

THE (RE)INDIGENISATION OF SPACE

Weaving narratives of resistance to embed Nura [Country] in design

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DECLARATION

I, Danièle Siân Hromek, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This thesis includes Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) belonging to Yuin, Dharug, Gundungurra, D'harawal, Bundjalung, Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta language, tribal or nation groups, communities, custodians or traditional owners. Where I have used ICIP, I have followed the relevant protocols and consulted with appropriate Indigenous people/communities about its inclusion in my thesis. ICIP rights are Indigenous heritage and will always remain with these groups. To use, adapt or reference the ICIP contained in this work, you will need to consult with the relevant Indigenous groups and follow cultural protocols.

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CULTURAL SENSITIVITY WARNING

For some Indigenous communities it is customary not to mention names or reproduce images associated with the recently deceased. Members of these communities are respectfully advised that there are people who have passed away mentioned in the writing in this thesis.

Some of the language, words and descriptions originate from early colonial writings and other sources. This language is now considered insensitive. I have amended and/or noted using [sic] as many of these occurrences as possible, however it was not always feasible to amend all such inappropriate language. In this instance please note the original sources of the language available in the Reference List.

I wish to include a further note for Aboriginal readers. While reading for this research I found some narratives or literature upsetting and even traumatic. Some stories were too close to my own, or indeed *were* my own story detailing how colonisation impacted my family. Remembering or re-hearing stories can re-traumatise, and while I found healing through retelling the stories from my own perspective, I wanted readers to be aware and gain support should this writing trigger any unease.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Uncle Noel Butler, Budawang Elder, Knowledge Holder of the Yuin nation and Dhurga speaker, provided the translation in Dhurga (the language of my Ancestors) for Country, that being Nura. Similarly, Ngura means Country in Dharug (the language of the land on which this thesis was written), as confirmed by Uncle Greg Simms, Dharug, Gundungurra and Yuin Elder. Using the words of Country, I pay my respect to Nura and Knowledge Holders of Nura. I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of all nations throughout this land and abroad, and their continuing connection to culture, community, land, sea and sky. I write with thanks to countless thinkers, makers and doers; due to their tireless work I can follow their footprints. I express my gratitude for the stories and knowledges shared with me. I am especially grateful to my Ancestors, who did whatever it took in order that I could be here now. I am here only by standing on their shoulders.

Recognising Country and Elders is a form of mutual respect between First Peoples. It is based on an ancient tradition which situates me and this thesis in the ontology and pedagogy of Indigenous ideologies. This acknowledgement is a living reciprocal action between people, narrative and Country.

Through the voyage of this thesis I have travelled to many spaces both of learning and geography, and they have left their inscriptions on me and on the text. It is not possible to undertake a journey such as this alone; it changes you beyond your control and recognition, and in doing so impacts those around you. I was unprepared for the challenges I would need to navigate, and without those standing beside me there are many times I would have fallen down.

I thank my family, including parents, siblings, grandparents, aunties, uncles and cousins, who not only supported me emotionally and mentally, but contributed their stories, wisdom, knowledge and love. Thank you for listening to my rants, holding me through my tears, reminding me of the importance of family and the endless cups of tea. I also give my enduring gratitude to my husband Carlos who joined me on my life journey during my thesis journey after I asked my Ancestors to 'sort it out already'. His support through the maelstrom that is academia, unwavering confidence in me and well-timed hugs sustained me through many difficult moments.

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As much as I aspire to live on love and air alone, regrettably it is difficult to conduct research without funding. Therefore I thank Jumbunna Institute for providing a postgraduate scholarship. Having the time to exclusively concentrate on my research made the difference to (almost!) completing on time, and the enjoyment of the research process. Thanks to the Lindsay Croft Postgraduate Memorial Scholarship

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Finally, I say thanks to all Ancestors, known and unnameable, who are no longer here physically yet have long acted as carers for Country and for me, for they too have power.

ABSTRACT

Space, for Aboriginal peoples, is full of Country. Furthermore, space, place, land, ground, geography, geology, cartography, topography, site, location, landscape, terrain, environment are *held* by Country. Deploying Indigenous theoretical and methodological approaches, I investigate an Indigenous experience and comprehension of space. By reconsidering and contesting the notion of *terra nullius* – an ‘empty land’ – the research considers how First Peoples occupy, use, narrate, sense, dream and contest their spaces.

Narratives and oral recordings are key to First Peoples’ expressions of their lived experiences of both culture and colonial trauma. Trauma is embedded in First Peoples’ lands and spaces via the invidious forces of invasion and colonisation, described here through select colonial archives and existing white historiography. Critiquing this historical narrative of colonisation, the research deploys instead Indigenous perspectives including lived experiences, oral histories, yarns, reflective practice and wider reading of Indigenous literature. These permit a focus on the (re)Indigenisation of space in order to investigate the question: ‘what is the presence and space of Country in contemporary Indigenous lives?’ The thesis therefore offers a (re)interpretation of the relationship between First Peoples and the land that is based on connectivity and relationality, as opposed to colonial writings that have inferred, stated or demanded that First Peoples’ relations with land were and are non-existent and even lost.

