use these to engage in the process of 'critical

self-reflection' advocated by Gary Foley and others (Land 2014, pp. 164–165). The use of existing resources created by Indigenous people reflects the responsibility of settlers to draw on 'existing resources and opportunities rather than burdening Aboriginal people individually' (Land 2014, p. 178). As part of an ongoing reflexive grappling with regarding which knowledges I am able to work with, I now focus on resources aimed at settler audiences, to try and ensure that I am engaging with knowledge that was intended for me. Within the context of this creative research, Indigenous texts work against the 'monological history and ideology' of settler colonialism (Rose 2004, p. 23). Alternative discourses presented within the texts provide disruptive and unsettling provocations for interrogating my position as a coloniser and engaging in process of intellectual decolonisation (Land 2015, pp. 162–165). Like Coultas (2021), I then mobilise theories and methods closer to my own location (notably the work of queer, settler, feminists) when I theorise ways to respond to the claims within these Indigenous resources.

Anti-colonial research is 'characterised by how (they) it do(es) not reproduce settler and colonial entitlement to land and Indigenous cultures, concepts, knowledge and life' (Liboiron 2021b, p. 132). First Nations aims and aspirations, including sovereignty, land rights, and decolonisation, need to be centred within place research (Tuck & McKenzie 2015). Reading work by Indigenous people has helped keep my research aligned with the aims, aspirations, and struggles of the Aboriginal communities around me. Whilst examining how settlers might use creative practice and place pedagogies to engage in the work of 'critical self-reflection' is the focus of this research, I take seriously the claims that this work of critical self-reflection cannot be separated from public political action (Land 2015, p. 16). Listening to and taking seriously the claims of others is 'itself a call – of refusal of violence, of further claims to responsibility' (Rose 2004, p. 31). Participating in First Nations led public political action disrupts my 'white saviour complex', which wants to fix others as a form of control, and keeps the focus/awareness of the Aboriginal resistance to colonialism and

ongoing struggles of these communities for justice. I've learned to follow the lead of First Nations people, and be a practical helper where needed and requested.

Throughout the research, I have been guided by Land's (2015) three domains of action in solidarity with Indigenous struggles; critical self-reflection, public political action, and giving up privilege. I have been involved in and supported First Nations led campaigns against fracking in the Beetaloo Basin and deaths in custody. I have also committed to a practice of paying the rent, prioritising resources for First Nations communities in projects and organisations I am involved in, and passing on opportunities, including paid work, to First Nations artists and people. These actions are not included as research data or outputs, as I haven't wanted to link them to the single-authored work I will be assessed on in an academic institution. However, I understand these actions are part of acting responsibly and with respect towards the First Nations people and writing who I am learning from, and some of these actions arise directly from knowledge gained through the research process.

Conclusion

Working within the framework of situated knowledge-making, I understand reading Indigenous authors within my research as a form of witnessing which requires response. Seeking out and taking seriously the narratives of Indigenous people disrupts the power of the monological settler culture that erases, imposes itself on, and speaks over all others in a 'self-totalising' narrative (Rose 2015, p. 128). This way of relating to text, through iterative cycles of reading, walking, and making, is a step towards dialogue, which Rose (2004) articulates as a process of opening ourselves to others, in deep awareness of our own situatedness, with a willingness to be changed (pp. 21–23). In this way, the processes of these researches can be seen as work that needs to be done prior to and alongside solidarity actions with Indigenous people.

As I engage in knowledge-making from my own position and engage with Other ways of knowing, I need to know where I am seeing from and be explicit about this. Alongside work by

Indigenous academics and thinkers, I re-searched my own culture for theoretical positions and processes that disrupt paradigms of separation, dominance, and extraction. Working with and through Rose's ethics for decolonisation, I read across knowledges to find cracks and ruptures within settler colonialism, that could crack me open and expose new ways of being – that reconfigure my interests and work against the harm of settler colonialism. Within Chapter 5, I expand on the making process I use to translate and respond to this disruptive reading practice. Chapter 6, 'The Claypans Diaries', which follows, gives an account of the reading, walking, and making practice within the fieldwork, and how these were materialised within the creation of the creative products.

Chapter 5 – Researching as an Artist: Kinships and Method/ologies

I came to this work as an artist, with nearly twenty years' local, national, and international practice experience in writing, performance, and community arts projects. At the end of this PhD exegesis I still feel more artist than academic. Most of this research has been done with the support of local and national arts communities, a long way from the university. I came to this research as an outsider to the academy. My desire to do a PhD program was to access the space, time, and resources to think through big questions about belonging, colonialism, and place, and experiment with how they might transform my creative practice. With dwindling arts funding in Australia, academic scholarships are one of the few pathways to access the multi-year funding to think through complex practice questions without the need for immediate presentation outcome. I completed the PhD program at distance, rather than working in a department at the university. For much of the research journey, I worked out of Watch This Space, a local artist run initiative. As an artist researcher, I worked in a hybridised location, situated within arts communities and overseen by the university. This location requires the work to be accountable to the creative and academic communities, as well as providing forums to speak across these locations through the creative works and exegesis.

Within this chapter, I present how role of creative research in destabilising settler colonialism. I present two projects, the collaborative exhibitions *Open Cut* and *Lead in My Grandmother's Body*, and the PhD project *Miranda Must Go*, as examples of how practice at the intersections of the creative arts and research can act as 'anti-colonial technologies' (Liboiron 2021b). I go on to locate my part by outlining some of the artists who influenced my practice in the early stages of my PhD exegesis. Having established the influences and allegiances of the work, I conclude by presenting the four key method/ologies for the creative research practice.

Anti-colonial creative place practice: Arts and research

Artists can call attention to connections between the local and global. Artists pull together invisibilised or submerged connections to fashion doorways, cracks, and portals; fugitive spaces and frames of viewing that destabilise colonial relations. 'Artists can make connections visible' writes Lucy Lippard, through 'an activist art practice that raises consciousness about land, history and culture and is a catalyst for social change' (1997, p. 19). Lippard describes artists as 'slipping between institutional walls to expose layers of emotional and aesthetic resonance in relationship to place … [to/and] ask questions without answers' (2014, p. 8).

The following two projects offer examples of artists reckoning with colonialism in hybridised creative research settings. These projects are similar in that they aim to actively expose and open conversations about the links between colonial violence and colonial land access, and employ both artistic and research methods and methodologies. I am interested in these projects because they present examples of how creative research can be used as anti-colonial technologies that 'make different land relations' (Liboiron 2021b, p. 121). Both projects involve settlers in this process, however *Open Cut* and *Lead in My Grandmother's Body* centre Indigenous voices through deep collaboration between settlers and Aboriginal artists. In contrast, *Miranda Must Go* provides an example of how settlers may use creative research to draw attention to colonial land relations in the absence of direct collaboration with Indigenous people.

Open Cut and Lead in My Grandmother's Body: Exposing and resisting colonial violence through intercultural collaborative making and research

Given the long histories of cultural ignorance, violence, and the incommensurability of experience between Indigenous and settler peoples, cultural practices of reflection and reparation play a critical role in addressing and redressing colonial and extractive violence. Focusing on the literary arts, Nixon examined how 'writer-activists' support extraction impacted communities to

become ‘audible agents from below’ through ‘transnational visibility and audibility’ (2011, p. 37). Through their uses of narrative, these writers can weave the dispersed and submerged impacts of slow violence into a coherent narrative. Employing the emotive and social power of storytelling, writer-activists actively work against the dehumanising othering embedded in decision-making that externalises the consequences of slow violence onto unseen and unheard communities. Rob Nixon (2011) described how writers act in allyship with environmental activists fighting against resource extraction, to expose the slow violence of these projects. These writers blend ‘the discourse of environmental justice, mostly borrowed from the west … with local discursive traditions … as a strategic ‘resource’ (Nixon 2011, p. 36). The ‘deployment of these strategic ‘resources’ can help give greater visibility to the dispersive impacts of slow violence that are suppressed by those who profit from these endeavours’ (Nixon 2011, p. 36). Furthermore, the international attention that these writers can draw to these issues can offer ‘protective visibility’ to activists working on the ground (Nixon 2011, p. 36).

Whilst Nixon focused on the use of literature as a tool against slow violence, a diversity of mediums are employed by artists fighting extraction in the Northern Territory. The two-part exhibition series, *Open Cut* (Green, Kerrins & Ritchie 2017) and *Lead in My Grandmother’s Body*, are examples of activist art practices against the historical and contemporary layerings of colonial violence on the lands of the Garrwa, Gudanji, Marra and Yanyuwa people in the Gulf of Carpentaria. These exhibitions were a collaboration between Garrwa artist Jacky Green, Garrwa-Yanyuwa artist Nancy McDinny, and Garrwa-Gangalidda artist Stewart Hoosan, all of who are based in Borroloola; Darwin-based settler artist Therese Ritchie, and settler academic Sean Kerins, from the Centre for Aboriginal and Economic Policy at ANU (Allam 2020; Bardon 2017b). This collaboration draws on the cultural authority, creative talent and profile of Borroloola artists, and the creative, curatorial, and academic skills of settler collaborators to communicate complex histories of colonial violence in ways that are legible to broader audiences, and accessible via touring exhibitions and the internet.

The *Open Cut* exhibitions used a broad range of mediums to communicate historical and present-day violence against Aboriginal people in the Gulf, including photography, painting, and text. Through these mediums, the exhibitions exposed a lineage of settler violence and Aboriginal resistance to the European invasion of their lands, beginning in the 1870s, when 'settler colonisers attempted to clear them from their land using elephant gun, poison and intimidation to make way for the first wave of European "development" [pastoralism]' through to environmental violence of the Glencore McArthur River Mine (Kerins 2019, p. 50). From frontier times to the present day, this violence has been enabled and supported by the administrative and legislative mechanisms of the settler state (Kerins 2019). A timeline created by Kerins and Ritchie, exhibited at the *Open Cut* exhibition and on the *Lead in My Grandmother's Body* website, 'document[s] how settler colonisers have used and continue to use western law and policy to usurp Aboriginal peoples' lands and waters and suppress their sovereignty' (Green et al. 2020, para. 9).

Within *Open Cut* and *Lead in My Grandmother's Body*, manipulation and re-presentation of the words, images, and objects were used to draw links between the violence of mining and frontier violence, and communicate these links to the broader community in emotionally resonant ways. The violence of remote mining projects can be viewed by urban settler populations as distant, complex, and Othered; through these projects this perspective becomes intimate, present, and embodied through large-scale portraits of community members, and the clarity of the narratives they use to link frontier violence and extractive violence. Complimenting these portraits with the presentation of complex information through accessible forms like a timeline works against the dispersive nature of slow violence. The articulation of slow violence as a unifying theme and theoretical framework of the exhibition introduces this concept to a broader audience, enabling them to use it to identify and understand the impacts of this specific extraction project, and other examples of slow violence in their world.

In the 2017 *Open Cut* exhibition, community members from Borroloola, the site of the large-scale and controversial Glencore McArthur River Mine, were photographed with words from mining company brochures written in white paint on their bodies (Green, Kerrins & Ritchie 2017). The appropriation of company words was used to demonstrate the ongoing impact of mining on Yanyuwa and Garrwa people and land, including poisoning of water and land and diverting a major sacred river (Bardon 2017b). "We put it [the words] in our chests to get people to understand what the mine is doing to us," explained senior Garrwa artist Jacky Green, who was photographed with the words 'Open Cut' across his chest (Green cited in Bardon 2017b, para. 9).

Materialisms of explicit colonial violence, such as bullets, are centred within the work, and linked to the more covert forms of violence, such as lead poisoning from toxic mining practices. The second exhibition in the series, *Lead in My Grandmother's Body*, explicitly linked the fast violence of early colonial frontierism and land theft with the slow violence of lead poisoning from the McArthur River Mine, violence wielded through legislative and administrative means that enables the control of all facets of Aboriginal land, lives, and livelihood. Portraits of Borroloola community members with oversized bullets explicitly linked lead poisoning to lead bullets (Green et al. 2020). As 'Garrwa woman of law, linguist and artist' Nancy McDinny explains, "It's not the first time they put lead in our bodies. They put lead in my 'grandmother's body when they shot our families" (Kerins 2019, p. 54). These are portraits 'born from the heat of resistance, their purpose was simple, to speak truth to power' (Kerins 2019, p. 50). Senior Garrwa artist Jacky Green used the allegory of the bullet to expand on how his people are using art as a tool of resistance:

> *[T]hey used the bullet to shoot us down. We are using our art like a bullet to fire back at people, to speak like a tongue, to get people to understand what they done to us and how they keep destroying our land. We are fighting back.*
>
> (Green cited in Kerrins 2019, p. 55)

Miranda Must Go: Settler artist responses to colonial narratives in place

Projects such as *Open Cut* and *Lead in My Grandmother's Body* are enabled by long and deeply collaborative relationships between Aboriginal people and settlers that draw on their different skills and authorities to achieve shared aims. Both Therese Ritchie and Sean Kerins have long histories of working in solidarity with Aboriginal people, particularly in Borroloola, and particularly around issues of racism, state violence, and the extraction industries. However, working across the cultural differences between settlers and Aboriginal people is not always possible or desired by Aboriginal communities (Land 2015), and settler artists interested in anti-colonial or anti-racist practice may need to find other ways of working.

Artist Amy Spiers (2018) documented the difficulties she faced in making contact with the Aboriginal communities connected with 'Hanging Rock', the site of her PhD creative project. Her project, *Miranda Must Go*, used disruptive public art practices to unsettle *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, a prominent white fictional narrative of the disappearance of a white girl, set at a site where Aboriginal people have actively disappeared through the process of colonialism (Spiers 2018).

