Composing Contemporary Ceremony

Towards a praxial technique from a critical
‘Practice as research’ perspective

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December 2017

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This thesis is being submitted in total fulfilment for the degree of Ph.D.
Composing Contemporary Ceremony

Towards a praxial technique from a critical ‘practice as research’ perspective
Abstract

Composing Contemporary Ceremony:

Towards a praxial technique from a critical ‘practice as research’ perspective

Composed between 2007 and 2014, in collaboration with artists, Elders, and general public, Contemporary Ceremonies map multi-sited, transcultural ritual-art practices where Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians meet in reflexive exchange.

This thesis posits a theory for composing these events from an emplaced and relational perspective utilizing Nelson’s definition of ‘Practice as Research’¹ which interrogates the “know that, know how and know what” of composition. This perspective includes propositional knowledge as found in ritual studies and Indigenous studies, procedural knowledge found in practice, and the ethical and instinctive choices made from experience and insight, which temper and guide aesthetics and poetics.

An ‘Indigenist oriented research paradigm’ guides each step of this research, its findings, and outcomes, in an emplaced reconsideration of ritual theory and the artistic praxis of ceremony making. One vital ethical and relational imperative has been to articulate compositional ‘matters of concern’ from Western onto-epistemological lineages that I find to be in concert with Indigenous “Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing.”² In doing so, I acknowledge and interrogate my own heritage and story in accordance with Indigenous protocols of research, as articulated by Shawn Wilson in ‘Research is Ceremony.’³ The post-humanist philosophies of Bruno Latour and Peter Sloterdijk and their complimentary theories of spheres and networks have assisted in articulating the ethical, relational, and spatial perspectives in this approach.⁴

Through abbreviated grounded theory analysis of the structural, philosophical, and social dynamics revealed in four case studies, theory coalesces throughout the passage of the thesis to reveal the proposed praxial technique for Contemporary Ceremony composition as conclusion.

Data collected for analysis includes auto-ethnographic accounts of case studies, artist’s diaries, video and photographic documentation, anonymous questionnaires, and working drawings, all of which have enabled the ‘matters of concern’ found in compositional dynamics to be identified and grouped into ‘categories of meaning.’

Categories of meaning emerged from scrutinizing data through a ‘Lefebvrean lens’ which considered producing the space of CCs, determining how they were conceived and perceived, and charting them as they evolved and were enacted in lived experiences. Hyperlinks in the text enable an experience of a mediated version of these CCs, and further detail is provided in auto-ethnographic accounts of each of the case studies.

This thesis is structured in three books. It honours Wilson’s contention that ‘research is a ceremony’ through following the trifold schema of Arnold van Gennep’s theory on rites of passage.5 The first book, ‘Cosmos – Rites of Separation’ considers how the cosmos of Contemporary Ceremony is conceived. The second book, ‘Community – Rites of Transition’ considers the communities’ and other entities’ perceptions of CCs, whilst the third book ‘Artist’s Self – Rites of Incorporation’ reveals the artist’s material thinking, and from analysis of lived experience, disentangles the praxial technique.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis comprises entirely my original work towards the award of a PhD.

I also declare that due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used; and that the thesis is fewer than the maximum word limit in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed,
Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to pay maximum respect to the Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and communities across Australia with whom I have collaborated, and alongside whom I have composed the documented case studies. This work does not exist without their collaboration, and the invitation and consultation that their Elders have afforded me. In particular Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy and N’arweet Carolyn Briggs have been generous and loving guides throughout this rite of passage, and have contributed much to enable this research. I also pay my respect to those communities in South Africa with whom I collaborated on Quiet Emergency and acknowledge with much fondness my two co-devisors: Johannesburg based performance artist Anthea Moys, and Zimbabwean choreographer Gilbert Douglas (my husband and creative partner since 2011). Without these communities’ and individual’s contributions there can be no Contemporary Ceremony. Much time, talent and generosity has been afforded me, and these projects and the friendships we have forged are precious to me.