This research speaks through a Budawang/Yuin woman’s worldview. It considers the importance of stories for holding knowledges and connecting to land, and examines the micro and macro connections between Country, people and making. First Peoples’ cultural practices connect to Dreaming and Country. They hold memory of culture and offer a means of (re)connecting to heritage. My investigation brings narratives, remembrance and Country together in a cultural, spatial and performative practice of weaving, exploring spatial reclamation and restoration of Indigenous spatial values. It ‘names up’ methods, linking them with narratives, considering how space can be (re)Indigenised. It rethinks and reframes the values that inform Aboriginal understandings of space through Indigenous spatial knowledges and narratives. By offering a reinterpretation and retranslation of Aboriginal methods of

reclaiming space, it likewise reflects on the sustainability of Indigenous cultures from a spatial perspective.

As foundational research in the area of Indigenous space this research has the capacity to impact policy and practice in relation to the planning of spaces to ensure they are designed equitably, relationally and with a connection to Country.

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PUBLICATIONS

Publications generated within the frame of this research enquiry:

Chapter 2:

Hromek, D 2019 (in press), 'Storytelling and Narratives on Country: A Yuin woman's perspective', Budawang/Yuin, in D S Jones & D Low Choy (eds), *Everyone's Knowledge in Country: Yurlendj-nganjin*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Chapter 4:

Hromek, D 2018, 'Always Is: Aboriginal Spatial Experiences of Land and Country', Budawang/Yuin, in R Kiddle, P Stewart & K O'Brien (eds), *Our Voices: Indigeneity and Architecture*, Oro Editions, San Francisco Bay, CA, pp. 218-237.

Chapter 7:

Hromek, D 2019 (in press), 'Contested Ground – Weaving Stories of Resilience, Resistance, Relationality and Reclamation', Budawang/Yuin, in K O'Brien (ed.), *Our Voices: The DE-colonial Project*, Oro Editions, San Francisco Bay, CA.

Exhibitions generated within the frame of this research enquiry:

Chapter 7:

Hromek, D. 2018, *Weaving Intentions*, Budawang/Yuin, cultural practice, in 'Make Known' curated by Eva Riestra-Rodriguez, UNSW Galleries

Publications related to this research enquiry:

Hromek, D 2019 (in press), *Void*, Budawang/Yuin, catalogue essay, Museums and Galleries of NSW, Sydney.

Gothe, J & Hromek, D 2019 (in press), 'A cultural generational communal iterative generative collaborative relational theory of design', *Theories of Design[ing]*, Budawang/Yuin (Hromek), Bloomsbury Publishers, London.

Hromek, D 2017, *Impact*, Budawang/Yuin, catalogue essay, UTS Gallery, Sydney.

Hromek, D, Hromek, S & Hromek, M 2018, 'Sensing Materials of our Country', Budawang/Yuin, *Architecture Bulletin*, vol. 75, no. 2 (September), pp. 18-19.

Hromek, D & Herbert, S 2017, *Indigenous Material Referencing Guide*, Budawang/Yuin (Hromek), UTS Library, Sydney.

Hromek, D & Janke, T 2020 (in press), *Cultural Principles and Protocols for Designers: for Projects or Curricula involving Indigenous Peoples, Communities and Materials*, Budawang/Yuin (Hromek), Meriam and Wuthathi (Janke), UTS ePress, Sydney.

Kombumerri, D & Hromek, D 2019 (in press), 'Designing with Country – Rethreading Aboriginal Culture into the Design Fabric of Sydney's Built and Natural Environment', Yugembir (Kombumerri), Budawang/Yuin (Hromek) in K O'Brien (ed.), *Our Voices: The DE-colonial Project*, Oro Editions, San Francisco Bay, CA.

Exhibitions related to this research enquiry:

Hromek, D. 2018, *Untitled (Eisenman by Hand)*, Budawang/Yuin, lightbox with drawings, in 'Void' curated by Emily McDaniel, UTS Gallery.

Hromek, D. 2018, *World Making*, Budawang/Yuin, speculative design, in 'Foundation' curated by Emily McDaniel, Fairfield City Museum & Gallery.

Hromek, D 2016, Winyanboga Yurringa, Budawang/Yuin, set and costume design, Moogahlin, Carriageworks Sydney and Geelong Performing Arts Centre.