Spiers made multiple attempts to contact Wurundjeri, Taungurong, and Djadja Wurrung communities associated with the site in line with creative research and artistic guidelines that emphasise the consultation and involvement of Aboriginal people in projects. However, when these attempts failed, Spiers was confronted with the choice as to whether abandon the project or find ways in which she could bring attention to the colonial narratives of erasure that dominated the site. Informed by Audra Simpson's articulation of 'ethnographic refusal' as a mode of resistance by Aboriginal people (Simpson cited in Spiers 2018, p. 150), and Land's (2015) assertion on the importance of settlers addressing their own community's racism, Spiers' research focused turned to 'a thematisation of white ignorance and complacency – drawing attention to my own communities'

ignorance and the means by which the dominant culture denies and obscures Aboriginal narratives' (2018, p. 152).

Through the creation of artworks for her project, centred around the public campaign *Miranda Must Go* (a reference to one of the main characters in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*), Spiers grappled with risk as a key element of settlers making anti-colonial work, and the need to unsettle the desire for settler safety and comfort through the process. As she continued to seek advice from Indigenous artists and academics throughout her process, she began to understand the need for settlers to facilitate education, reflection, and action against colonialism and its impacts in their community (Spiers, 2018). In making this work, Spiers (2018) had to be willing to take risks, whilst being reflexive. To minimise the potential harm generated from these works, Spiers highlighted the importance of learning from 'the long and bumbled history' of white and settler artists making work about colonialism and race and getting it wrong (Tuck & Yang cited in Spiers 2018, p154). With its focus on critiquing the narratives settlers use to erase Indigenous stories from a place and insert narratives of Whiteness onto Aboriginal land, Spiers' (2020) project offered an example of how settler artists can pursue anti-colonial aims within their/settler communities as they work with/in place.

Seeking a different kind of practice

I came to this research seeking a different kind of practice – one that would help me respond to the crisis of climate change and social inequity that I was witnessing around me. Despite my background in community development and community arts, I felt that my existing models of practice lacked the capacity to understand and address the broad systemic drivers of colonialism. I was particularly interested in models of practice that would promote deeper connection between people and places in ways that linked local experiences to broader social movements and structural change.

Just before starting my PhD research, I encountered an essay by Dougald Hine – on art, modernity and the sacred – that proposed;

> *If we whose inheritance includes the relics of Christianity, Enlightenment and Romanticism have anything to bring to the work that lies ahead, that I suspect that one of the places it will come from is the work of artists who are willing to walk away from their own story of exceptionality … unable to appeal to the authority of art you begin again, with whatever skills you have gathered along the way and whatever help you can find. You do what it takes to make work that has a chance of coming alive in the spaces where we meet, to build those spaces in such a way that it is safe to bring more of ourselves.*
>
> (Hine 2017 p. 149)

By the work that lies ahead, Hine referred to the social and ecological crisis unfolding locally and globally – the kind of crises often referred to under big names like 'climate change' or 'poverty' or 'extinction' or 'COVID-19' or 'mental health crisis'. Hine's work orientated me away from the narratives of individual excellence embedded in the creative arts, towards a more localised, humble approach to culture making that prioritised connection, conversation, and repair.

Throughout my PhD research, and in the two years prior, I attended many talks, exhibitions, films, and conferences to see what issues other artists were concerned about, and how they were approaching these with their local communities. Through this process, I've made kin with many artists who are making work that is actively engaging with witness and care in damaged places and damaged times. I encountered the work of Alana Hunt, Joshua Kwesi Aikins, and Mhvari Killien in the early stages of my research, or just prior to commencing the PhD research. Artists like Kwasi, Hunt, and Killin shared a humility in their work that was more committed to conversation than monologue. Their practices opened up new ways of seeing the world through conversation and

hospitality, rather than through brilliant declarations of universal truths. Here, I summarise how each of these works disrupted my existing ways of making and provided clues and directions as to how I could proceed with my creative inquiry.

Alana Hunt's *Cups of Nun Chai* was one of the first works that really taught me about how an intimate, iterative art practice can offer witness and care from a distance. The work is offered as a memorial for the 118 Kashmiris who died in political violence during the Kashmir Independence protests in 2010 (Hunt 2020). Through tea and conversation, the project unfolded over years, being documented and represented as a book, an exhibition, and a newspaper serial. I learned much about iterative practice and how small, sustained interactions could open spaces of witness and connection, and work against the amnesia of the 24-hour news cycle.

Indelible Imprints, a walking tour by Joshua Kwesi Aikins (2018) that I attended whilst in Berlin in 2018 introduced me to generative place pedagogies that blurred art and research. Kwesi (Aikins 2018) drew attention to the traces of colonialism in central Berlin marked in buildings, street names, and tourist signage, showing the histories of colonial violence and theft hidden in plain view. From Kwesi's tour, I learned how place holds material memories and markers of colonialism, and that these could be invoked to form a dialogue in place, simultaneously immediate and specific and in relationship with, and accountable to, other place and times.

Whilst on a residency in Finland, I was fortunate to meet and learn from Mhvari Killin. Her work, *Re-soundings*, restored bells to places on the Outer Hebrides islands, from where they had been removed during the Reformation. As Mhvari explained it, *Re-soundings* reversed a process of violent removal, where the original bells were melted down to be made into canon shots, by remaking the bells from melted down gun shell cartridges (Killin & Watt, 2017). This taught me about the profound power of material practice, and how it could be instrumentalised as a force of healing within communities. As an artist working predominantly in writing and performance,

Mhvari's work attuned to me to the power of material interventions, and how they could be used to enact change rather than just create a representation or idea of it.

Looking back, I can see that these works, and others like them that I encountered through the PhD research, offered a new way of understanding creative practice as a means of asking and responding to highly localised questions in ways that were big enough for other people to inhabit, without losing the specificity of the body, place, and time from which they emerged. These works orientated me to the work in this research project.

Principles of making: Creative methodologies within the research process

This work is speculative, iterative, and multi-disciplinary. It is enacted through a series of personal, place-based creative gestures that speculate alternatives to colonialism in response to other knowledges. This process is reflexive in the sense that Adams and Holman Jones wrote, enacted through a series of returns 'to the river of story' in which personal experiences are analysed in the context of theory, for new learning to come forth (2011, p. 108). Grzanka offered Eve Sedgwick's allegory of *the closet* as something we are constantly coming in and out of as a process of refusing binaries and dualism within queer research (Sedgwick cited in Grzanka, 2019, p. 3). This process of going in and out of the closet resonates with the research's iterative and speculative practices. Each artwork can be seen as a gesture towards something other than colonialism. It is incomplete and speculative, punctuated by returns to the closet of self-analysis, reading, and reflection, before re-emerging with a different gesture, responding to similar but slightly different circumstances.

Within this creative research, making with different mediums found through the walking practice became a way of documenting and translating the new knowledges I was creating through the reading and walking practices. The artefacts and fieldnotes developed through this process became sources of information about the impacts of these gestures and experiments. These were used

to share the learning from this work, and as a point of reflection to inform the next iteration of practice.

Whilst creative thought is often prized for its capacity to draw connections where none previously existed, the process of finding and making these connections often feels uncertain, requiring movement, (re)invention and iteration (Wood 2021). Much of the time, I have not known what I have been doing or if it has been research. Questions have often appeared as ill formed, shadow creatures emerging from text, from land, from my body, from my daily life, and the changes in the world around me. Some questions have haunted me enough to make repeated deep dives to perceive their shape. Charlotte Wood referred to this as 'heat seeking' (2021, p. 27), following compelling but not always comfortable ideas within the creative process. Through these repeated dives, the process of reading, walking and making began to take shape. It has only been through writing that I've been able to really understand this as a method/ology and its impacts and implications in my life and beyond (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005). In short, as St Pierre wrote (2019), I've been in a process of following an idea, and making up method and methodology as I go.

Creative research as bower birding

Tess Brady (2000) referred to her multi-disciplinary creative research process as *bower birding*. The bowerbird is found in many parts of Australia. The Western Bowerbird, the species common on Arrernte land, is a medium-sized brown bird, with pink markings around its neck. I've lived with and adjacent to many of these creatures. One of the characteristics of the bowerbird is that the male bird builds a small bower on the ground, which is decorated with objects of a specific colour, depending on the species. Using the allegory of picking 'all the blue bits and leaving the rest' – a reference to the way that bower birds collect items of a single colour for their bower – she describes how creative researchers develop a 'working, rather than specialist knowledge … across a range of disciplines' (Brady 2000, para. 13).

Brady's allegory is a useful tool for thinking through my creative research process. A bowerbird moves back and forth between their bower, a site of courtship and performance, and the local surrounds in which they fossick for material. In the same way, each piece of knowledge gleaned through reading and walking was woven, through creative practice, into the 'bower' of my research outcome – creative products and exegesis – which are themselves performative. Through a series of returns – to texts, to place, to mediums and methods – I have gathered and gleaned a broad range of highly localised knowledges. These knowledges expose how I've learned about my entanglement in colonialism and extraction, the impacts of this entanglement on my relationships with place, and some of the speculative gestures I might use to unravel this. These are woven into the creative products and exegesis, sites of performance for external evaluation.

Bricolage

Artists weave together different knowledges, methods, methodologies, and mediums of practice to create new and unforeseen connections between things. Creative practice/praxis led research can be understood as bricolage (Stewart 2001). Earl describes the *bricoleur* as one who 'uses whatever they have at hand to get the job done' (2013, p. 15). They found bricolage, a process of drawing on methods and methodologies as needed to conduct research, useful for researching the shifting environment of the Occupy movement (Earl 2013). Like Earl, my process was one of 'wandering through' a research context, making multiple connections between theory and lived experience, with various creative practices acting as an intermediary/interocular in my learning (Earl 2013, p. 19).

Working as a *bricoleur* led me far beyond my comfort zone. I come from a creative practice background, but this work is not done with poetry or spoken word which are my familiar and comfortable mediums. I began this research with the process of making postcards, which morphed into a range of different creative translational practices. As the creative research process unravelled, I

found myself laying my hands on mediums I've never used to 'get the job done' – photography, cyanotypes and, quite literally, found objects. As I engaged with different ideas, I discovered different ways of understanding these through creative practice. Although I wrote throughout this PhD program and in several published poems that were informed by the research, these works never held the same revelatory capacity as the claypan works or the gathering ground workshops. They were always more crafted, more fashioned. I always knew what was coming next.

Emergent arts methodologies

Margaret Somerville articulated a framework of 'emergent arts methodologies' that position the body and creative making as a process for uncovering 'emergent' and 'invisible' highly localised place stories (2010, p. 15). For Somerville, these stories 'cannot be pre-empted prior to creating the conditions for their telling, their emergence must be facilitated in the process' (2010, p. 15). She used the term emergence to describe how this kind of work undoes existing narratives of place and creates conditions for the relational re-making of new stories about place.

Somerville's (2010) work on *place pedagogies* spoke to the importance of embodiment: the iterative creative process in generating emergent place knowledge/pedagogies. Within her articulation of place pedagogies, Somerville (2010) explained how, by engaging in a series of returns to place, artists might generate a body of iterative works that could create an assemblage of meaning. For Somerville (2010), it was the relationships drawn between different iterations of practice that generate deep, localised and relational knowledges. Somerville's process makes sense to me. It offers a rationale for why I found myself working with mediums outside of my previous practice. I needed to work with the unfamiliar to learn something I didn't know.

When I document place with different mediums, I enter into an epistemic relationship with the materials and processes of these mediums. Positioning humans in a reciprocal relationship with the material world, Somerville explored how artists enter into different epistemic relationships with

the ‘objects and technologies’ that we ‘intentionally manipulate in the process of becoming other’ (2007, p. 15). Different mediums offer different epistemic possibilities – we literally make different meanings through different mediums (Somerville 2007, p. 15). Through an iterative multi-medium practice, artists create a multiplicity of renderings that can then be arranged in assemblages of meaning. The use of different methods to engage with un-settling knowledges within place offers multiple opportunities for creating assemblages of partial, localised ways of knowing.

Crystallisation

I gained further insight into the value of trans-disciplinary, iterative practice through Richardson and St Pierre’s (2000) articulation of crystallisation as a process of meaning making. Richardson and St Pierre proposed the metaphor of Crystallisation, as opposed to triangulation, as a method of validity within mixed methods writing (2000, p. 936). Rather than the two-dimensional triangle, the crystal ‘reflects externalities and refracts within itself’ (Richardson & St Pierre 2000, p. 936). This metaphor offers an understanding at the intersection of the subjective researcher experience and the external context of the research.

The metaphor of a crystal offers a different lens for engaging with situated knowledge through reading, walking, and making practice. I expanded Richardson and St Pierre’s (2000) metaphor to include the mixed methods of making, not just writing. Iterative making practice yielded a range of situated knowledges, occurring at the intersection of my body, place, the medium, and the ideas I was engaging with on that particular day. I entered into a knowledge-making relationship with different creative mediums (Somerville 2010), with each medium offering a different epistemic lens, or what Haraway (1988) might have referred to as ‘prosthesis’. Iterative practice yielded a range of creative translations or situated knowledges. These were created at the intersection of my body, place, the medium, and the ideas I was engaging with on that particular day. These translations form an assemblage of meaning, presented through and including the exegesis. This process of

investigating a subject through multiple lens and angles – as if through a crystal – results in a 'deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic' (Richardson & St Pierre, 2000, p. 936)

Conclusion

Within this chapter, I have situated myself as an artist undertaking creative research within the university. I position this creative research within the academy as being the pursuit of 'a different kind of practice'. In pursuing this 'different kind of practice', I sought out the works of other artists as a way of locating this project in a broader cultural and creative eco-system. Within this chapter, I have examined the ways differently situated artists have reckoned with histories of colonialism and extraction at the intersections of academic and artistic practice through the case studies of the *Open Cut* and *Lead in My Grandmother's Body* exhibitions, and the *Miranda Must Go* creative graduate research project. I then situated myself in relationship with other artists, with whom I have personal relationships or whose work I have experienced personally, and detailed some of the ways that their artworks have influenced my practice.