In the writing of this thesis, the encouragement and support of peers, students and colleagues has been enduring and invaluable. Special mention must go to ‘Draf’ – Robert Draffin artist, partner in pedagogic ludicity and liminal theatre maker extraordinaire with whom we had many rich ritual conversations; Dr. Roger Alsop, who graciously and most excellently took up my supervision after the dissolution in 2016 of the Department I worked and studied under (Centre for Cultural Partnerships, VCA), Roger’s keen and discerning judgement has been invaluable in completing this thesis, and his encouragement has been unswerving; Professor Sue Baker, who graciously took up my co supervision after the closure of CCP; Dr. Lachlan MacDowell and Dr. James Oliver, (both former CCP) both supervisors and guides in the earlier stages of my research who offered many challenging and rich conversations, insights and some excellent resources; Professor Ron Grimes, who kindly offered some invaluable research advice and support in the early days of this project; Dr. Michelle Evans – long-time friend and colleague who encouraged me towards Indigenous research methodologies in interpreting my work; PhD peers from the CCP and wider VCA; Fay Ball and Dean Stewart, who took me and my students ‘Walkin’ Birrarung’ – an oral history tour offering an immersive and informative reimagining of the city of Melbourne from an Indigenous gaze. We made these walks every year – sometimes twice a year – over ten years. I learned something new each time I walked the Birrarung with them and their generosity and skill in sharing knowledge of country has been inspirational.
The mentorship and friendship of Bundjalung Widjabul woman Rhoda Roberts (a major force of creative directing and producing in Indigenous Arts and Media in Australia), has been hugely significant in the evolution of the case studies in this thesis. I was head of Rhoda’s ceremonies team for many years at *The Dreaming International Indigenous Arts Festival* and worked with her on many other prestigious events across the country. Rhoda taught me much about the art of ceremony making with Indigenous communities – ‘doing ceremonial business’ – in our years of working together. This included her sharing knowledge of protocols and their diversity, the practice of taking time for deep listening and consultation with Elders (from Indigenous communities in Australia and those from abroad), and her attention to details to make sure everyone was cared for and accommodated, according to both ‘traditional’ as well as ‘contemporary’ needs – which was as much part of ceremony making as the ‘event’ itself.

Thanks must be given to Narangga (Yorke Peninsula) and Kaurna (Adelaide Plains) man, Jacob Boehme who has taught me much about the importance of dancing sovereignty. He and I have weathered many events and projects, and, in some contexts find the need to remind ourselves of the complexities of ritualised (and real) relationships. Without Jacob’s ‘no-bull-shit’ attitude, ability to laugh at political correctness, intelligence, artistry and passion for culture, much of the practical work contained in this thesis could never have come into being. My debt to him as friend, brother, colleague, artist, and ‘poison cuz,’ is a big one and his presence in my life greatly treasured.

Tania Bosak, respected Ta-ke-tina practitioner, teacher and musician worked alongside me on the musical direction of many CCs. Tania’s ability to shift from the ridiculous to the sublime is deeply appreciated and her deep and enduring friendship and support of my work is cherished. Tania’s support and artistry have given many of these works their heartbeat. Mahony Maia Keily and Meme Macdonald require gratitude and honouring – both are ritual makers whose experience and practice has impacted my own. They are sisters in many ritual endeavours and we have held many a firetorch and gathered gum leaves together over many years. Former colleague and mentor Neil Cameron – acknowledged in the body of the text – deserves mention and thanks for years of practice and discussion on all things ceremonial.

On a domestic front, deepest gratitude to Natalie Davey, Rori Davey and Kuda the dog – for being loving patrons in having Gilbert and I to stay in their bungalow for many years – without whose support this thesis would never be written. Gardening and dog wrangling were a delight to gift in return. Aven Hodgess, dear sister in art and valued interlocutor in many of the deeper aspects of
art, belonging, ritual and reflexivity. Her keen intellect and willingness to churn through gnarly questions is greatly appreciated. Bernard Nagle, dear friend and long-time partner who was part of making many of these ceremonies, who was with me during some of life’s most profound ones, and whose kindness and insight is invaluable deserves honouring. Thanks too to Susan Purdy, and pups Stan and Dolly – their country retreat was an oasis of loveliness wherein much writing could happen.