Hromek, D, Hromek, S & Hromek, M 2015, Covered By Concrete, Budawang/Yuin, spatial map installation including video, aromas and audio, Underbelly Arts Festival, Sydney.

NOTES ON LANGUAGE

READING THIS THESIS – TERMINOLOGY AND RETHINKING CONVENTIONS

An Indigenous inscription of the ground is an oral inscription of the ground. As such this research relies strongly on oral stories, yarns and histories. However, as this is an academic written work, I make numerous decisions with regards to usage of words and language.

Research, as a term and endeavour, holds a lot of colonial baggage for most Indigenous communities (Smith 2012)¹. It evokes mistrust and suspicion and I have struggled with it, including the idea of being a researcher myself. There is an irony in my choosing to use some colonising or anthropological terms while at the same time criticising those authors who penned them. These terms are used regarding my culture, often without permission or consultation. They are limited in terms of the diversity of First Peoples, and are inadequate in representing the cultures of Indigenous peoples worldwide or even within Australia. However, in a country such as Australia, which is continually undergoing a colonising process, it is impossible to separate them from my discourse. In using these terms, I am therefore taking ownership of them and request readers' understanding in my doing so.

Where possible and relevant, I use the names of individual people and their communities or group affiliations based upon how they identify themselves, particularly when referring to their lives, experiences and ways of being. Identity can be complex for First Peoples, who may have a mix of cultural reference points to address, or may have had their identities stolen or hidden as part of colonising and institutional processes. The colonial project affects all Indigenous peoples, albeit in differing ways and when discussing colonisation, it may at times be pertinent to speak more generally. This in no way aims to detract from individual people or communities and their experiences; rather it enables a more philosophical and conceptual viewpoint concerning the effects of colonisation.

¹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith is a Māori academic who affiliates to the Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou iwi.

According to Michael Yellow Bird², *colonisation* is a system in which one people claim sovereignty over another and assert social, political, economic and spiritual control over them. Colonisation is motivated by beliefs and values of the coloniser being superior to those of the colonised (Yellow Bird recorded by Easter 2014). Colonising is a dehumanising activity that affects humans at a deep soul level (Duran 2006)³, thus it is not only lands, waters and skies⁴ that are colonised, but peoples also, physically, mentally and psychologically.

Settler colonialism, as experienced in Australia, is the form of colonialism in which so-called ‘settlers’ come to Indigenous lands with the intention of making a new home on the land, ‘a homemaking that insists on settler sovereignty over all things in their new domain’ (Tuck & Yang 2012, p. 5)⁵. Within settler colonialism, the primary concern is the resources of the land. The resources are viewed as commodities for the ‘settlers’, with Indigenous relationships to that land being irrelevant to this pursuit of capital. Land becomes remade into ownable and transferrable property. In order for ‘settlers’ to make the land they invaded truly their home, the Indigenous peoples must be erased, for while they and their creation stories connecting them to that land in perpetuity continue to exist, the colonisers cannot fulfil their own aim of settler colonisation, namely to become ‘indigenous’ themselves to that land (Tuck & Yang 2012).

As a member of the First Peoples of this land, my experience is that colonisation is not an event of the past; we are not in a *post-colonial* period; we actively continue to be colonised. As such, I will not be speaking of colonisation as a past occurrence, or refer to post-colonial conditions. *Neo-colonisation* is a form of global power in which, despite the perception of independence, transnational corporations and global and multilateral institutions combine to perpetuate colonial forms of exploitation of developing countries. Neo-colonisation has been broadly theorised as a further development of capitalism that enables capitalist powers to dominate and exploit subject nations through international capitalism rather than by direct rule (Halperin 2016). *Re-colonisation* (or *(re)colonisation*) refers to the argument that, for Indigenous people, colonisation did not end with European invasion. Colonisation continues in a number

² Michael Yellow Bird is a citizen of the Arikara (Sahnish) and Hidatsa Nations in North Dakota.

³ Eduardo Duran is Pueblo/Apache and Lakota through the Hunka and the Yellow Horse family.

⁴ When referring to the land in this research, air and water are also implicitly included, as well as the depths of the underground.

⁵ Eve Tuck is Unangax and an enrolled member of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island, Alaska.

of forms, including globalisation, post-colonisation and cultural fragmentation. Re-colonisation refers to the active, ongoing repetition of colonisation layered in activities that occur in Australian society and worldwide, such as the neglect of Indigenous pedagogies, continuation of Stolen Generations, theft of Indigenous knowledges or intellectual property, continuance of assimilation policies, neglect in terms of reinstating Indigenous lands and land management practices, negative depiction of Indigenous peoples in the media or literature, or as being from the distant past.