Having considered the work of other artists, I presented key methodologies or 'principles of making' that guided my creative practice including bricolage, bower birding, emergent arts methodologies, and crystallisation. These 'principles of making' emerged through engaging theoretical approaches to making through experimentation in the field. Although the creative works traverse several mediums, none of these were familiar to me prior to undertaking this research. The principles of making have guided the creative process, and therefore contribute to this process of being an act of creative research, rather than a purely expressive, aesthetic, or reflective endeavour. Chapter 6, 'The Claypans Diaries', provides an account of how these principles of making were enacted in the field to create the three creative products that accompany this exegesis. Chapter 6 details the development of the creative method/ology of reading, walking, and making by bringing

together the elements of disruptive reading and translational making discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, with walking as a mode of inquiry through three iterative cycles of creative place research undertaken at the Ilparpa Claypans between 2019 and 2020.

Chapter 6 – The Claypans Diaries

Introduction

The Ilparpa Claypans research was emergent. This chapter tells the story of these iterative practices through linear time, weaving the theory and practice together to illuminate my process of learning. The research progressed as a series of three iterative, situated, place explorations, with each iteration engaging different theories, methods, and audiences. Just as each iteration engaged a different process of inquiry, different writing-up processes are used across this paper. This practice offers insight into the different processes of making and reflection embedded within each iteration. This chapter tells the story of three iterations of creative, place-based research at the Ilparpa Claypans. Each of these iterations was built on the previous. The first two works, *Postcards from the Claypans* and *Shadow Work* can be seen as studies for the final work *Testing Ground*.

The first section of this chapter 'Walking at the Claypans', explains how and why I came to be walking at the Ilparpa Claypans. It introduces Deborah Bird Rose as a key theorist throughout the iterative practice and the influence of Margaret Somerville's emergent art methodologies on my creative renderings of place.

'Postcards from the Claypans' documents the first iteration of creative practice at the claypans, which took place from May to June in 2019. In this iteration, individual walks were documented on individual postcards and mailed to individual peers in different parts of the world. Reflecting the personalised and contained nature of this medium, images and text from individual postcards are shared as examples of this practice. Reflective writing offers insight into how this iteration of practice began to engage with the idea of 'resilience facilitation', which was to become the focus of the third iteration of practice inquiry.

The second iterative exploration, ‘Shadow Work’, took place in January 2020. This iteration was a process of situating myself at the claypans through the creation of an autoethnographic cyanotype map. This section of the chapter moves back and forth between theory and practice across linear time, replicating the process of weaving images and text together, which I had undertaken to create Shadow Work.

The third iteration of this work, ‘Testing Ground’, built on the themes of resilience facilitation and embodied practice from *Postcards from the Claypans* and settler situatedness and material practice from *Shadow Work*, through an 18-day durational performance installation undertaken at the Ilparpa Claypans, and exhibited at the Watch This Space gallery in Mparntwe/Alice Springs during November 2020. *Testing Ground* positioned my body in service to place, through a daily practice of walking and removing dumped material and invasive weeds. This section of the chapter reflects on the process and impacts of this durational practice through a comparative dialogue with Freya Mathew’s (2005) writing on pilgrimage.

The Ilparpa Claypans

The three creative works are the result of the practice of reading, walking, and making undertaken at the Ilparpa Claypans, a series of 12 ephemeral claypans located approximately 13 km south west of the township of Mparntwe/Alice Springs. These claypans are a site of great beauty and great destruction. My inquiries at the claypans positioned me as a ‘witness to the loss of place’, requiring me to take up the ‘moral burden’ to ‘break up monologue and sustain a moral engagement with the past in the present that gives voice, presence and power to that which has been lost, abandoned, or destroyed’ (Rose 2004, p. 51).

Figure 6.1. *Ilparpa Claypans 1*, 2019. Image courtesy of Simon Cutherbert.

The claypans form part of the arid wetlands of the Ilparpa Valley, which includes 'claypans, swamps, intermittent springs and sewage plants' (Duguid 2016, p. 36). The claypans are an area of national botanical significance, and home to Shield Shrimps, a form of desert shrimp that populate the pans after rain (Bergen 2010). They are a popular recreation site, with many people going there to walk dogs and picnic. Through my personal relationships, I am aware that the site has significance for the Arrernte people. I do not have the knowledge or authority to expand on this further, however, nor have I sought this information for the purposes of this research from archives or Arrernte people, as I do not have ethics clearance to do so (see Chapter 4 for further expansion on why I have not pursued Arrernte involvement in this research).

Figure 6.2. *Ilparpa Claypans 2*, 2019. Image courtesy of Simon Cutherbert.

Despite their importance, the Ilparpa Claypans have been a site of continued environmental use and neglect. Early in the towns history, they were used as a 'commonage', an area where anyone could leave their livestock outside of Mparntwe/Alice Springs (Sleath 2014). Ongoing destruction to groundcover caused massive dust storms in Mparntwe/Alice Springs, resulting in the nearby area of Honeymoon Gap being seeded with buffel grass in the early 1950s as part of a wider strategy of dust suppression. (Nelson 2018). Buffel grass has since spread throughout the Ilparpa Valley, including the claypans.

Buffel grass is a highly destructive weed that causes widespread damage to arid ecosystems, changing native fire regimes and displacing local plants and animals (Schlesinger et al. 2020). The environmental damage caused by environmental damage caused by buffel grass impacts Aboriginal

people across Central Australia, whose access to local food sources is impacted by its spread (Schlesinger et al. 2020). There is an active Landcare group in operation at the Ilparpa Claypans who have been meeting regularly to remove buffel grass from the area (Landcare 2020). This has been bolstered by sporadically funded work by local environmental organisations who work with land councils and Traditional Owners to remove buffel grass from the area (Finnane 2021). This work has resulted in the return of native grasses and other ground cover to some areas around the claypans, as seeds stay stored in the soil, however vast tracts of buffel grass remain.

Walking at the claypans

Walking is a troubling medium. It makes the mixed up and generative trouble that Haraway asked us to stay with, 'learning to be truly present … as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings' (2016, p. 1). To 'walk a concept' is to generate a 'speculative middle' that 'complicates, unsettles and disturbs thought' (Truman & Springgay, 2018, p. 134). I began to walk as a way of reflecting on and making sense of what I was learning through my activism and desktop research. I became interested in pedagogical and creative practices that could expose and disrupt the settler gaze, and the potential new ways of seeing and being that might emerge from this disruption. Influenced by Sarah Truman and Stephanie Springgay's (2016) *Provocations for Walking Research*, I began to engage with literature as an agent of defamiliarisation.

Walking places, the body at the intersection of thoughts and place, offers a way of 'knowing the world through the body, and the body through the world' (Solnit 2000, p. 47). Placing the body in contact with the world can be a method of refusing the fragmentation of Western knowledge-making that is rooted in modernity and 'approach[es] an inert world in order to dissect, rearrange, classify, typologise and remake' (Rose 2004, p. 180). As the site of colonialism and ecological crisis, place is a vital frame for the development of 'restorative practices that connect people up in respectful ways

and look[s] after country at the same time' (Kessaris 2006, p. 12). I first began thinking about walking as a method of engaging in restorative place learning through Rose's writing on how her Aboriginal teacher and friend, Jessie Wirripa 'lived in an ethic of inter-subjective attention where life happens because living things take notice' (1999, p. 100). This thinking was further developed by Margaret Somerville's writing on how engaging the settler body in sensual learning with/in place can 'identify absences and construct new stories of place' through the development of material intimacy and dialogical relationality with other people, species, and time (2010, p. 338).

My early experiments with walking took place at a variety of different locations around the township of Mparntwe/Alice Springs. These walks were akin to a stone skimming across the surface – touching multiple sites but lacking in depth. They were reflective of the 'multi-centred' relationship to place articulated by Lucy Lippard but failed to interrogate or interrupt it (1997, p. 5). This practice was akin to Freya Mathew's articulation of a modernist viewing the world as 'an ever-changing artefact of his passing whims' (1999, p. 4). Subsequently, I abandoned this process in search of an alternative framework of engagement.

At this time, influenced by Somerville's (2010) writing on iterative place practice, I began to engage in a series of returns to place. I began to concentrate my practice, walking repeatedly in one site – the Ilparpa Claypans, a series of 12 ephemeral claypans located 13 km southwest of the Alice Springs township. In the 13 years I have lived in Mparntwe/Alice Springs, I have witnessed the ongoing degradation of the claypans due to four-wheel drives, weeds, and dumping. When I walked there, I was filled with despair and grief for the damage to the place. I began to look for ways to interrupt these feelings and investigate other ways of being with this damaged place that could gesture towards resilience and repair.

Walking and reading

Reading became a way of interrupting what I was experiencing whilst walking. Influenced by Sarah Truman and Stephanie Springgay's (2016) *Provocations for Walking Research,* I began to engage with literature as an agent of defamiliarisation. Defamiliarisation techniques 'rethink or re/move what has become habitual' (Truman & Springgay 2016, p. 261). In the early stages of using literature as an agent of defamiliarisation, I would read prior to a walk, and use the reading as a lens for the experience of the walk. The reading disrupted my despair by offering new ways of seeing place, or new perspectives for understanding what I was experiencing. In turn, walking repeatedly at the claypans provided a context for the readings, and enabled me to apply the theoretical ideas as a tool for reconfiguring my relationship with place. This gave me a deeper understanding of the ideas within the literature, and how they might apply to my situatedness.

As my walking practice progressed, I began to move fluidly between reading, walking, and making. Reading would provide a lens for the walk, and direct my attention to different themes or propositions. Walking was a way of investigating the propositions found within the research through my body, in place. Walking with reading as a disruptive influence attuned me to the ongoing resilience of the claypans, and the ways that other humans and creatures were still living in the claypans, and using it as a site of nurturance and rest. The combination of the walking and reading practice led me to generate new understandings about how I might act in a more responsible way towards the claypans, and participate in its resilience, even in the face of the ongoing degradation. In this way, the walking practice acted as a means of translating the theoretical readings into an embodied and emplaced understanding.

Postcards from the Claypans

May – June 2019

Recognising that 'situated knowledges are about communities, not isolated individuals' (Haraway 1988, p. 590), I began to send postcards created through the walking practice as a way of documenting my walking experiments, and sharing what I was learning with peers. I was drawn to postcards as an intimate and relational creative practice. In walking with theory, I was enacting a dialogue between the situated knowledge of the texts, my body, and the claypans. Through the creation of postcards, I extended these dialogues outwards, to connect with peers who were thinking with and in their local contexts. Postcards blur public and private correspondence and move across political and geographical borders, linking places through space and time (Motter 2011).

Each postcard was a translation of an individual walk at the claypans. At the end of each walk, before leaving, I'd find a place to sit and write the postcard text. I would weave field notes together to provide a summary of what I'd experienced and learned during that particular iteration of the practice. The text was accompanied by a print of a digital photo from the walk, offering the reader visual context of the place at that specific time and day. Three of the postcards created and sent during this time are shared with reflective notes, as translations of the first iteration of the place-based practice at the Ilparpa Claypans.

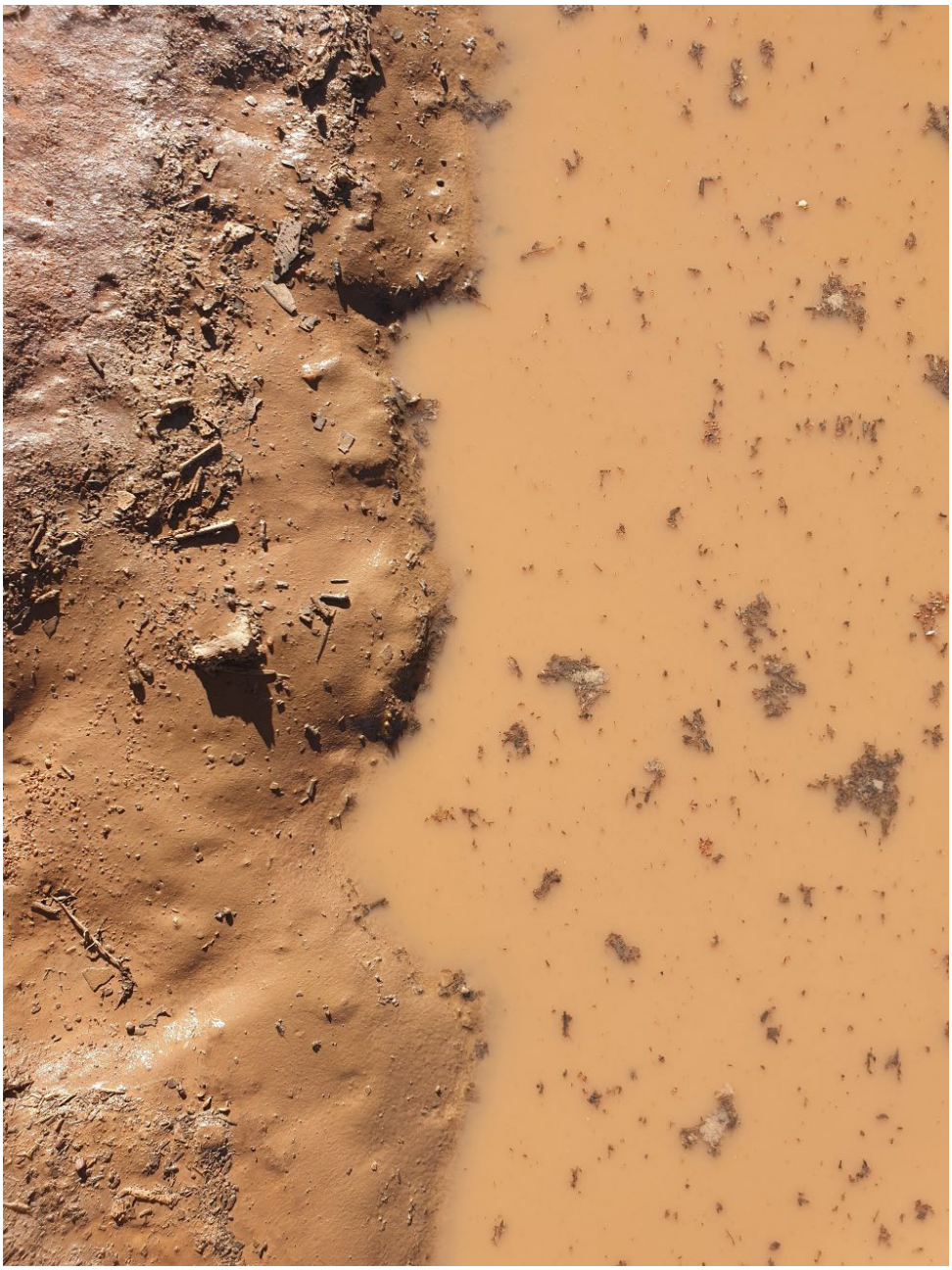

Figure 6.3. *Postcards from the Claypans 1*, 2019. Image and copyright Kelly Lee Hickey.