Gratitude is immense for my familial circle; my dear husband Gilbert Douglas has endured years of a cranky and often emotional thesis-wrangling partner. Gilbert’s support is beyond words, and his enduring love and faith have kept me sane – there are not words for my appreciation of his kindness, commitment and support. His two daughters Nyaradzo and Thelma, now living with us in Australia, have had to bear the brunt of my lack of time and demands, and have been patient, encouraging and understanding. Laika – my dear pup – has not been quite as understanding. But her playful insistence on daily walks has taken me back into the bush each day, reminding me to be alert to the world of Entities around me. She is patiently waiting now, as I write.

Finally, my deep gratitude to my ancestors – who live on within me …

Malcolm and Ruth, Elspeth and Dorothy – I dedicate this thesis to you – with all my love.
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Preamble

Respect, Responsibility and Reciprocity

Before anything else, there is a ritual to enact – a ‘breaking of ground.’ It may have little to do with the rites of current-day academia, but the ritual practice of acknowledgement has precedence that stretches back in time. There are protocols this entire thesis is governed by, and which must, be applied; even if restricted to ‘performative utterances’ constrained by text.

I respectfully acknowledge Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy, senior elder of the Wurundjeri Ballock of the Woiwurrung peoples, and N’arweet Carolyn Briggs, senior elder of the Yallukit Wilam of the Boonwurrung. From Freshwater and Saltwater peoples these women are traditional owners and custodians of central Melbourne, on whose lands I work and have lived.

Both of these women have guided me, collaborated with me, and taught me about local Indigenous culture. I have been taught that the Creator spirit ‘on country’ travels in the form of a great wedge tailed eagle Bunjil, and his companion Waa the black raven, is both messenger and protector of the waterways. At night, Bunjil transforms to take the form of a star, known to Western Astronomy as Altair – ‘the flying eagle.’ Exacting and precise, an Indigenous tradition of astronomy has guided the night-time survival of the Kulin nations for millennia. I have learned that health; wellbeing, spirituality, and identity are interconnected in a holistic pattern in which land is acknowledged as sacred.

I am not an Indigenous Australian. I am one of the ‘settlers’ – an invader – inhabiting an “embodied and emplaced awareness of ‘being in Indigenous sovereignty.’” In accordance with protocol I further qualify my relationship to this country, owning both my privilege and my whiteness, in an:

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6 Karen Martin, “Please Knock before You Enter: An Investigation of How Rainforest Aboriginal People Regulate Outsiders and the Implications for Western Research and Researchers” (James Cook University, 2006). Of late, scholars have championed as ethical imperatives, the acknowledgement of traditional custodians in academic texts and the telling of one’s own story.

7 Refer: Book Two Chapter Five: Protocols, Permission and Ethical Research


9 Refer Glossary


“anti-colonial construction” of my “non-aboriginal self.” As newcomer, it is important for me to pay my respects and to take time to acknowledge Elders: past, present, and future.

It is of paramount importance to respect the land consciously and actively, and all ‘Entities’ who dwell here. It is vital to protocol, and in awareness of the ‘new climactic regime,’ that I ‘care for country.’ In doing so, core values of respect and reciprocity, equality and responsibility – vital to survival and protection – must be bound and guided by spirit and integrity. This credo has sustained an ancient and enduring civilization, and one that surely charts for us newcomers: ‘how to be here’ and perhaps if we embrace these concerns more deeply, ‘how to live.’

I have been taught that I am welcome here, if I obey the laws of Bunjil. To obey these laws is simple, even straightforward, but they have been much abused since colonisation. I am asked to do two things: to behave in a way that does not ‘harm the land,’ nor ‘the children of the land.’ I am offered with generosity all that this land offers, ‘from the tips of the trees to the roots in the earth.’ Such beneficence in the face of colonial devastation is humbling.