Nor will I be referring to my culture as having been *lost*. It was not lost; it was forcibly silenced through the processes of colonisation. My family and Ancestors faced these forces with an incredible, creative and beautiful resilience and resisted them, passing on knowledges and practices in often hidden and discreet ways until, in my generation, it was safe for them to re-emerge from the deep sleep in which they were being kept safe. Until the land and descendants of the land no longer exist, our culture always was and always will be.

In 1788, there were more than 250 languages spoken on the continent, with over 800 dialectal varieties (AIATSIS 2019). Now many of our languages are sleeping, or in forms of revitalisation (T Janke 2019, pers. comm., 14 February)⁶. As is the experience with other Indigenous peoples whose languages were taken from them by force, some of my own experiences cannot be described within the limitations of English, and I no longer have the language I need to be able to adequately describe those experiences. Similarly, some English words and phrases are overly loaded with western preconceptions. In this instance I will either define the English term as I intend it to be read, or use a word from the language of the land that better interprets the meaning. If *language words* (those being words from an Indigenous language) are used, I provide as close an interpretation as possible, together with the nation, clan or language group from which the language comes.

Due to colonial processes, many writers about Indigenous knowledge, culture and practice are non-Indigenous. Often their interpretations reflect poor understanding, or overstep the bounds of appropriate

⁶ Terri Janke descends from the Meriam people of the Torres Strait Islands and the Wuthathi people of mainland Australia.

commentary (Heiss 2002)⁷. Nonetheless, at times I have chosen to include their references, with a reinterpretation if required, as they provide access to some valued knowledges I may have otherwise been unable to retrieve. This being said, it is my preference to privilege Indigenous voices (Rigney 2006)⁸ where possible, and use Indigenous speakers or writers to inform my research.

Prior to colonisation, there were no *Aborigines* in this country; *ab origine* is a Latin word meaning ‘from the beginning’. It was assigned by colonisers to the peoples living in Australia to describe those whose lands they were appropriating. According to Anita Heiss, prior to invasion ‘there just were people who were identified and known by their relationships to each other through familial connections, through connections to Country and through language group’ (2012, pp. 3-4). I prefer not to use the word ‘Aborigine’. I find it outdated, somewhat derogatory and lacking in recognition of the many and diverse cultures and languages that this land is made up of. Instead, when a unifying term specifically relating to mainland peoples is required, I prefer *Aboriginal peoples* or *Aboriginal person*.

In using the word *Aboriginal*, I am aware it is a colonisers’ identifier. As I operate in an academic arena and also a country where, as a generalisation, people can name more American states than Aboriginal nations, I accept this word as a descriptor for the people who first occupied this land. However, I am aware it is not the preferred way of self-identifying by many First Peoples in Australia. I use ‘Aboriginal’ in this writing as a generic term to describe the First Peoples who inhabited the mainland continent as well as their descendants.

Through the course of this research, I have been asked in a number of ways, ‘Who is Indigenous anyway?’⁹. As a starting point to answering this question, a definition agreed by the High Court of Australia in 1983 is that an *Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person* is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by their community. More importantly, our stories of our creation, history and belonging tell us we originated from here rather than having relocated to this land from elsewhere.

⁷ Anita Heiss is a member of the Wiradjuri nation.

⁸ Lester-Irabinna Rigney is a Narungga, Kurna and Ngarrindjeri man.

⁹ To be clear, this is an offensive and provocative question as it is a challenge on identity and belonging.

The term *indigenous peoples* describes 'racially distinct populations whose long-term histories connect them with identified areas of land situated within the borders of globally recognised nations' (Manus 2005, p. 553). Many First Peoples feel the word *Indigenous* has been imposed on them because it associates them with flora and fauna, and was a term used by colonials, and more recently academia, science and government. The word *Indigenous* generalises mainland and islander cultures into one group, despite both having very different cultures, customs and even flags. While personally I am comfortable with the term as I understand it as a uniting term that places me with global First Nations Peoples, some of my Elders growl at me when I use it, so I do so with caution. For practicality in an academic situation, I use this word to describe the First Peoples of the mainland continent and Torres Strait Islanders.

First Peoples, First Nations and *First Nations Peoples* are terms that many Indigenous peoples prefer internationally and within Australia as they describe our relationships with the land as the first inhabitants of that land. Generally, I use the term *First Peoples* to describe Indigenous peoples in Australia, and *First Nations* when describing Indigenous peoples globally.

It is always respectful to capitalise the words *Aboriginal* and *Indigenous*. Likewise, *First Peoples* and *First Nations*.