I drive out to the claypans two days after the rains to catch them before they go down. When I first moved to town, a rain like this would fill them for months. Now, with so much driving over, the clay is worn thin and they drain within days. I want to blame other people for this, but like Deborah Bird Rose says, we are all hero, victim, and villain. Although in this case, I'm not sure what being a hero for this place would look like. The flies have returned after a summer of heatwaves and drought. The late rains

return humidity and heat where we thought we had made the switch to winter doonas and freezing nights. Everything is unpredictable, just like the election result, and just like what has happened here I want to blame it on someone else. I wish I could leave you with something graceful, like blame doesn't change what has happened, and then a 4WD splashes past me, and my clarity turns to rage.

Postcard Text, Ilparpa Claypans, Arrernte land, 21 May 2019

Created by Kelly Lee Hickey, Sent to Paula Faraco,

Berlin, Germany

I chose to walk at the Ilparpa Claypans site for sentimental reasons. In the decade that I have lived in Central Australia, the deterioration of the claypans has compounded and escalated: buffel grass chokes coolibah trees, dumping increases with council tip fees, and 4WD's plough into the claypans, leaving deep scars in their wake. I began to walk with the hope that a defamiliarising practice would interrupt my feelings of despair, and provide some clues as to how I might respond. As I began my research at the claypans, I walked in despair, cataloguing the damage on each visit, writing tirades that ached with my externalised blame and internalised shame. The pain of the claypans is not isolated to introduced species or a lack of management or wanton disregard; it is entangled in all of these things and underwritten by colonialism, which, as a person descended from settlers, I am squarely implicated. Rose's writing on situatedness in the Anthropocene, which positions us all as 'hero, victim and villain', pushed me to interrogate how I might 'hold onto the possibility of decent action' (2013, p. 215).

Figure 6.4. *Postcards from the Claypans 2*, 2019. Image and copyright Kelly Lee Hickey.

I went looking for hope at the clay pans this morning, because as MK Turner says, country is always there, underneath, and as Deborah Bird Rose says, there is love, as well as violence. And so I carried these two ideas with me as I walked in freezing winds. Past claypans which are mud and old car parts, past tracks cut into the earth, over plants. Past old pots and asthma puffers and discarded underwear, until I came upon a place where I hoped that hope would be. And it was. There on the mounds where

Landcare had cleared back the buffel weed, Kangaroo grass had sprouted. It's a common species that grows longer seeds inland so they can travel further to take root. It produces more seed in dry times. It seems adaptive to climate change. Hope can be small, and hard to recognise, it could be easier to overlook resilience when surrounded by what is being trashed. It can be hard to see past the grief but there is beauty still, and the humble work of not abandoning is an expression of love.

Postcard Text, Ilparpa Claypans, Arrernte land, 4 June 2019

Created by Kelly Lee Hickey, Sent to Shannyn Palmer,

Bywong, New South Wales, Australia

As I continued my experiments, I began to take instructive provocations from the texts that encouraged me to take notice of alternatives to a singular narrative of destruction and hopelessness. Margaret Turner wrote on the resilience of culture within the land, using the analogy of a tree branch; 'the solid wood is inside – that's where the beauty is' (2010, p. 46). As I walked with Turner's words, I attuned myself to the resilience of life at the claypans, whilst still bearing witness to the damage being done to the land. As I attempted to hold both damage and resilience within my gaze, I was reminded that 'the project of reconciliation demands of us that we acknowledge the divide and the violence, but simultaneously demands that we explore entanglements of memory, connection and commitment' (Rose 2004, p. 185). Encountering the native grasses was a turning point in my walking and thinking with the claypans. It reminded me that life is still flourishing, despite all the destruction. The humble work of not abandoning is a reference to Rose's (2016) blog post 'Hope is the Way of the World'.

Figure 6.5. *Postcards from the Claypans 3*, 2019. Image and copyright Kelly Lee Hickey.

The first thing you see are the tyre ruts, eating into the clay, and tearing up the base of the 12 interconnected claypans that hold water here. They are broken in ways I do not understand. I only know they don't hold water like they used to. The delicate meniscus of mud separates and re-forms, cracking where it no longer holds water. There is so much grief here. It seems like every time I come there is more destruction. I've started looking for hope on my visits and this morning I seek out native grasses

regrowing on a cleared mound. On my way over I find myself stopping suddenly at tracks. Emu tracks. I've never seen them here. I photograph them, double check on google, message them (photographs) excitedly to friends. Sitting on the hill near the new native grass returning, I reflect on the resilience of life. The mud, the grass, the Emu, keep doing the business of life. How do we support this business of living? How do we continue to turn towards life? How to honour the small struggles of others in a way that births humble, tangible actions of hope? All of this is resistance to the narrative of foregoneness.

Postcard Text, Ilparpa Claypans, Arrernte land, 14 June 14 2019

Created by Kelly Lee Hickey, Sent to Dougald Hine,

Cambridgeshire, United Kingdom

Both loss and resilience are emplaced, experienced in the local and the specific (Rose 2004, p. 49). Recognising the return of native grasses at the claypans did not erase the pain of witnessing the ongoing damage. Instead, it offered me a different narrative thread that I could pay attention to, and learn from. After my encounter with the grasses, I began to focus on Rose's idea of 'resilience facilitation' (Rose 2004, p. 48). In contrast to suppressing or controlling nature's processes, resilience facilitation 'involves observing Nature's processes and then working to facilitate the conditions under which Nature's resilience can flourish' (Rose 2004, p. 48). Encountering emu prints at the claypans reminded me of how little I know and understand the natural processes of place. Within this not knowing, there is the capacity for wonder. The emu tracks humbled me and gave me a greater sense of my responsibility to place. If life is still growing and moving across this land, then I can respond in ways that learned from and honour its presence. Recognising my entanglements with the damage to place, I am responsible not only to witness the damage, but to move with, and in care of, that life.

Shadow Work

January 2020

I returned from Nga Tutaki in Aotearoa/New Zealand in December 2019 to a country on fire and a world that continues to be changed and changing. All through January, my social media newsfeed filled with images of catastrophic bushfires. In Mparntwe/Alice Springs, a different climate devastation unfolded. Central Australia braced itself for another summer of record-breaking heatwaves, the like of which was not expected by CSIRO until 2030 (Allam & Evershed 2019). The rising heat and dwindling rainfall turbo-charged existing inequalities in housing and water security (Allam & Evershed 2019). Local politicians began to discuss the possibility of the interior becoming uninhabitable (Allam & Evershed 2019). It felt like the climate-changed future I'd been reading about for so many years had finally arrived.

I witnessed these events from the comfort of air conditioning, my privilege protecting me from the direst effects of the heatwaves. In the evenings, I returned to the Ilparpa Claypans, walking amidst the dying Mulgas and plumes of dust. As the buffel grass shrivelled and died, the extent of rubbish dumping became more apparent. My despair at the destruction of place became heightened. Remembering Rose's writing on 'resilience facilitation' (2004, p.48), it no longer felt enough to walk and think. In a small gesture of care for place, I began to pick up rubbish as I walked and take it with me, back home.

Bearing witness to the destruction of place requires us to 'take up a moral burden' (Rose 2004, p. 51). Witnessing thrusts us into responsibility, 'engages with our moral relationships with the past, acknowledges our violence and works dialogically towards alternatives' (Rose 2004, p. 31). As I turned over some of the objects I'd collected as rubbish, I contemplated how, as a settler person, I was entangled in the specific devastation of the Ilparpa Claypans and how this devastation might be linked to broader patterns of ecological and social crisis.

As I began to engage with salvaged objects from the claypans, I moved from digital photography and postcards to cyanotypes. Somerville writes on 'the epistemological relationship with the objects and technologies, that we, in the process of becoming-other, can intentionally manipulate' as we explore and learn with/in place (2010, p. 340). Different mediums have different histories and offer different ways of engaging with and learning about the material world. Cyanotypes were widely used by field naturalists, as exemplified by Anna Aitken's *British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*, and were the primary method of copying architectural and technical drawings up until the 1950s (Ware 2021). These parallel histories of documentation in the organic and industrial world drew me to the medium as a method for exploring situated knowledge at the intersections of my settler body, dumped objects, and the Ilparpa Claypans.

The bright days of the Central Australian summer offered plentiful amounts of UV required to expose the Cyanotype prints. Through January 2020, I fell into a rhythmic cycle of making – walking in the early morning, printing in the middle of the day, painting more cyanotype paper at night. I would lay objects on paper and expose them at solar noon, watching the UV interact with the chemical dyed paper, turning it from green to yellow to slate grey. As I dunked the prints in water to process the image, the negative space of the object appeared as white against the deep blue of the cyanotype.

Through this process, I began to understand the salvaged objects as settler artefacts – material manifestations of the disassociative hunger of settler colonialism. The negative space of the objects in the prints reminded me of Rose's (2004, p. 181) writing on 'wholeness hunger' as a condition of the fragmented cultures of modernity, and the danger of projecting settler dreams of belonging and connection onto Aboriginal people, land, and culture. The shadows in the prints also reminded me of Plumwood's shadow places and the invisibility of these objects' provenance. As I extended my vision to the fragmented and multi-placed lives of each of these objects, I began to understand something of

the kinship between dump and the quarry – how objects move through my hands momentarily, how seldom I think of where they have come from, and where they will end up.

Figure 6.6. *Shadow Work* in Progress, 2020. Image and copyright Kelly Lee Hickey.

Settler colonialism relies on the destruction and control of Indigenous people, culture, and lands (Tuck & Yang 2012). It is an ongoing process 'reasserted each day of occupation' (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 6). Settler cultures are 'designed not to consider place, as to do so would require a consideration of genocide' (Tuck & McKenzie 2015, p. 635). As colonialism morphs into a global culture of extraction, more of the world is rendered invisible to those of us who consume it. As colonialism claims, it names, with a gaze that 'distances the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interest of unfettered power' (Haraway 1988, p. 581). Invoking the image of the 'fenced colonial big house', Plumwood explained that 'this split between a singular, elevated, conscious "dwelling" place and the multiple disregarded places of economic support is one of the most important contemporary manifestations of the mind/body split' (2008, pp. 144–146).

I created *Shadow Work* to unsettle the monolithic invisibility of my settler gaze by situating my experiences at the Ilparpa Claypans. In contrast to the eye that 'sees everything from nowhere', Haraway advocated for 'partial, locatable, critical knowledge, sustaining the possibility of webs of connection called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology' (1988, pp. 581–584). As an autoethnographic map, *Shadow Work* explicitly locates my particular experience within a particular settler culture, and examines this cultural position in relation to the particular place of the Ilparpa Claypans, in the particular time of the summer of 2019.

Shadow Work is a map that is constructed from fragments of text and cyanotypes. This fragmentation alludes to the incompleteness of my situated knowledge. During the map's creation, I moved back and forth between my field notes and the cyanotypes, finding connections between text and the symbols that emerged from the cyanotypes. A rusted pipe became a trench carved into the claypans by 4WD's, twisted wire and a broken O-ring became the tree where we laid a friend's ashes to rest. The map documents the damage to the claypans – the 'terrible histories' and 'damaged places' (Rose 2004, p. 22) that are the legacy of settler colonialism. It also shows moments of care, connection, and the resilience of life in that place because 'violence is not the whole story' and 'entanglements give us grounds for action' (Rose 2004, p. 22).

Situated knowledge requires 'webs of different positioning' (Haraway 1988, p. 590). *Shadow Work* was exhibited as part of *Groundswell: movements in art and territory*, a curated touring exhibition that positioned 'artists as some of the first responders' to the climate crisis (Ansaldo 2020, para. 2). Presenting *Shadow Work* within this exhibition brought my situated knowledge into dialogue with other Northern Territory artists engaging with issues of water security, place, and culture across a range of geographical, cultural, and practice backgrounds. As the exhibition toured throughout the Northern Territory through 2020 and 2021, dialogues were opened between the works and different communities, through the gallery exhibitions and accompanying public programs.

Figure 6.7. *Shadow Work*, 2020. Image and copyright Kelly Lee Hickey.

Testing Ground – November 2020

Figure 6.8. *Testing Ground*, Day 18, 2020. Image and copyright Kelly Lee Hickey.

Moving into the third iteration

In mid-2020, I was offered an exhibition at Watch This Space, a local artist-run gallery in Mparntwe/Alice Springs. The exhibition was to be shared with a friend and designer, Elliat Rich, who was to create a work exploring listening through the creation of a collective weaving work that responded to sounds of the soil. I was initially quite hesitant, as I don't consider myself a visual artist, and exhibiting in a larger gallery context felt quite daunting.

In conversations with other artist friends, I was encouraged to follow my process at the claypans and respond to what that process offered me. I returned to walk at the claypans, to consider how I might bring my learning with/in that place into a gallery context. During these walks, I remembered an idea I'd had whilst collecting rubbish as part of *Shadow Work* in the summer of 2020. During those summer walks, I'd imagined highlighting the issue of illegal dumping through a

durational installation created through a daily process of collection and re-presentation of rubbish from the claypans in the gallery space.

Previous iterations of place research at the claypans, *Shadow Work*, and the *Postcards from the Claypans*, generated and shared artefacts as the end product of a process of learning with place. In contrast, *Testing Ground* exposed the dynamics of research-in-progress through a daily cumulative practice of collection and reflection. This exposure of process felt both exciting and risky. Within her book, *Emergent Strategy*, which applies the concept of emergence within the context of social movements, adrienne maree brown wrote that 'if we release the framework of failure, we can realise that we are in iterative cycle, and we can keep asking ourselves – how do I learn from this?' (2017, p. 105). brown's writing on the intersections between personal and collective transformation in which we 'understand ourselves as practice ground for transformation' (2017, p. 191) and the usefulness of iterative and intentional practices resonated with my work at the claypans, and the idea of making visible a practice of care for place.