Recognition and paying respect as ritual forms require commitment to do their work; otherwise we risk prefacing public events with tokenistic, ‘politically correct’ prologues. Without sincere consideration and intent, these ceremonial gestures risk becoming meaningless. The practice of ‘deep listening’ or ‘dadirri’ – listening to self and other entities and always to the land – is a vital part of this process. Shawn Wilson in Research is Ceremony, urges us to perceive of research beyond the academy, challenging researchers to consider that:

The source of a research project is the heart–mind of the researcher, and ‘checking your heart’ is a critical element in the research process. The researcher insures that there are no negative or selfish motives for doing the research, because that could bring suffering upon

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8 ibid.
14 Martin, 3.
15 Refer Zeitgeist: the Anthropocene
17 Both Elders have taught me this in word and deed.
18 N’arweet Carolyn Briggs, Senior Elder, Boonwurrung uses this phrase repeatedly in her Welcomes to Country.
19 Kristina Everett, "Welcome to Country...Not.," Oceania 79 (2009). 57-58. Everett in her article: ‘Welcome to Country...Not!’ stresses the dilemma these ceremonies present as a: ‘safe’ kind of inclusive gesture of recognition all the time knowing that such claims are not legally enforceable; (in terms of land rights) nor recompensed in other ways (such as rises in health, wealth and opportunities indicators in Indigenous communities.)
21 Wilson.
everyone in the community. A ‘good heart’ guarantees good motive, and good motives benefit everyone involved.\textsuperscript{22}

He continues:

I think that part of relational accountability too is that you are accountable to yourself, not just to other people. You have to be true to yourself and put your own true voice in there, and those stories that speak to you. That is retaining your integrity; it’s honouring the lessons you’ve learned through saying that they have become a part of who you are. The research ceremony is grounded in the community, and with the relationships that are being built comes the recognition that I am an integral part of that community too.\textsuperscript{23}

As reciprocal gesture, being accountable or in “giving an account of oneself,”\textsuperscript{24} this thesis pays “maximum respect”\textsuperscript{25} as a sincere offering in gratitude to Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants who have been integral to process and event of composing contemporary ceremonies.\textsuperscript{26} There are many people who have been part of this journey – too many to mention here – but all are important, indeed integral, to this work.

Contemporary Ceremony is a form we grew together in collaborative, knowledge-sharing spirit. My intention is that this research will fill a gap – and contribute to the knowledge of composing (and avoiding tokenistic) future contemporary ceremonies.

\begin{flushleft}
\vspace{10pt}\textsuperscript{22} ibid. 60.
\textsuperscript{23} ibid. 123.
\textsuperscript{25} Lunga Smile, curator & artist from Lwandle migrant village museum used this phrase frequently during the process of Quiet Emergency – one of the case studies in this thesis.
\textsuperscript{26} Refer Appendix One: My Self
\end{flushleft}
Book One: Cosmos
Rites of Separation
Introduction

The aim of this research has been to determine and chart the compositional dynamics evident in a suite of ritual-art events, described in this thesis as ‘Contemporary Ceremonies.’ Contemporary Ceremonies (CCs) are composed in collaboration with artists, Elders, and the general public, and as both processes and events, cradle spaces of re-representation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in imaging and imagining ‘ways of being,’ together. They were co-created between 2007 and 2014 alongside numerous communities and directed, or ‘composed,’ by myself.

Soft Definitions

Contemporary Ceremonies are site specific, public ritual-art events, and as such, their dynamics are emplaced, relational and multi-modal. They belong to a hybrid genre of art making that I call ‘the art of community.’ The intention in composing them has been to utilise the reflexive potential within ritual modes and ritual alignment processes. In doing so, spaces of receptivity are created in which a reconciliatory sense of communitas is fostered between participants – a sensibility extending to audiences.

Grounded in ritual scholar Ron Grimes’ contention as to the “inventability” of rituals and his challenge to consider a “revised theory of ritual,” this research proposes a ‘praxial technique’ for their composition. Grimes proposes that in “fuzzing” disciplinary boundaries it may be possible to reconnect ritual practices to their “vital sources and tributaries.” With this challenge in mind, this research offers an artist’s trans-disciplinary philosophy and theory for composition. Through an emplaced reconsideration of ritual theory, I clarify and articulate the processes and paradigms from ‘lived experience,’ towards a praxial technique.