I choose not to use the terms *First Australians, Aboriginal Australians* or *Indigenous Australians* when speaking of First Peoples. The land that came to be known as Australia was given this uniting designation by Europeans. Prior to that time this land was inhabited by more than 500 different groups, all with their own cultures, beliefs, languages and names. Many Aboriginal people prefer to be known by the name of their own group rather than as 'Australian'. It is my view that the adoption of these terms is a (re)colonising practice that attempts to disguise non-Indigenous occupation of Indigenous land by removing the signifiers chosen by the original people of the land. Indigenous peoples were also not

counted as part of the nation until 1967¹⁰, so Indigenous peoples were effectually the last Australians and the first Australians were Europeans, not First Peoples.

Likewise, I prefer not to be known as *our* First Australians or *our* Aboriginal people as is the tendency of some politicians and media; I do not belong to anyone nor does my identity nor my heritage nor culture. We do not refer to *our* white Australians or *our* non-Indigenous Australians, so as an attempt at finding equality in language, I choose not to claim ownership in this way. Likewise regarding the term *Indigenous leaders*; Indigenous peoples are not an homogenous group with a centralised structure or leadership group. We do not have nominated leaders who speak for us all as a united people (Pearson 2019)¹¹.

In relation to British *invasion*, I prefer not to use the word *settlers* when referring to the British. I cannot ignore the irony of people who travelled more than eight months and in excess of 24,000 kilometres away from their homes to then label the original inhabitants of that land – who had occupied the continent for many tens of thousands of years – ‘wanderers’ or ‘roamers’, and suggest they go ‘walkabout’. *Settlement* has become a euphemistic term for conquering by force in the Australian context (McGrath 1995). I argue that it is the Indigenous peoples who are settled and the Europeans who are the wanderers – as well as *colonisers*, *imperialists* and *invaders*.

When I use *western* I am referring to cultures or societies that have values, worldviews, customs and systems of governance, beliefs or politics originating with Europe. Western worldviews have transferred to non-European countries through forces such as colonisation or immigration, and therefore Australia

¹⁰ On 27 May 1967 a referendum was held to make two amendments to the Australian Constitution to alter sections 51 (xxvi) and 127, which stated, ‘51. *The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to:- ... (xxvi) The people of any race, other than the aboriginal [sic] people in any State, for whom it is necessary to make special laws.*’ and ‘127. *In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal [sic] natives [sic] should not be counted.*’ With 90.77 per cent of people voting for the change, the words ‘... other than the aboriginal people in any State...’ in section 51 (xxvi) and the whole of section 127 were removed (National Archives of Australia 2019).

¹¹ Luke Pearson is a Gamilaroi man.

could be considered as having a (majority) western culture. In using the term *the west* I am referring to countries or nations that understand themselves in the context of having western values.

I prefer not to use the term *hunters and gatherers* to describe pre-invasion Aboriginal peoples. I do not find it sufficient to describe the rich social, cultural and spiritual societies of the First Peoples. While gathering and hunting did occur, this is inadequate to explain their relationships with the land, which was more profound and based on a deep understanding of sustainability (Pascoe 2014)¹². Similarly, the term *nomadic* is unrealistic. It disregards the many groups that existed and continue to exist across the continent, all with differing traditions, rituals, Dreaming stories and ways of relating to their varying environments. For instance, it has been suggested that due to the relatively resource-rich coastal regions, there is little evidence that the peoples around the Sydney area seasonally migrated, and prior to invasion these lands were densely settled (Standfield 2012). The word 'nomadic' also disregards the purposes of travel, be it land management, ceremonial or kin responsibilities. Once the British arrived and appropriated the land, clearly additional movement was required simply for survival. *Mobility, movement* or *travelling* are my preferred phrases to describe movements of Indigenous peoples.

Despite accounts from the *Endeavour* voyage in 1770 assuring the British that Aboriginal peoples would show little opposition, there are regular reports of Indigenous peoples' defence of their lands – though these accounts described this defence as Aboriginal defiance or blamed convict disobedience for the problem, rather than invasion as the cause. Inevitably British violence towards Indigenous peoples was believed to be justified, even when it was outside the limitations of British law (Banner 2007; Standfield 2010). Yet for First Peoples the invaders had come uninvited and not followed protocol for gaining access to Country, so First Peoples were within their rights to defend their lands as per their Laws. Downplaying resistance was important to the British as it enabled them to conclude they were doing little harm to the peoples they invaded, achieving the result that Aboriginal people appeared 'acted upon rather than active agents in history, passive in the face of their own dispossession' (Standfield 2012, p. 73). This, though, was not the case. Therefore, I write from a perspective of active *resistance* rather than passive accepting victims.

¹² Uncle Bruce Pascoe is of Bunurong, Yuin and Punniler panner heritage.