Exhibition details

Framed as a 'ritual of recovery', *Testing Ground* was an 18-day durational performance installation that exposed and explored settler responsibilities for damage to the Ilparpa Claypans. This exploration took place through a daily practice of removing rubbish and weeds from the Ilparpa Claypans and re-presenting them as an installation in the Watch This Space gallery throughout the exhibition period from 10–28 November 2020.

As the final iteration of work at the Ilparpa Claypans, *Testing Ground* built on the learning from *Postcards from the Claypans* and *Shadow Work*. The process of removing buffel grass, an invasive weed causing significant harm to Arrernte land (Schlesinger et al. 2020) was an experiment with 'resilience facilitation', which I'd learned about through my walking with theory and postcard-making practice (Rose 2014, p. 48). The removal of rubbish was informed by *Shadow Work*, wherein

I had come to understand dumped items at the claypans as the detritus of colonialism, and therefore culturally suitable materials for me to engage with. *Testing Ground* moved this engagement from the abstracted practices of digital photography and cyanotype to working directly with the dumped objects themselves as the material of the installation. The creation of an installation at Watch This Space drew attention to the issues of dumping and invasive weeds at the Ilparpa Claypans by putting them on public display as an installation at the gallery. Exhibition in the gallery made them a spectacle and point of discussion. Against the walls and floor of the gallery, there was no space for these materials to hide – they were denaturalised. The accumulation of the weeds and rubbish through the exhibition alluded to the ever-expanding accumulation of the weeds and rubbish at the claypans.

Figure 6.9. *Testing Ground: Buffeling*, 2020. Image courtesy of Kate La Greca, copyright Kelly Lee Hickey.

The practice of presenting these works in the gallery was informed by *Shadow Work*, where I learned the value of opening my situated knowledge and practice to public dialogue through the

exhibition. *Testing Ground* carried forward the practice of taking and translating field notes into the public space from both the postcards and *Shadow Work*, as a way of exposing my thinking with/in place. I installed a large sheet of blank brown paper on the gallery wall to capture notes made after each day's installation in the gallery. At the claypans, I used my phone camera to upload daily images and field notes onto Instagram, which served as both a project archive and a way of sharing my work-in-progress with friends and networks in the geographically dispersed community of the internet.[2]

Ritualised inquiry and pilgrimage

As I reflected on the process of *Testing Ground* for this chapter, I found Freya Mathew's (2005) process of pilgrimage to the source of the Merri a useful comparative framework. Like me, Mathews (2005) witnessed the ongoing destruction of a place dear to her – Merri Creek in Naarm/Melbourne, Victoria – and decided to undertake a pilgrimage to the source of this creek as a way of better understanding that place. Within Mathew's framing of pilgrimage as 'encounter … a quest for the unnamed' (2005, p. 137), I saw parallels with *Testing Ground*'s commitment to a sustained process to find out what it does. In contrast to a travelling pilgrimage, my process was a 'ritual of recovery' enacted through a series of daily returns and commitments to the same place. Like Mathews (2005, p. 137) I felt that the local, rather than the exotic, held important clues as to one's relationship with what she describes as the 'mystery' and what I think of in this work as the lineages and connections between all things.

Though we shared a similar origin point of enacting a ritualised inquiry as a response to destruction, there were significant aspects of methodological divergence between my process and Mathew's. Mathew's was interested in 'repossession' and 'reinhabitation' (2005, p. 136). Hers was a

[2] https://instagram.com/tender_places

journey of establishing relationships between self and place – a journey 'into the land', with frequent references to reciprocity of belonging including taking the river's name (Mathews 2005, p. 162–163). In contrast, mine was a journey into self, rather than into land. My work is informed by Tuck and Yang's position on decolonisation involving the repatriation of all land, 'not just symbolically' (2012, p. 7). I am mindful of 'reoccupation' being a 'settler move to innocence' (Tuck & Yang 2012, pp. 23–38). I felt that I was not in a position, as a settler person living on unceded land without a treaty, to make any claims of 'reinhabitation' or 'repossession', as Mathew's did (2005, p. 138). In enacting *Testing Ground,* I was interested in learning how to act with greater responsibility for the impacts of colonisation on place and move from a model of extraction, towards one of 'resilience facilitation' (Rose 2004, p. 48). As with my previous iterations of practice, the learning occurred at the intersection of my body and place.

Commitment

> *This is a daily practice of extending care to place.*
>
> *And that means showing up regardless of how I feel.*
>
> **Field Note Instagram Post, 15 November 2020**

Testing Ground differed from the two previous iterations in that I committed to a sustained, public, and time-bound process. From the outset of the project, I recognised the limitations of my engagement with place. As the project began, I felt 'part imposter, part intruder' (Gallery Notes, Day 1), and felt 'the scale [of buffel grass] overwhelm my frame' (Galley Notes, Day 2). My 18-day process was minuscule, compared to the long-term commitment of Arrernte people in caring for the land over thousands of generations, or even the much shorter commitment of the Landcare volunteers, who worked removing buffel grass over many weekends.

Mathew's described her pilgrimage as an 'acceptance of the given' (2005, p. 149). Once one decides on the 'sacred destination', one 'hits the road' and accepts whatever comes one's way (Mathews 2005, p. 149). I undertook *Testing Ground* in November, close to the summer solstice, with days reaching into the high 30s (degrees Celsius). This meant that I would travel out to the claypans at dawn each morning so that I could do the physical labour of removing the buffel grass and rubbish while it was still relatively cool. Like Mathews (2005), blister and fatigue were part of my process. Some mornings, I didn't want to get out of bed, however sustaining the commitment 'regardless of how I feel' had important implications for learning about care to place.

Working where others had been

> *This work is a transient moment in a past and future of life, death, love and destruction. Resistance and resilience are contextual.*
>
> **Field Notes, Gallery Notes, Day 17**

On my second day of *Testing Ground*, at the claypans, I noticed 'lines of buffel on the sand' that had been cleared by Landcare. This was the beginning of understanding the work I did as part of a collective. I began to 'work where others have worked, where they will work again' (Gallery Notes, Day 11). As the days progressed, I moved from clearing bits and pieces of buffel grass from different trees, to developing a sustained pattern of maintaining already cleared areas. As I began to align my work with the collective, I was reminded of Rose's writing on 'working together for country' as a response to the Anthropocene, and 'doing your part as a human while others do their part' (2013, pp. 217–218). Mary Graham articulated the importance of relational thinking, as 'to behave as if you are a discrete entity or a conscious isolate is to limit yourself to being an observer in an observed world' (1999, p. 182). She said that 'ego and possessiveness', present a 'barrier to upholding obligations for looking after land' (Graham, 1999, p. 188).

Figure 6.10. *Testing Ground: Bag of Buffel*, 2020. Image courtesy of Kate La Greca, copyright Kelly Lee Hickey.

As I attuned myself to working within a lineage and a network of others who were also caring for country, I noted 'a shift in metrics'.

> *Instead of focusing on filling my blue bag I've been gathering with, I commit to clearing buffel from around one tree. This gives me a deeper attention to task as I go over the area multiple times, ensuring I remove dormant root balls entirely.*
>
> **Field Note Instagram Post, 20 November 2020**

Rather than seeking an external metric of what was relevant to my body, I began to pay attention to what would support 'countries own life-giving capacities' (Rose 2013, p. 218). Through a sustained commitment to the single action of removing buffel grass, I was able to shift my focus from my anthropocentric research and presentation-based aims, to what was happening in the very local place that I was working. Locating myself as part of a collective 'working for Country',

required me to pay more attention to what the land needed, and how my contributions might better fit as part of the whole. I was better able to participate in 'resilience facilitation' by 'observ[ing] nature's own processes' and learning from those who had gone before me, and worked with/in this place for much longer than I had (Rose 2004, p. 48).

Gathering up stories

> *These small acts change the landscape momentarily.*
>
> *Perhaps the permanence will be the changes made in me*
>
> **Gallery Notes, Day 12**

Testing Ground was a ritual inquiry into my responsibilities as a settler. This autoethnographic research has implications for broader members of my community. Mathews described the pilgrim as one who 'gathers in' (2005, p. 150). The pilgrim 'draws everything the pilgrim encounters, including himself, into the net of meaning provided by the destination' (Mathews 2005, p. 152). Mathew's gathered in stories as a way of weaving themselves into the land; for me it was a process of situating myself within my responsibilities to the land.

The exhibition ritualised the 'gathering in' of stories, through the material installation, handwritten documentation, and Instagram posts, weaving them into a net of meaning. As noted earlier, one of the features of this durational installation was that I didn't know where this process would take me. The field notes documented my process as a series of encounters, which accumulated within physical and digital forms across the 18 days of the exhibition. The exhibition had a physical repository in the gallery, where my human hand was visible in the variances of hand writing and the placement of materials. This physical repository was juxtaposed by the digital gathering in of stories on Instagram, where I documented each days' labour at the claypans through digital photos and text – a process reminiscent of the postcard making – and shared it through Instagram. This enabled the

story of the process to travel beyond the geographical situatedness, connecting with other artists, friends, and followers of my work whom I am yet to meet.

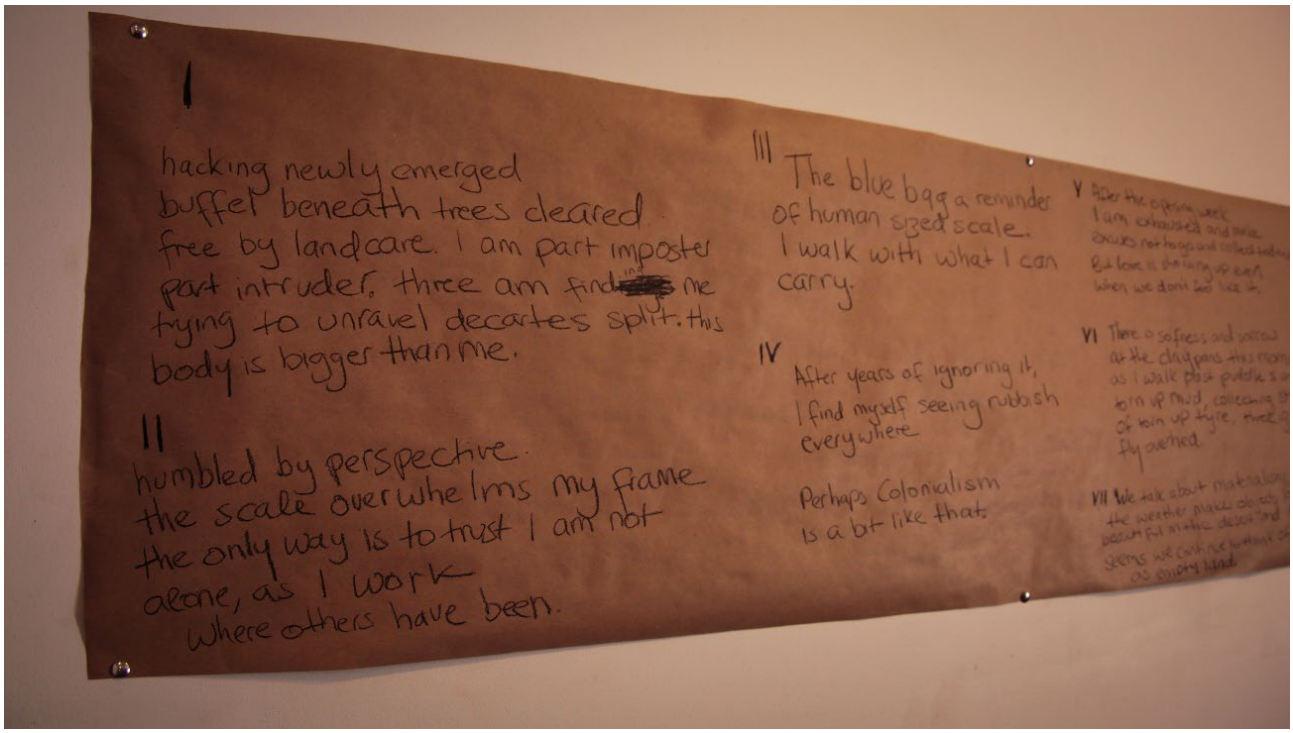

Figure 6.11. *Testing Ground: Gallery Notes*, 2020. Image courtesy of Kate La Greca, copyright Kelly Lee Hickey.

Conclusion

Localised, creative place practice is a way of situating ourselves at the intersection of body and place, and from this very specific place, building webs across the world. Walking with theory as a defamiliarising agent at the Ilparpa Claypans gave me greater insight into my situatedness in place as a settler person. Through a series of returns and iterative making across mediums, I have been able to deepen my understandings of the responsibilities arising from this situatedness and share these with others through intimate and public artworks. The Ilparpa Claypans continue to be impacted by weeds, dumping, and four-wheel driving, and life continues to respond and reach for survival. The challenge of integrating the learning from these creative processes into a practice of taking responsibility for these ongoing changes to continue.

Chapter 7 – Ripples Beyond the University: Re/Situating the Research with My Lived Experience

Within this chapter, I re-situate the research learning and impacts in my life. I do this by drawing threads of the research and lived experience together in ways that blur the necessary but somewhat artificial delineation between the lines between 'post graduate researcher' and person. I use buffel grass as a thinking tool to understand what I've learned about resilience facilitation from the research process and how this has impacted my involvement in social movements. I go on to examine how the research has impacted my arts practice, and the mobilisation of disruptive, situated reading, and community place pedagogies of reading, walking, and making within my creative practice.