I borrow the term ‘praxial’ from music studies’ scholar Alperson who notes a praxial perspective considers art from a “…variety of meanings and values evidenced in actual practice in particular cultures.” The praxial view is emplaced, relational, enacted and multifaceted. I use technique,

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27 The term ‘ritual-art’ has been used to emphasize that these are not civic or institutional ceremonies, but ceremonial performances created by artists using ritual modes.
28 Refer Book One, Chapter One: The ‘Space’ of Contemporary Ceremony
29 Refer Book One, Chapter Three: A Spectrum of Activities Grimes urges for a ‘soft definition’ for the term ritual, enabling a blurred boundary to be drawn around the term rather than fixed prescription.
30 Refer Book Two, Chapter Four: ‘Art of Community’
31 Refer Book One, Chapter Three: Taxonomies of Ritual
32 Refer Book One, Chapter Three: Victor Turner – Social Dramas, Communitas and Liminality
34 Refer Introduction: A Praxial Technique
35 Grimes. 38.
rather than ‘method,’ to suggest an approach to practice that is formed in process and capable of remaining open to change and individual interpretation. In contrast ‘method’ suggests an approach that is prescriptive and inflexible in its modelling. The praxial technique detangles the ‘divinatory’ processes of ceremony composition by identifying and articulating the “matters of concern” influencing its production.

Figure 1: Nelson’s three spheres of artistic knowledge perceived as a Venn diagram

Methodology

Methodologically, this research embraces Robin Nelson’s notion ‘Practice as Research’ (PaR) in which an artist’s tacit knowledge and skills offer additional epistemological dimensions to traditional research methodologies. Analysis of praxis, considering Nelson’s three spheres of artistic knowledge; ‘know that,’ ‘know what,’ and ‘know how’ reveal recurrent patterns and “matters of concern” in compositional dynamics. In clarifying this data, inspired by Henri Lefebvre’s relational theories on the ‘production of space,’ grounded theory methods have assisted in disentangling and grouping dynamics from a suite of case studies. These concerns are thus considered from three interconnected epistemological spheres: the conceived sphere of theory and ideas, the perceived sphere of the sensate and relational, and lived experience – a sphere of the intuitive and temporal. Documentation of the case studies using auto-ethnographic writing and ‘performative’ text, images, drawings, and video reveal the inductive analysis of my “material thinking.” This data clarifies the matters of concern that arise during process and event, and further delineates the rationale for the praxial technique; annotated as an emerging theory.

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37 Latour’s phrase is used throughout this text, Refer Book One, Chapter Two: Matters of Fact and Matters of Concern
38 Nelson. 3.
39 Ibid. 37.
41 Carla Willig, Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology, Uk Higher Education Oup Psychology Psychology (OUP, 2013). 73.
42 Refer Carter in Book Two Chapter Five: Practice as Research (PaR) and research-creation
Research Contribution

This research contributes to the recognised gap in knowledge in the field of ritual studies from makers of ritual.\textsuperscript{43} Importantly it is also a reciprocal offering to the communities who have participated in co-creating CCs. As part of my relational accountability, and in response to requests for mentorship in ceremony composition, this research hopes to fill that gap and offer a heuristic and flexible technique for others who may seek insights into composing future CCs.

Research Boundaries:

An ‘Indigenist oriented research paradigm’\textsuperscript{44} guides this research. From this perspective, key theories in ritual studies, the ontological concerns of post-humanist philosophies, and the decolonising imperative of Indigenous studies informing praxis are identified, alongside relevant concerns of performance studies.

The major fields explored in this research are ritual studies and Indigenous studies, with reference to post-humanist philosophy and performance studies where deemed useful in articulating the concerns of the ontological orientations and aesthetic register of CC’s. “Vital sources” in the twentieth century Western academic tradition include seminal theories by Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner, and Mircea Eliade. Major “tributaries” from the twenty-first century include the scholarly works of Grimes, whilst the influential philosophies of Lefebvre, Latour and Sloterdijk further “fuzz” disciplinary boundary lines and offer a Western Philosophical paradigm in concert with Indigenous research paradigms.


\textsuperscript{44} Refer Book Two, Chapter One: The Indigenist Oriented Research Paradigm
Offering ‘Clews’

Instead of providing a literature review I have placed theory throughout this document. This places relevant authors’ discussions in direct context with the unfolding research. However it must be noted that the first book is the most theoretically dense of the three, and could be seen to fulfil the function of a literature review.