According to Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *decolonisation*, 'once viewed as the formal process of handing over the instruments of government, is now recognised as a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power' (2012, p. 101). I am not overly comfortable with the overuse of the term decolonisation, and that it is being used by those who have clearly not experienced colonisation. This depoliticises a practice that must be political. It also denudes the term of its poignancy and does not represent the dismantling of power structures for the equality of oppressed First Peoples. Theft of language is a form of violence. As described by Eve Tuck and K Wayne Yang (2012), decolonisation is distinct from other civil and human rights projects and experiences of oppression. Decolonisation is about making reparations to Indigenous peoples, Indigenous social justice and equity, and righting colonial power relations. Therefore, I advocate for care in the use of the word by those who have not experienced colonisation.

An approach to decolonisation is described by Michael Yellow Bird as:

... creating and consciously using various strategies to liberate oneself from, or adapt to, or survive in oppressive conditions. It is the restoration of cultural practices, thinking, beliefs and values that were taken away or abandoned but are still relevant or necessary for survival and wellbeing. It is the birth and use of new ideas, thinking, technologies and lifestyles that contribute to the advancement and empowerment of Indigenous Peoples (2008, p. 284).

Anthony McKnight¹³ (2015) talks of reculturalisation and decolonisation of the self whereby decolonisation becomes a process of liberation not only of lands, but self. However, decolonisation 'in a settler context is fraught because empire, settlement and internal colony have no spatial separation' (Tuck & Yang 2012, p. 7). We inhabit a land that is still undergoing a colonising process, where Indigenous peoples are repeatedly (re)colonised and (re)invaded. Every day that the 'settler' remains 'owner' of the land, Indigenous peoples are (re)colonised. Every day that Indigenous peoples are told directly or indirectly that their ways of living and being, knowledges, and ways of passing their learnings on, are inferior, they are being colonised again. Every day Indigenous people live in environments designed to suit the power structures of the coloniser, we are being colonised. Therefore, I embrace

¹³ Anthony McKnight is an Awabakal, Gumaroi, and Yuin man.

words of *reclamation, resilience, resistance, relationality, responsibility, resurrecting, strength* and *subversion* as an approach to decolonisation and resurrection of culture.

Indigenisation refers to the adaptation to or increase of Indigenous cultures, participation and ownership. *(Re)Indigenisation* is a reference to 'always was, always will be Aboriginal land', a mantra used by Aboriginal land rights activists. It refers to the understanding that irrespective of invasion and colonisation, the relationships with and belonging to Country continue to exist.

This research is written from the perspective of empowering Indigenous voices. Within this remit are the rights of *self-determination* and *sovereignty*. Self-determination is our collective right to freely determine our political status and empower us to decide the nature of our own futures. It is the inherent right to have status, dominion or authority over our lives and lands (Australian Human Rights Commission 2002). In the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, sovereignty is described as:

... a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown (Referendum Council 2017).

For Aboriginal people, the word *Country* (capital C) has a different meaning than the western understanding of the word *country* (small c). The western experience of land is one of property, an appropriated ground given a monetary value, a landscape that is tamed, built upon, produced, owned. When I use the word Country, I am referring to it in the Aboriginal sense of the word, which relates to the cultural group and land that we belong to, yearn for, find healing from and will return to. I make this distinction to ensure there is no confusion with the non-Indigenous use of the word 'country'. Larissa Behrendt¹⁴ discusses this in relation to Aboriginal resistance to white settlement. She says,

¹⁴ Larissa Behrendt is a Euleyayai/Kamillaroi woman.

Aboriginal people didn't engage in serious resistance to the new colony at first because they assumed that the white people wouldn't stay. In Aboriginal culture, people had the responsibility for their traditional Country and their spiritual life was wrapped up in the landscape around them. They assumed that white people would have those responsibilities and worldview too and would have to return to their own land to look after it (2012, p. 85).

Mob is an identifying term that refers to a nation, clan or language group that we belong to.

An *Elder* is not necessarily an older person, rather a Knowledge Holder respected in their family or community for holding lore and/or knowledge. Within Indigenous cultures – and this writing – respect is given to Elders, and as a mark of this respect, they are addressed as *Aunt* and *Uncle*, with their titles capitalised. Similarly, if referring to Ancestors, the term *Old People* may be used; it is respectfully capitalised to ensure there is no confusion with the words used in everyday vernacular. I likewise capitalise *Knowledge Holders* to recognise their important roles within our communities as those who are custodians of particular Law, knowledges or stories. When referring to *Ancestors* I am referring to those from whom I am descended, but also the respected, revered, creative beings who may be involved in Dreaming stories. This being said, as the Dreaming itself, they are not from the past; rather, they are ever-present and continue to walk among and guide us.