Buffel grass and resilience facilitation

> *G and I are talking about buffel grass management in Central Australia. He works in land management and has been successfully clearing buffel on crown land. He talks about the relationship between contractors like him and volunteer groups like Landcare; he has the resources, expertise, and 'grunt' to do the hard work of removing established stands of buffel, which can then be maintained by volunteer groups. I tell him I've been following up removing buffel regrowth after contracted clearing around a big old tree near my house. He says that's the way forward, if everyone just looked after one tree, we'd see a big change. I tell him I've been thinking about spreading some native seed around, to support reveg(etation) in the area. He explains how that's not really necessary; really, it's just about creating 'real estate' for local species he says, and then birds will come and sh*t out the seeds that are meant to grow there, and that's*

how it happens. Our job is to create space.

Reflective Journal, November 2021

Buffel grass is one of the core materials used in my creative research practice, appearing in each of the three iterations of the claypan works. G's story of tackling buffel, bit by bit, gave me insight into anti-colonial action on the land and beyond/socially. As I discovered through *Testing Ground*, the practice of clearing buffel around established trees and letting birds and others do the work of reseeding is a powerful demonstration of 'resilience facilitation'. In contrast to the large-scale eradication projects of 'forcing Nature to behave as human's would like Nature to behave' 'resilience facilitation' (Rose 2004, p.48) observes nature's own processes and then working to facilitate the conditions under which nature's resilience can flourish. Resilience facilitation requires a humility that both de-centres human exceptionalism and places us back into relationship with the world in which we must join with others, human and non-human, to 'work together for country' (Anthropocene Noir). From situated attentiveness arises paths and movements that carve a path forward through 'hope and terror' by 'attending to what matters in that situation' (Tsing et al. 2020c, para. 11,).

Within this chapter, buffel grass is my more than human companion as I think through the implications and impacts of the creative research outcomes. In mobilising buffel grass as a thinking companion, I draw on some of the epistemic and ontological frameworks of the Feral Atlas (Tsing et al 2020a), a digital project inviting nonlinear investigation of material and more-than-human ecologies and infrastructures in the Anthropocene through an interactive website. Positioned as a method of attunement 'to particular and varied material processes and feral dynamics through which the Anthropocene continues to take form', the Feral Atlas investigates possibilities for learning at the infrastructural intersections of human/more-than-human worlds (Tsing et al. 2020c, para. 3). Within this chapter, I mobilise some of the ontological-epistemological frameworks of the atlas, alongside

key theorists within this creative research to think through what buffel grass might teach me about my entanglement with other species, and how it situates me as both responsible and response-able to our more than human kin, in this time of accelerating loss and damage.

In order to help me think with buffel grass in the context of Feral Atlas, I had a conversation with Jennifer Deger, one of the Atlas' editors. She noted that in the parlance of the Feral Atlas, buffel grass could be thought of as a 'plant of conquest' that 'detonates' landscapes (J Deger 2021, personal communication, 24 January 2022). Within the Feral Atlas, this process of detonation is understood as 'the coming into being of new programs of infrastructure building that in turn set new challenges for humans and nonhumans' (Tsing et al. 2020b, para. 1). Detonation sets off catastrophic reactions, that have multiple and often unforeseen unfoldings, in human and more than human worlds. Buffel grass, as a plant of conquest, is entwined with colonialism. It was first used as a pastoral fodder, and then as dust suppression to counter the large dust storms worsened by the destruction of ground cover by cattle (Nelson 2018). In conjunction with cattle, it detonates arid landscapes, with a recent study showing that 'buffel was equal to feral cats and foxes in terms of future risk to biodiversity' (Schlesinger et al. 2020, para. 7). As buffel grass spreads across the landscape, it smothers other species, and literally sets them alight as it crowds out local grass and ground cover and fuels hot fires that destroy native trees, which are homes to many birds and animals (Schlesinger et al. 2020). It also limits the access of Aboriginal people to native food sources by smothering staple food plants, such as the desert raisin, or making it difficult to walk across the land and find animal tracks or burrows (Schlesinger et al. 2020).

Like colonialism, to try and tackle buffel grass all at once is exhausting. The sheer scale of the buffel grass infestation in Central Australia can be overwhelming. This feeling of being overwhelmed is aptly portrayed in Franca Barraclough's (2017) work *The Biggest Buffel Bust Ever*, which depicts a long line of people 'like a search party, shoulder to shoulder, weeding into the endless horizon of a country overrun' (2020, para. 2). As I learned in *Testing Ground*, trying to tackle

an entire area of buffel as one person is ineffective. The Feral Atlas employs 'atlas as a verb', inviting acts of noticing and responding to the nuances of the Anthropocene as it unfolds within our local area and in relation to other places, times, and beings (Tsing et al. 2020c, para. 3,). This noticing is critical to effective buffel removal and regeneration, which works in small patches around established trees, or other 'high value' ecological areas. Buffel removal also requires attentiveness to the need for different approaches at different times; there is the big work of removal, which needs to be followed up by maintenance to ensure that the invasive species doesn't re-establish itself. Within *Testing Ground,* I had to attune to the local environment and contribute to the work of others, rather than just pulling out buffel from random areas, or starting to clear a new patch. Having contributed our human labour to removing buffel, I must surrender to the work of more than human kin, who deliver seeds to the area as part of their everyday cycles of life. Attending to my situatedness makes visible the details of human and more than human response to local threats, such as buffel grass, and provides opportunities to join with others to learn, respond and be with the changing landscapes of our own local Anthropocenes (Tsing et al 2020a).

Resilience facilitation within social movements

> *With drilling due to commence in April this year, the anti-fracking campaign is ratcheting up. I am witnessing conflict and confusion as some of my (settler) peers, seasoned campaigners, struggle with solidarity work. I witness how hard it is to release control over strategy and resources, how uncomfortable it is to support initiatives that one does not understand. These struggles are familiar to me. We (settlers) are conditioned to know, do, have, be, and control everything. Productivity and influence are seen as sources of power within our culture.*
>
> *I am realising how much change needs to occur in our (settler) culture for us to work in solidarity without bringing our baggage to the table. I have been talking with some of my peers about how we are inside the story of colonialism, and so it can be*

hard to see it, although it underpins so many of our actions and informs much of who we are. As characters inside this story, we can start to read it more clearly, and take actions to change the plot.

Reflective Journal, January 2019

This way of thinking with buffel grass about resilience facilitation within the context of ecological and environmental labour is transferable to my participation in social movements. Responding to harm through social movements requires a deeply situated understanding and acceptance of 'what is' in our current location, how we are situated in relationship to other people, critters, infrastructures and processes, and the possibilities to collective action arising from these situated relations. The capacity to see things as they are, with all the compromise, imperfection, and entanglements is part of an anti-colonial ethic of refusing '*terra nullius*' thinking, which seeks to erase all that has been before in pursuit of a 'clean slate' (Liboiron 2021b, p. 20). As a settler, refusing *terra nullius* creates opportunities for responsible relating through understanding 'our situatedness is neither wholly violent or wholly non-violent' and that 'entanglement gives us grounds to act' (Rose 2004, p. 22) Just as with buffel grass management, participating in social movements requires cultivating 'a mode of attending to the world that draws power and purpose by recognizing that one is taking part in a necessarily iterative and shared endeavour' (Tsing et al. 2021c, para 6). As Rose writes, this means beginning where we are (2013).

Managing buffel grass requires a situated knowledge of the existing ecology, current and historical management practices, and how the land is changing and responding. Similarly, participation in social movements require an awareness of my situatedness in relation to the current campaign, so I can determine the most effective and sustainable ways to participate. In Chapter 4, I described how I learned to 'release the story of my own exceptionalism' and 'develop a more a humble way of practising allyship that recognises the limitations and responsibilities of my

situatedness as a white settler'. Over the course of my research, I have understood the change in my activist and solidarity work as a movement from 'needing to be involved' to 'showing up' and 'handing over'. Instead of needing to 'win' or 'save things', I now understand social movement participation as part of a social responsibility and enactment of my values. Rather than being 'front and centre' in campaign organising, I now understand movement participation as being a constellation of practices that include reflective practice, showing up, and handing over resources and access. I find access to be a more useful term than power, as it focuses on the access that I receive because of my privilege, rather than equating Whiteness with power, and/or Indigeneity with a lack of power. Working collectively with an understanding of situatedness requires accepting the unlikely configurations that may arise with/in collaborations. 'Working together' does not necessarily mean working side by side in the same location or on the same task, but rather 'doing your part as a human being while others do their part … and that we can be sharing purposes while working where we are' (Rose, 2013, p. 218). Part of understanding my situatedness is learning how my actions and responsibilities might change within different relational settings. When I'm acting in solidarity with established causes, I focus on the skills I enjoy and that I am good at, such as cooking. Often, I work with others, making meals for distribution through my local mutual aid group, or helping with the BBQ at protests. In certain circumstances, I'm able to take leadership and start new initiatives, such as the *Love, Resistance and Other Survival Strategies* reading group that I discuss in 'Rewilding the research: impacts on creative practice'. Both modes of working require paying attention to what is flourishing within my community, identifying opportunities for participation with an awareness of the limits and possibilities of my situatedness, and then undertaking those actions with the knowledge that I am part of a larger network of action.

Re-wilding the research: Impacts on creative practice

There is another layer of attending to situatedness during unfolding crisis within this research and exegesis. Much of the writing on situatedness, such as Haraway, Rose, Liboiron, and Tsing,

focus on relational awareness and action. Similarly, the relationship between the researcher and those with whom they share their lives and stories is similarly a site of grappling for many autoethnographers (Ellis et al. 2010; Adams & Holman Jones 2011). As discussed in Chapter 2, I undertook this academic inquiry through the lens of my own experience in response to my situatedness, drawing on autoethnographic and creative methods that worked within the limited experiences of my own body. However, this self has been in relationship with other people, institutions, and communities throughout the research in ways that are tangled and uneasy to separate. Adjacent to this process of creative research within the university, I developed and facilitated several creative, public pedagogical events, hosted predominantly within arts settings, that were influenced by and influential on my developing skills and knowledge within the academy. I offer an account of some of these events to demonstrate the slipperiness of creative research practice and the generative opportunities of leaks between academic and artistic practice.

Within creative research, the artist acts upon the academy and the academy acts upon the artist, expanding the boundaries of both (Brady 2000). One of the aims/purposes of undertaking the PhD process as an artist was the development of a rigorous, research led, creative arts practice that would enable me to respond better to the ecological and social crisis I was witnessing in the form of climate change, extractivism, and colonialism. In Chapter 5, I wrote that 'I still feel more artist than academic'. Alongside this PhD research, I have continued a creative practice that is adjacent to, but outside of/not accountable to, the academy. My location as an artist is an important part of my situatedness, and my experience of the research is not separate from my broader practice, but messy, relational, and interactive.

Alongside contextualising the creative practice within theory, or acting as an 'interpretative document for examiners', this exegesis offers the opportunity to expand on aspects of the research not covered by the creative works (Brady 2000). In writing up this exegesis, I have had to undertake a curatorial process to select which parts of my practice I include and exclude as research. About

mid-way through the research, I decided to exclude the participatory place projects from the PhD exegesis, despite having ethics clearance to include them. Similar to my rationale for not including fellow activists within the research, my decision to exclude public participatory projects based on the desire not to make the decision to participate in these projects conditional on being part of the research and my reluctance to include others in a single authored research document. However, I can see the impacts of the PhD practice on my creative practice, and so choose to elaborate on some of my projects and experiences as an artist outside of the academy to demonstrate these impacts, and the potential of academic training to improve creative practice. I do this through reflective writing that centres my experience as an artist and researcher. In doing this, I recognise that I am presenting a partial and partitioned account of the experiences, however, engage this as one strategy of grappling with the relational ethics embedded within auto-ethnographic practice (Ellis et al; Adams & Holman Jones 2011).

This research responds to specific claims from Indigenous Australians in order for settlers to consider how to move beyond cultures of entrenched racism and colonialism, to a place where are capable of dialogue, respect, and solidarity (Birch 2017; Kwaymullina 2020; Land 2015). In arts and activist circles, and through academic and non-academic texts, I encountered multiple calls and claims by communities most impacted by colonialism for white and settler people to educate themselves and begin to centre Indigenous and non-white world views (Birch 2017; Foley 2010; Green, Sonn & Matsebula 2007; Kwaymullina 2020; Land 2015).

As the research progressed, I became aware of the educational privilege I gained through the PhD program. I was being exposed to many new ideas through texts recommended by my supervisors, and, with the assistance of a stipend, had the time to read them. As I began to see changes in my own thinking occur by engaging with the ideas, and then practices of the research, I wanted to find ways of sharing them with others outside of the academy. Parallel to this, I was engaging in a number of alternative online pedagogical spaces, whilst undertaking the research

including participating in the Emergence Network's 'Vulture' course in 2019, 'The Assembly for the Future' presented by The Things We Did Next in 2020, and A School Called HOME's 'Homeward Bound' course in 2021. These spaces varied in their content and delivery, but all were held in online environments, and presented radical curriculum using cultural and artistic technology. By 'cultural and artistic technology', I mean that the methods of presentation and facilitation were familiar to me as an artist and often incorporated creative thinking and/or processes, symbolism and creative practices or provocations, such as music, collective movement, creative speculation, or storytelling. These pedagogical spaces modelled the ways that artists and thinkers can act as 'knowledge carriers at the edges; spaces of negotiation away from the frontlines' of global and ecological crisis (Andreotti cited in Hine 2019, para. 49).