The term ‘ritual’ is conceived as a meta-category under which both ‘rite’ and ‘ceremony’ belong: rituals can comprise many rites, and rites may have further rites nested in their structure. Contemporary Ceremonies are ritual processes and ritual events, so intermittent use of the terms ‘ritual,’ ‘rite,’ ‘event,’ or ‘CC’ may be used to break the monotony of repetition.

To further clarify the development of the research, the text has been divided into three books. In clarifying the significance of this division, a brief explanation of Arnold van Gennep’s theory on Les Rites de Passage is necessary as prelude to a more detailed description of the structure and writing style of this thesis. As orientation to this research, I offer further “soft definition” of Contemporary Ceremonies, the research paradigm, and an outline for each chapter. Before doing so, it is important to note recurrent patterns concerning the challenging nature of this research, which have had significant impacts on the project. As further orientation, the complexities inherent in the trans-disciplinary and emplaced nature of this research require explanation.

Research Focus

Entangling Complexities

This research has been troubled by a number of complexities. Images of the knot and the circle are ones that have arisen repeatedly, and which recur in many aspects of it. At times I have found myself going round in circles, and entangled.

Ritual studies research

The study of ritual is fraught by definitional boundary issues. Ritual studies is an inherently trans-disciplinary field, and as Ron Grimes notes enjoys, “no clearly dominant themes, schools or theorists,” with no one agreed upon definition of the term. Some theorists argue that rituals do not

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45 Nelson.10. “Clew” or ‘thread’ – to follow into a labyrinthine thesis. Refer Glossary.
46 van Gennep.
47 Refer Book One, Chapter Three: A Spectrum of Activities
48 Grimes, Beginnings in Ritual Studies. xiv.
achieve anything – other than as archaic unifying activities – whilst others attribute them agency with both direct and indirect functions and effects.49

However, as Grimes notes, neither functions nor effects necessarily match intentions – an important awareness to bring to their composition. Rituals can and do fail. He notes:

The paradoxicality of ritual coupled with the multiplicity of perspectives and disciplines contributing to ritual studies makes it difficult to say what rituals are supposed to do, more difficult to demonstrate that, they in fact, do these things, and most difficult to explain how they do them.50

He continues: “rituals inhabit physical and social environments that can be bewildering in their complexity.”51 Research into the composition of CCs begins on shifting onto-epistemological sands.

Ritual can be used to describe a broad range of behaviours and functions; from stylized animal behaviours through to a world of different cultural greetings, highly structured religious and civic rites to festivals, family and seasonal celebrations – from collective behaviours to individual ones – the breadth of topic describes activities along a broad spectrum.

According to Grimes there are at least seven modes of ritual sensibility, and most rituals are a mix of more than one mode, so the complexity multiplies. As recourse he suggests we consider ritual a form of web-making in order to “reconceive its interconnectivity and boundaries, because it attends to the relations between rites and their contexts…”52

Further entanglements arise when considering that rituals are deeply culturally embedded, and personally ingrained and enacted. We speak of them as being “in our blood” – that they “cultivate values” and trigger memories by virtue of their “sensory, attention-grabbing” qualities.53 The study of ritual composition therefore requires scrutinising ontological perspectives via a flexible lens, as Grimes states:

Ritual studies research is not only descriptive and analytical but also personal. It is not only theoretical; it is also political. It is not only about principles, rules, and guidelines but also about encounters, stories, improvisations, and performances.54

50 ibid. 301.
51 ibid. 40.
52 ibid. 181.
53 ibid. 325.
54 ibid. 36.
Attempting to chart each of these ‘matters of concern’ means that the research space is dynamic and demanding. Again Grimes notes: “Kinaesthetically conceived, ritual is the act of stepping in to be, whereas theory is the stepping back to know…”55

Grimes cautions the researcher that fractal patterns can arise in theorising ritual. He notes that in addition to the embedded nature of rituals, of rites nested within rites, rituals are also embedded in their settings.56 The cultures and spaces in which rituals are enacted are considered focal determinants in their realisation.

**Emplacement**

Consequently, CCs are inseparable from their context and the communities alongside whom they were composed. In scrutinizing the case studies, it became evident that in order to proceed with an ethic similar to that occurring in practice, the written research needed to be guided by paradigms and protocols that upheld the integrity of this position.