I use *Dreaming* (capital D) to describe the unceasing action of creation which is ever-present now as well as in the past. It is the dynamic interaction between worlds, the seen and unseen, the physical and spiritual. It is the force that gave birth to all we know and it is the Dreaming that allows Aboriginal peoples to innovate and adapt (Graham 2008; Martin-Booran Mirraboopa 2003; Watson 1997; Yunkaporta 2009)^{15 16 17 18}. While there are many words in our languages to describe the Dreaming (for instance, in Dharug the word for Dreaming is *Gunyalungalung*, and Yolŋu people call it *Wangarr*), there is no direct

¹⁵ Mary Graham is a Kombu-merri person and is also affiliated with the Waka Waka group through her mother.

¹⁶ Karen Martin-Booran Mirraboopa is a Noonuccal woman from North Stradbroke Island (south east Queensland) with Bidjara ancestry (central Queensland).

¹⁷ Irene Watson belongs to the Tanganekald and Meintangk Boandik First Nations Peoples, of the Coorong and the south-east of South Australia.

¹⁸ Tyson Yunkaporta belongs to the Apalech clan (west cape) with ties in the south; his born-country is Melbourne and he has adoptive and community/cultural ties all over, from Western NSW to Perth.

translation in English. The term has been adopted to describe the creation of the world and human beings, and is often referred to in relation to spirituality and stories. Through Country, our spirituality, identity and heritage originated during the Dreaming. Silas Roberts¹⁹ says about the Dreaming,

Aboriginals have a special connection with everything that is natural. Aboriginals see themselves as part of nature. We see all things natural as part of us. All things on Earth we see as part human. This is told through the ideas of [D]reaming. By [D]reaming we mean the belief that long ago these creatures started human society. These creatures, these great creatures, are just as much alive today as they were in the beginning. They are everlasting and will never die. They are always part of the land and nature, as we are (Neidjie, Davis & Fox 1985, p. 13)²⁰.

I prefer 'Dreaming' over Dreamtime as it reflects the ever-presence of the Dreaming.

While I use the term *spiritual* in this research, I am not referring to a religious idea, rather 'an appreciation of everything that is inherent of Country, a connecting energy that provides oneness of being' (McKnight 2015, pp. 1-2).

Law (capital L) refers to the laws, customs and protocols of the land set out in the Dreaming as a set of rules or guidelines for every entity to follow. These have been passed to us through the land and Ancestors from the time Country came into being; they are our identity. According to Timmy Djawa Burarrwanga²¹, we carry Law in our blood and hearts, and it tells us the significance of sacredness and spirituality in ceremony (Burarrwanga recorded by Churchill 2016). Should I use *law* (small l) I am referring to the imported laws imposed on the land by those who came from Europe. *Lore* is used when referring to knowledge or tradition passed from generation to generation through story, song and other performative expressions.

¹⁹ Silas Roberts is a Yolŋu Elder.

²⁰ Bill Neidjie is a Gagudju Elder from Kakadu in the Northern Territory.

²¹ Timmy Djawa Burarrwanga is from the Gumatj clan in north-eastern Arnhem Land.

Indigenous scholars often use the plural of words such as *knowledges*, *learnings*, *knowings* or *teachings* to describe Indigenous forms of these words. This is because we recognise that there are multiple Indigenous cultures and hence knowledge systems in Australia, so reflect this in our language.

Within this research a series of *narratives* are told; some personal to me or others, some are family *stories*, others are collective stories shared freely and widely and are not attributable to a single source. Where possible I have quoted a published source as a reference; however, for some, if I do not know of a published source, I acknowledge that this remains a shared collective story and indicate those who shared it with me.

When transcribing *yarns* or conversations, where possible *Aboriginal English* has been maintained without concern for 'correct' English, with a translation should that be required. Aboriginal English is a blend of English words and Indigenous words or slang.

I am aware spellings and word meanings can differ within and between communities. Place, language and group names (and other words) originated from an oral tradition with multiple dialects. Boundaries based on misinformed colonial mapping and historical conflicts can be highly contested concerns for some communities. As well, colonisers have not always well understood Aboriginal ways of forming words, and there are often many ways of saying and spelling them. I acknowledge this as a contested space, yet it is not the role of this writing to address their individual contestations. In Aboriginal knowledge systems there are many ways of knowing, many truths and diverse perspectives. Likewise, there are many truths about places containing diversity in the knowledges, stories, histories and understandings of that place. Historically spaces were more shared than is currently understood, with different groups holding different custodial and cultural responsibilities towards them. Therefore, divergent knowledge systems are all respected and acknowledged in this document. I use the spelling and names as preferred by either those whose identity I am referring to, or the people with whom I work and have key relationships with. I have no intention of excluding others, rather of acknowledging my own personal worldview.