Attending to the need for settler spaces of education (Foley 2010; Huygens 2011; Land 2015) and the potential for artists to do this, I began to create pedagogical spaces in my creative practice that responded to the articulated and situated concerns of my immediate community. *Love, Resistance and Other Survival Strategies*, a reading group held in response to the helplessness I was witnessing in my community about climate change, is an example of how I mobilised disruptive reading practices to respond to the situated concerns of my community. Held over four weeks in January 2019, one of the hottest months in Mparntwe/Alice Springs, the reading group coincided with the climate change charged summer of 2019, in which featured catastrophic bush fires along the south-east, southern, and western coasts of Australia, and record-breaking heatwaves in Central Australia. The reading group was held at the local artist run gallery, Watch This Space. The curriculum offered different ways of understanding and responding to the climate crisis through poems, essays, and podcasts prioritising the voices of Indigenous, Black, Queer, and Feminist thinkers. Each week featured at least one piece of content by an Arrernte person, to ensure a diversity of voices of the Traditional Owners of the land we met on were present. The limited use of academic

texts and focus on a variety of communication modalities was designed to improve access and engagement with the course materials. The curriculum remains online at the *Tender Places* website.[3]

The response to the reading group was overwhelming. I had been expecting a maximum of ten participants. January is usually a very quiet time of year in Mparntwe/Alice Springs, with many people going on holidays or to visit family in other places. The town also doesn't have a strong culture of reading groups. I was surprised when 20 people attended the first session at Watch This Space. All the participants were settlers, the majority of whom identified as white. There was a wide diversity of age and genders across the group. I began the session by inviting people to share why they had come to the reading group, and then opened the circle up to discussion about the weekly curriculum. The discussion would take place around a 'pot luck' morning tea, with group members bringing a plate to share. Many people spoke emotionally about their direct experiences of fires and heatwaves through the summer. As we continued to talk about these experiences, people spoke to how different perspectives in the weekly curriculum expanded their understanding of the drivers of climate change, who was affected, and the different ways of responding. People also began to share other ideas from their own life and reading practices, enriching the learning of the group. As the sessions continued, more people began to join, with the last session having 40 participants.

The *Love, Resistance and Other Survival Strategies* reading group reinforced the effectiveness of reading as a disruptive strategy for settlers. Published materials can share other people's ideas, thereby offering new ways of understanding our existing circumstances, and interrupting feelings of helplessness and despair. This worked for other people and not just me. Furthermore, there was a real interest within the settler community to learn from the perspectives of others, both remotely through readings and other media, and locally through the experience of peers in our immediate geographical community. I began to see how the curatorial and facilitation skills I'd

[3] https://tenderplaces.net/

developed as an artist enabled me to develop a community climate change curriculum and create a culture of hospitality, openness, and respect, which enabled sharing, discussion, and learning. The importance of these 'soft' skills was reinforced when members of the group unsuccessfully met to continue discussion without a curriculum and facilitation.

After the success of the reading group, I became interested in how I could incorporate aspects of the reading, walking, and making research practice into my broader community arts practice. A few months later, I was commissioned by the NT Writers Centre to develop a workshop series on embodied practice and writing about place. I developed a three-week curriculum to introduce writers to different aspects of walking and place practice that I'd developed through the research; situationist inspired drifting, sensory defamiliarisation practices adapted from Truman and Springgay (2016), and walking with a text. Each of these three practices were paired with writing provocations, to support the group to translate their experiences into poetry in the second half of the workshop.

The workshop series coincided with the escalating COVID-19 situation. Our first workshop was held in a hybrid environment with two thirds of the group meeting in person, and the other third meeting online. Despite it being a small group, the hybridised format was extremely difficult to facilitate – I felt like I was being in too many places at once. By the second week of the workshop, the Northern Territory had entered lockdown, so we moved online. We had participants join us from across the Northern Territory. Facilitating the whole group online was far easier than trying to facilitate online and in person simultaneously. The group would meet online for a collective grounding exercise and to share the reading and provocations for the walking practice. The group would then go offline for half an hour and undertake the practice in their own location – sometimes as walk around the block, sometimes in their backyard. After the walking practice we would meet online again and undertake the writing exercises together.

The move online was surprisingly generative. The walking practice attuned people to their local environment, whilst the writing practices enabled people to translate and share these experiences within the group. The move online was surprisingly generative. Whilst there were differences in place experiences, the readings and writing provocations provided a shared lens for these experiences, which generated points of overlap for discussion. Through these discussions people were able to appreciate new or overlooked aspects of their local environment and their responsibilities to their local place.

Over the next two years, between 2019 and 2021, I held another four of these workshops at writers' festivals and as part of the Victoria University Public Pedagogy Institute's seminar series. Two of these were held online and two were held in person. In these subsequent sessions, I focused on pairing readings and provocations with each event's themes, which included loss, connection, and transformation. With each iteration, the connections between the workshop theme, reading, and provocations deepened. This yielded deeper engagement with the ideas in the texts, allowing participants the opportunity to gain an embodied and emplaced understanding of philosophical text, even when written in harder to access academic styles, such as the work of Donna Haraway.

The Gathering Ground workshop series was a practice of 'slipping between institutional walls to expose layers of emotional and aesthetic resonance in relationship to place' (Lippard 2014, p. 8) The shared container of the workshop operated in a hybridised space of academic and creative pedagogical practice. This practice enabled people to engage in situated knowledge making, with the shared experience of the workshop providing a container for people to engage with and translate new and potentially disruptive knowledge into their situated experience. Through the creation of written works, participants could communicate the learning that arose from this process between people and places, even when separated by vast geographical or cultural divides.

These collective processes of disruptive reading, walking, and making shared through creative projects can build links between people, places, and times. As we collectively zoom in and out of the embodied, sensuous experience of the local to the theoretical, descriptive experiences of Other places, times, and people we linger at intersections that illuminates resonance, dissonance, or other signals that indicate there is something new or unexpected to be learned. Negotiating this process of collective reflection and translation engages relational aspects of situated knowledge making, exposing elements we may have individually over looked. Undertaking this collective process with different texts in response to different places at different times builds layered meanings that are akin to the layered epistemic process of Somerville's emergent arts methodologies that I invoked through iterative practice at the Ilparpa Claypans.

Joining my research and artistic practice has enabled me to develop a more rigorous creative practice that responds reflexively both to theory and lived experience. My skills and experience as an artist enabled me to mobilise creative practice as a method of exploring place in response to external stimuli in the form of text. It has also enabled me to develop tools to translate these experiences into emotionally and aesthetically resonant pieces of writing that can be shared with others. Through guided reading, increased literacy, and access to an academic library, my training as a researcher through the PhD process expanded the range of ideas, or stimuli, that I could access and share with others. My research training also provided theoretical frameworks with which to design and evaluate the creative practices I was using, enabling a more reflexive practice. Through public creative workshops this hybridised creative research practice facilitated situated knowledge making, and exchange with/in and through place.

Conclusion

Within this chapter I have re-situated the research within my life and broader practice as an activist and an artist. Thinking with buffel grass, a recurring medium through the creative works, I

propose Rose's resilience facilitation as a mode of responsible action against the harms of colonialism. I mobilised this understanding of resilience facilitation in the context of my activist practice within social movements, reflecting on the importance of reflexive participation in collective movements that account for the limits and opportunities of individual situatedness. I then detailed the impacts of the creative research on my artistic practice. I did this by exploring the leakages between my creative research within the university and my artistic practice within the community and arts institutions through and account of public participatory place responsive creative works developed and presented adjacent to this research. In presenting these accounts of the impacts of the research on my practice as an activist and an artist, I demonstrated the ways in which the reading, walking, making methodologies developed through this research can contribute to a shift in attitudes and behaviour, individually, and provide opportunities for collective and collaborative situated knowledge making and learning within and between geographical communities.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

Research summary and contribution to knowledge

Mary Graham's advice for 'White Australian's' interested in the 'maturation process' of Australian society was to 'start establishing very close ties with land, not necessarily via ownership of property but via locally-based, inclusive, non-political, strategy-based frameworks, with a very long-term aim of simply looking after land' (1999, p. 193). As someone acculturated from birth into settler colonialism and currently occupying unceded Arrernte land, my relating to land is always fraught with the reproduction of extractive and violent colonial land relations. Through this research I have developed practices and provocations that have enabled me engage in embodied, creative and place-based learning, connection and reflection that takes seriously the claims made by Indigenous people, and settler responsibility to act on these.

Settler colonialism as an extremely violent and ongoing form of extractive relations is a major driver of the catastrophic ecological violence that threatens life on a global scale (Klein 2014; Nixon 2011; Norgaard 2011; Rose 2013). Addressing climate change requires reckoning with settler colonialism, which requires active engagement by settler colonists, such as myself (Birch 2017; Land 2014). As discussed within the first movement of this exegesis (Chapters 1–3), despite presenting as a monolith, settler colonialism is inherently unstable due to its lack of connection to the land or a land ethic (Thorpe cited in Land 2015) and its constant need for reproduction (Liboiron 2022; Tuck & Yang 2012). Settler colonialism relies on often invisibilised hierarchies of separation, severance, and difference steeped in eugenics and Whiteness to justify the theft of land and violence towards Indigenous people, places, and cultures (Green, Sonn & Matsebula 2007; Tuck & Yang 2012). These grand narratives of colonialism flatten difference arising out of situatedness and assume total control and access to all knowledge and resources (Liboiron 2021b). Recognising these grand narratives as both socially constructed and having deep historical and ongoing impacts (Land 2015), this research

invokes queering provocations that centre relationality, fluidity, and heterogeneity to un-settle the monolith of settle colonialism. This unsettling occurs by investigating and attending to the responsibilities and limits of settler situatedness, whilst pursuing alternative ways of relating to land and people that arise from listening and learning from others with a recognition that 'entanglement gives us grounds for action' (Rose 2004, p. 22).

I entered this research training program with the unsettling provocation of the world being on fire and not knowing what to do about it. The research has been a personal process of unlinking from harmful settler colonial ways of being, doing, and knowing that rely on the extraction and destruction of life, and relinking with anti-colonial, feminist, and queer ways of doing and being that turn towards life and it's flourishing. Much of this process has involved working against the numbing and invisibilising impacts of settler colonialism and Whiteness, which render much of the harm and harmful ways of being unseeable to those of us raised within settler colonialism and white supremacy. Through the creative practices outlined in this exegesis, I have developed modes of attunement to other knowledges, to my body, and to the land. These creative practices of attunement join with the practices of resilience facilitation, political action, and community pedagogy outlined in Chapter 7 to form a constellation of anti-colonial practices, which inform my continued development beyond the PhD research. Similar to constellations in the heavens, this constellation of practices provides a guide with which I can steer through the changing tides of these tumultuous times, without clinging to the cruise ship of settler futurity. They orientate me towards a way of being that recognises and enables me to participate alongside the struggles of many people, places, and creature for life in ways that recognise the limits, responsibilities, and opportunities of my situatedness. It is a constellation that guides me into relations that can sustain life.

The contribution to knowledge within this research has three dimensions: the first being the identification of appropriate sources of information for self-education; the second being the identification or development of appropriate processes for engaging with the information used for

self-education; and the third being practices and frameworks to integrate and act on the learning gained through this process of self-education and reflection.

Within the research, I mobilised Indigenous scholarship as an agent of disruption within the un-settling process. This required deep engagement with the ethics of accessing Indigenous knowledge and scholarship as a settler researcher. As discussed within Chapter 4, settler self-education is a vital element of settler solidarity with Indigenous and anti-colonial struggles (Land 2014). Prioritising Indigenous voices within settler self-education makes visible the hidden aspects of settler colonialism and position some settlers as responsible to Indigenous voices who speak on their own terms (Kwaymullina 2020; Land 2015; Sonn, Green and Matsebula 2007). However, the deep embedding of extraction and exploitation within settler colonial culture extend to epistemology and pedagogy, with settlers assuming access to Indigenous knowledge and time in the same way that they assume access to Indigenous land (Liboiron 2021a). There is a long history of settlers exploiting Indigenous knowledge for settler colonial ends (Birch 2017), especially within the academy (Tuck & Yang 2014). Ethical practice is therefore required by settlers, especially settler researchers such as myself, when engaging with Indigenous knowledge. Through a process of reckoning and reflection, I decided to engage with an ethics of reading that centred Indigenous knowledge and perspectives specifically aimed at settler people for the purposes of education on anti/colonialism. I accessed these works by Indigenous people with a responsibility to meaningfully engage with the claims and with a willingness to be changed. I detailed this approach in the exegesis not to prescribe a right way, but to encourage other settlers to similarly grapple with the ethics of learning from Indigenous sources.

As I read widely in the early stages of my research, I began to reflect on how I might engage more deeply with the ideas I was encountering in my literature review. My head was full of ideas from other perspectives and places, but I had not yet translated them into my local context in order to be changed by them. My background in community and cultural development equipped me with an

understanding of how cultural engagement with the stories of others can shift community perceptions and behaviours (Adams & Goldbard 2015).

As I detailed in Chapter 5, I was interested in the translational role of artists in supporting communities to grapple with complex issues such as climate change (Boulton 2016) and colonial land use (Green, Kerrins & Ritchie 2017). As articulated in Chapter 2, place and colonial land relations were central to the research inquiry, so I developed an iterative practice of reading, walking, and making as a way of creatively engaging with the ideas in the texts through my body, in relationship to the land I live on. As detailed in Chapter 6, I developed the three iterative creative works across 18 months of sustained creative fieldwork at the Ilparpa Claypans. During this time, I cycled in and out of reading, walking, making and reflection, moving between theory and practice in order to engage with the disruptive potential of other knowledges and to develop the theoretical frameworks of practice articulated in the practice principles in Chapter 5.

Both the principles of practice and the reading, walking, making process are tools that settlers can engage with, modify, and re-articulate into their own contexts as a way of engaging with disruptive ideas in their own setting. This capacity for others to try and modify these practices and processes arising out of the research makes them a valuable contribution to settler led anti-colonial place pedagogies.

The aim of engaging with disruptive reading, walking, and making practice is to make visible and enact alternatives to settler colonialism within settler culture. As Land (2015) asserts, public political action and self-reflection are interlinked, each influencing and supporting the other. In Chapter 7, I re-situated the research within my life through a series of reflective autoethnographic writing on the impact of the research on my artistic and activist practice. Engaging with buffel grass as a thinking companion, I reflected on my learning about ‘resilience facilitation’ (Rose 2004) through creative fieldwork, and applied this as a model for understanding the changes to my activist

practice. I identified working with situated awareness and attention to the actions of others as foundational to being able to effectively participate in social movements, and understand how to respond according to changes in setting or need.

I expanded this thinking on the impacts of the practice by providing an account of the ways in which the creative research impacted my artistic practices. Although I decided early in the research projects not to include my participatory community-based practices within the research, I exposed the ways in which my practice within the university leaked into my practice within community and arts settings through a practitioner account of public projects that mobilised elements of the reading, walking, and making creative research process. The exposure of these leakages between academic and artistic settings demonstrates the in-process and ongoing research dissemination and impact through creative practice within this PhD research and more broadly.

As I come to the end of this post-graduate research journey, I understand decolonising, addressing Whiteness and anti-racism as lifelong practices and processes, which requires ongoing reckoning, reflection, and change (Kwaymullina 2020; Land 2015). I remain interested in exploring positions of opposition to the structures of colonialism, extraction, and white supremacy, which acknowledge my position as a settler colonist, whilst attending to the possibility of other, more morally response-able ways of being emerging.

As settler centred research undertaken within the epistemic, procedural, and temporal confines of a PhD program, this research has limitations. This research is deeply situated – undertaken through the specifics of my queer, white, multi-generational settler body, over the course of three and half years, at the single site of the Ilparpa Claypans. Situated knowledge practices yield deep, but highly partial, ways of knowing (Haraway 1988). The epistemic processes of asking questions and finding answers, as well as the consequences resulting from this process, are highly dependent on the responsibilities arising from each individual cultural, social, institutional, and

geographical locations (Liboiron 2021b). Therefore, I now move to identify the limitations of this situated knowledge making, and potential future directions of research and practice arising from this research project.

Responding to limitations of the research

Indigenous peer and community review

Recognising the limitations of location and circumstance is an important element of situatedness. Rose (2013) advocates for working where we are, which in some cases means practising 'standing in solidarity from over there', rather than needing to involve ourselves in every action or decision (Liboiron 2021b, p. 25). As settler centred research undertaken within the epistemic, procedural, and temporal confines of a PhD program, this research has limitations. I therefore identify the limitations of this situated knowledge making, and potential future directions of research and practice arising from this research project.

A key feature of situated epistemic practices is that they require dialogue (Haraway 1988). Our situated knowledge is limited, and others can not only see other ways of knowing, but also aspects of our knowledge that may be invisible to us (Haraway 1988). Therefore, situated accounts, such as those generated through the creative works and exegesis, require others to speak back to them. Due to the temporal and procedural limitations of this research, this dialogical aspect of situated knowledge making within the research has been limited to the feedback of supervisors and assessors.

In reflecting upon this limitation within the research, I am particularly interested in methods of gaining feedback through peer and community review processes. Community participation and review processes used by the Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (CLEAR) ensure that community priorities are centred within the research process and that the publication of knowledge serves the interests of the communities being researched (Liboiron 2021b). This occurs

through public forums held throughout the research that shape the inquiry and methods of dissemination, employment of local community members as fully paid co-researchers, and through the use of judgemental sampling that focus on community species use (Liboiron 2021b). Although peer review and community participation are part of multiple epistemic process within the academy, such as action research and other participatory methodologies, Liboiron (2021b, p. 140) locates their community review practices as specifically anti-colonial because 'land is always part of a community', regardless of the specifics of legal titles. Therefore, community review is about disrupting colonial assumptions that researchers should have unfettered access to land, resources, and time.

Peer review processes are used in both academia and the arts to give feedback on the quality of work and its contribution to the development of a discipline. About two thirds of the way through the research, I became interested in including a peer review process into this work, through the commissioning of two Indigenous artists to view the work and give me formal feedback. This idea was based on a process used by myself and other artists in the creative development and presentation, in which an artist outside the project is employed as a provocateur or mentor, who gives feedback on the work, and poses questions that expose new ways of working or viewing the work. The aim of this process was to enable Indigenous artists to speak back to the research, identifying gaps in my knowledge and opportunities for further reflection.

The proposed inclusion of Indigenous peer reviewers triggered procedural processes required by the university, namely the identification of an Indigenous organisation to host this process and the establishment of an Indigenous reference group to oversee the process of peer review. Unfortunately, I was not resourced to support meaningful establishment of a reference group or host organisation, which included the establishment of an MOU with a relevant Indigenous organisation. Unlike some other post graduate researchers I've known, I was not undertaking the research as part of my employment within an Aboriginal organisation that could provide the organisational and cultural

scaffolding required for this undertaking. The university, being based in Melbourne, had no networks in Central Australia to support this work and was therefore not able to broker relationships with Arrernte groups or organisations to support these procedural requirements. As a university with limited research resources, Victoria University did not have the funding to support me to build these networks locally through the provision of consultation fees for members of a reference group, which I felt was appropriate given that I was approaching Aboriginal people to work on my research project. I made multiple requests for further funding to support payment of Indigenous participation and was told on repeated occasions that there were no funds available beyond the $2,500 research budget I had already received. Therefore, the Indigenous peer review aspect of the creative research outputs was abandoned.

Given that the procedural, temporal, and financial limitations of the PhD program were the main barrier to engaging Indigenous people within the research project, there needs to be greater consideration and access to the resources intercultural research requires in order to be ethically undertaken within post graduate research training, as well as an awareness of how needs and practices differ according to research/er situatedness. For example, one academic suggested I offer food vouchers in exchange for Indigenous artist peer review, rather than paying the relevant rates specified by the National Association of Visual Artists. Vouchers were also recommended as payment for members of the reference group I would be required to establish for oversight of the peer review process. Whilst relevant in some research settings, this practice of offering vouchers in exchange for labour is perceived as offensive in Central Australia, given the prevalence of government income management policies that restrict Aboriginal people's financial agency. This points to the need for a deeper understanding within the university of when it may not be suitable or ethical to work with Indigenous community members, especially when the university does not have the local networks or knowledge required to broker the relationships needed to support academic research with/in local Indigenous communities.

Although I was not able to undertake the process of Indigenous peer review within the PhD process, I remain interested in developing formal and informal mechanisms of peer review and feedback as an option for artists and researchers to engage in a process of accountable dialogue with Indigenous peers and community members, and have built these into projects I will be undertaking in the future.

Limits and refusal

Given the difficulty in undertaking ethical, community engaged research within the PhD program, due to resourcing, temporal and procedural restraints, existing disciplinary or departmental processes and desires, and the very real risk of communities withdrawing consent for research (Liboiron 2021b; Tuck & Yang 2014), it is worthwhile for universities, and those researchers working within them to consider refusal as a meaningful opportunity for the expansion of epistemic and methodological practices within the academy. As Tuck and Yang (2014) wrote, refusal can be both an ethical and generative position in research. Recognising the limitations of undertaking community-based research particularly within Indigenous or other 'over studied Others' (Tuck & Yang 2014, p. 223), within the resource poor and procedurally intensive context of a PhD program, opens opportunities for other kinds of questions and ways of making knowledge to emerge. As Liboiron (2021b) highlighted, anti-colonial research can be based on the anti-colonial assumptions underpinning the research questions and methods, rather than through assuming or requiring access to Indigenous people's time, knowledge, or land. This is akin to Rose's (2013) acknowledgement that working together does not always mean side by side, but rather with shared aims and the recognition that individual contributions are contextualised within the collective labour of other humans and the more than human.

As Tuck and Yang (2014) pointed out, the academy is only one site of knowledge making, and is deeply embedded in colonial culture. One of the great tensions within the research has been

the use of existing published materials by Indigenous writers within my research as a settler person. As a trainee researcher, I encountered a broad range of views within faculty as to how I might engage with texts published by Indigenous authors, ranging from being encouraged to read widely outside my cultural location, through to being told that this constituted the use of Indigenous knowledge, and therefore required specialist ethics clearance. In the end, through reading, conversation with supervisors, and reflection, I came to my own position of focusing on work by Indigenous academics and thinkers that was explicitly aimed at settler people to inform research priorities, and then mobilising the methods and methodologies of settler and other non-Indigenous academics and thinkers to undertake the work. I don't know or claim this to be the 'right' way to undertake research, but it was what felt most ethical and appropriate within the particular context and limitations of this inquiry.

Whilst there are strong guidelines for researchers working with Indigenous cultural knowledge contained within archives (AIATSIS 2020; Janke 2019), there are significantly less resources guiding how settlers might engage with academic texts that advance the theoretical perspectives of Indigenous authors, particularly when these texts are aimed at settler readers. The work of Tuck and Yang (2014) and Liboiron (2021b) against extractive reading practices, and Mott and Cockayne's (2017) work on citation politics are examples of thinking within this area. As calls for settlers to undertake self-education and practice good citation and epistemic ethics grow, more inquiry into the benefits and limits of use of theoretical texts authored by Indigenous academics by settler scholars within the Australian context is needed.

This need to identify the limits of the universities' access to knowledge and experiences generated outside of the academy extends to the life of researcher. Whilst this research has been undertaken as part of the academy's training program, it occurs adjacent to other areas of my life. Whilst I deliberately excluded elements of my life from the research, in particular personal relationships, I acknowledge that in doing so I invisibilised aspects of knowledge making that no

doubt informed the research from this account. Additionally, as demonstrated in the above reflections on changes to my artistic and activist practice, the research has impacted these excluded areas of my life. Recognition of these impacts and interactions between academic research and my lived experience points to opportunities for further investigation of the impacts of research and research training on researchers, research participants, and other sites of knowledge making they inhabit, as well as reflection on the limits of this investigation within the academy.

Future directions

This exegesis has provided an account of the development of a constellation of creative and pedagogical practices that unsettle settler colonial land relations. It has fundamentally changed my world view, and the ways in which I show up in relationship to land, other people, and the more than human world. The creative works and the exegesis provide deeply situated and partial accounts, practices and understandings of a research journey undertaken within the containers of a PhD program, my settler body, and the Ilparpa Claypans. I make no claims of total truth or the right ways to do things. As I wrote in Chapter 7, this process remains open ended and ongoing.

As I enter the twilight of this research journey, I turn my thoughts to what comes next. I am interested in how the research may go feral, leaving the domesticated confines of the academy and find sites of intra-action and change in the community through creative projects and activities. I am also interested in porosity between academic, artistic, and community settings, and the ways in which I can move between these sites, following and connecting up the anti-colonial cracks that Walsh (2015) wrote of.

To this end, I will continue working within the university as part of the Top End STS research collective, participating in the development of a Marrara Swamp Field School as part of the AUS STS conference in July 2022. The school will trace colonial infrastructures impacting the Gurrambai/Rapid Creek catchment, and engage narratives of collective care and responsibility. I will

also bring my creative research skills into the artistic realm through a creative residency at the Araluen Arts Centre in Mparntwe/Alice Springs. During this residency, I will examine public access and participation with/in the site through a series of collective creative experiments informed by the reading, walking, and making practices developed within this research. I am looking forward to the collective nature of both of these projects, and the capacity to include broader community participation, including the paid participation of local Indigenous community members and educators.

Attending to my responsibility to keep learning and stay involved in Indigenous led community activism is vital to sustaining the integrity of this work. At the time of writing, I have just finished a five-week Arrernte language and culture course led by Senior Arrernte educator Kumalie Riley, and will continue this study through this year. Kumalie describes this course as 'the things that everyone living in Mparntwe needs to know' and so my attendance is part of learning how to be here better. I also continue to be involved in Indigenous led struggles, with a focus on anti-fracking and other land rights struggles, and prison abolition, as these are two key focus areas for local Indigenous campaigning.

At the end of this process, I'm more comfortable with the messiness of grappling with colonialism, and no longer seek the purity of a perfect solution. I understand that making mistakes is part of the process of learning, but that I have a responsibility to be accountable for these mistakes. As a result, I'm more compassionate towards those around me and for myself. Most importantly, although it still feels like the world is on fire, I feel response-able where I once felt helpless. And that makes all the difference.

Conclusion

As I carry the learning of the PhD journey into my future practice, I acknowledge that it has had a transformational impact on both my activist and artistic practices. I understand these impacts as

being comparable to the process of removing the weed, buffel grass, from around native trees. After a period of sustained disruption, through reading, walking, and making, I am able to see spaces beyond colonialism. I need to continue to maintain these practices, just as the process of maintaining a cleared area through weeding is an essential part of buffel grass removal. In this way, settlers may contribute to the creation of spaces where Indigenous power and the Otherwise of anti-colonial worlds (Kwaymullina 2020; Walsh 2015) may flourish and grow.

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Appendix

Ethics Approval

Quest Ethics Notification - Application Process Finalised - Application Approved

quest.noreply@vu.edu.au <quest.noreply@vu.edu.au>
Wed 9/11/2019 10:14 AM

To: Anthony.Birch@vu.edu.au <Anthony.Birch@vu.edu.au>

Cc: Kelly-Lee Hickey <kelly-lee.hickey@live.vu.edu.au>;Christopher.Sonn@vu.edu.au <Christopher.Sonn@vu.edu.au>

Dear PROF ANTHONY BIRCH,

Your ethics application has been formally reviewed and finalised.

» Application ID: HRE19-114
» Chief Investigator: PROF ANTHONY BIRCH
» Other Investigators: ASPR CHRISTOPHER SONN, MS Kelly-Lee Hickey
» Application Title: Tender Places
» Form Version: 13-07

The application has been accepted and deemed to meet the requirements of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) 'National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)' by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee. Approval has been granted for two (2) years from the approval date; 11/09/2019.

Continued approval of this research project by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (VUHREC) is conditional upon the provision of a report within 12 months of the above approval date or upon the completion of the project (if earlier). A report proforma may be downloaded from the Office for Research website at: http://research.vu.edu.au/hrec.php.

Please note that the Human Research Ethics Committee must be informed of the following: any changes to the approved research protocol, project timelines, any serious events or adverse and/or unforeseen events that may affect continued ethical acceptability of the project. In these unlikely events, researchers must immediately cease all data collection until the Committee has approved the changes. Researchers are also reminded of the need to notify the approving HREC of changes to personnel in research projects via a request for a minor amendment. It should also be noted that it is the Chief Investigators' responsibility to ensure the research project is conducted in line with the recommendations outlined in the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) 'National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).'

On behalf of the Committee, I wish you all the best for the conduct of the project.

Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee
Phone: 9919 4781 or 9919 4461
Email: researchethics@vu.edu.au

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