I prefer to use the word *Yuin* or *Budawang* to describe my own personal relationship with my Country, my people, my heritage. I also use the word *Koori*, used by Aboriginal people from New South Wales. Regardless of the colour of my skin I refer to myself as a *Blackfella*, and, as is the practice in my mob, I call non-Indigenous people *whitefellas*. I write as a Yuin person while acknowledging my complex identity. I speak from a first-person perspective to ensure my voice is included in the themes covered in the discussion, and therefore come from a point of subjectivity as my ways of speaking are shaped by my experiences. I include myself in the discourse when referring to Aboriginal people, or (should I be referring to them) my family and kin, as 'we' and 'us' or 'our'. I do this to ensure I am accountable for my words, and so readers know a Koori woman is the author of the text. In identifying the language I use, I am identifying myself to the reader.

PREFACE: CALLING UP THE WIND

CROSS-CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS AND SPATIALITIES

Time was not known or recorded in the same way as it is now; however, an event occurred in the year identified by the Gregorian calendar system as 1770 that changed things indelibly for First Peoples:

Saturday, 21st. Winds Southerly, a Gentle breeze, and Clear weather, with which we coasted along shore to the Northward. In the P.M. we saw the smoke of fire in several places; a Certain sign that the Country is inhabited ... At 6, we were abreast of a pretty high Mountain laying near the Shore, which, on account of its figure, I named Mount Dromedary (Latitude 36 degrees 18 minutes South, Longitude 209 degrees 55 minutes West). The shore under the foot of the Mountain forms a point, which I have named Cape Dromedary, over which is a peaked hillock (Cook 1770, chapter 8, para 3).¹

Captain James Cook arrived in the *Endeavour* off the coast of Yuin Country on Friday 20 April 1770 and stayed near what is currently Narooma for several days, recording observations of the land, waters, winds and people.

The Yuin people of the South Coast of New South Wales custodially owned, cared for and inhabited this Country. Their oral memory reveals a different understanding of events. They knew something was coming; smoke signals and messages had arrived from people to the south cautioning them to be prepared.

The Old People down in Yuin Country were up on their sacred mountain, Gulaga, learning the stories and teachings of their Country from their Elders. As they were looking out to sea, to gadhu², they noticed this big white thing coming up from the south, a big white bird. The mob were really concerned because they noticed smoke signals coming from the south and knew that there was something dangerous out there. They heard about these big prehistoric pelicans in their Dreaming stories but had

¹ In all quotes, capitalisations, italics, spelling and grammar are as per the original unless otherwise indicated. [sic] is only used to indicate problematic language.

² Gadhu means sea in Dharumba.

not seen a big white bird on the ocean like this for a long time. Their Elders had told them that these pelicans would scoop them up in their beaks, chew them up and spit them out, and of course there was a lot of fear. They did not want to be swallowed and regurgitated. So they got the Garadyigan³, the clever fellows, and Elders to have a look. The Garadyigan decided they would call up the wind to send the prehistoric pelican on up the coast. So they called up Koorah Koo-rie⁴, the wind spirit, who blew up a big southwester. This wind was at such a rate of knots that the big pelican started to go further and further out to sea. The mob were relieved at this point as the bird continued up the coast northward. Inevitably the big white pelican did land at what is now called Port Botany, the lands of the Gweagal people. Of course I am talking about old Jimmy Cook on board the *Endeavour*. Our Old People did not know that what was going to follow was much worse than what the prehistoric bird might have brought. With the invasion by the British our people did inevitably end up being swallowed, suppressed and regurgitated. As did their lands (Yarn with D Bannon-Harrison 2015 on 19 April).⁵

Gulaga is a female Dreaming place, an initiation and teaching place from time immemorial, a sacred place for women's business. The mountain top is ringed by extraordinary tall standing stones called guardians, some male, some female, whose presence sustains the mountain's spiritual integrity (Yarn with D Bannon-Harrison 2015 on 19 April; Rose 1998). It was on Gulaga that the Yuin people found the solace to face that of which they were aware via their long tradition of passing stories and histories from one generation to the next, the destructive white sea bird.

Cook arrogantly renamed Gulaga 'Mount Dromedary' as he thought the mountain looked like a camel. That change of name was the first of many changes wrought upon Yuin people. 'In those days the British sailed along our coast and claimed it as though we did not exist. Cook's maps were very good, but they did not show our names for places. He didn't ask us' (cited in *View from the Mountain*, an unpublished manuscript in the Umbarra Cultural Centre, Maynard 2014, p. 16)⁶.

According to Yuin people, Cook discovered neither our mountain, nor us.

³ Garadyigan means clever man in D'harawal and Dharug.

⁴ Koorah Koo-rie is the name of a wind spirit in Yuin Country.

⁵ This story, shared with permission, by Dwayne Naja Bannon-Harrison (Yuin/Gunai man with Watchabolic and Yorta-Yorta kinship connections), was originally told by Uncle Warren Foster (a Djiringanj Elder from Wallaga Lake).

⁶ John Maynard is from the Worimi People of Port Stephens.