As most of the research has been conceived and enacted in Australia I have used what I term an ‘Indigenist oriented research paradigm,’ which prioritises relationships and relational accountability with participants, audiences and other entities. This paradigm governs the focus of this study, and guides its choice of research strategies. In simplest terms it offers a respectful and relational way of being, knowing, and doing.

The use of the word ‘paradigm’ suggests a lens or worldview through which the research would be tempered. ‘Indigenist oriented research’ is intended as a respectful way of acknowledging the writings of a community of scholars on Indigenous research methodologies, which have been pivotal to this research and its design and intends to avoid misappropriation. The paradigms and protocols outlined by Wilson, Rigney, Martin, et al57 in their writings mirrored my ethos as ceremony maker, and have been essential practices of acknowledgement, accountability, and respect throughout many years of practice.

In using the term ‘Indigenist’ I affirm my affiliation with Indigenous communities and note that my research has necessarily been influenced by Indigenous protocols. The term also serves to highlight that I myself am not an Indigenous researcher, nor am I researching Indigenous peoples. Rather this research is guided by principals delineated by many Indigenous scholars, and protocols

55 ibid. 21.
56 ibid. 256-262.
57 Refer Book One, Chapter One: Lineages of Indigenous Scholarship in Research Methodologies
taught me by community and Elders, as respectful ways of being, thinking, and behaving for both researching, and more importantly, living on this land.\textsuperscript{58}

As a non-Indigenous academic researching in a field that intersects with the concerns of Indigenous studies, and claiming the above-mentioned paradigm, accountability is a very real issue. Alert to appropriation and the continuing abuses meted out through colonization, I am aware of the potential of enacting yet another colonising gesture.

Tuck and Yang make unequivocal admonitions to comprehend the incommensurate status and experience between colonizers and colonized. They warn against a form of “settler anxiety” which “tries to escape the unbearable searchlight of complicity, of having harmed others by just being one’s self.”\textsuperscript{59} This anxiety, they warn, might be played out as part of “the settler move towards innocence” rather than attending to the “unsettling work of decolonization.”\textsuperscript{60}

They note: “Solidarity is an uneasy, reserved and unsettled matter that neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict.”\textsuperscript{61} The practice and research of CC is similarly unsettled.

Aware of the burden and discomfort that First Peoples have endured in many research processes, and that this research project had been at my own instigation, I felt a responsibility to respond to the gift of collaboration, without asking for further lengthy time commitments from collaborators. I continued to ‘check-in’ with Elders and community members regarding the direction of my research, but it became clear that although there was support for my studies, there was a limit to how much individuals could reasonably commit.

Clare Land points out in \textit{Decolonizing Solidarity}:

\begin{quote}
There is a middle ground in taking the lead and waiting to be told what to do. It’s a balance – taking responsibility and not burdening already stressed-out, overworked indigenous leadership, but also taking guidance from them.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

Importantly, Indigenous scholars referenced in this research are not restricted to those who hale from Australia. I have included works by leaders in the international field of Indigenous studies, and recognise that there is a solidarity and concordance between scholars in the ethics, methodologies and paradigms that they espouse.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{58} See: Martin.
\textsuperscript{60} ibid. 4.
\textsuperscript{61} ibid. 3.
\end{flushleft}
When referring to heritage it is preferential to acknowledge exact lineages. When using collective terms ‘First Peoples’ rather than ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Indigenous Australians’ has become the community’s preference in Australia. I have used this term where possible, however at times these other terms may be used to break monotony of repetition, with no disrespect intended in doing so.

With these points in mind, embracing the above paradigm and respecting the limits of collaboration, I have heeded Cree scholar Shawn Wilson’s admonition to ‘tell one’s own story.’ As such, I have included sources from non-Indigenous theoretical and ontological perspectives, being from my cultural epistemological heritage, which I have found to be in concert with the guiding Indigenist paradigm.

**Practice as Research in the Art of Community**

Researchers with art practices that enjoy defined disciplinary boundaries are frequently said to find PaR a challenging endeavour.\(^6^3\) I note a further complication for researchers attempting to articulate a ‘community oriented’ aesthetic: a practice of ‘art in relationships.’

The ‘art of community’\(^6^4\) embraces a multitude of contemporary art practices and a spectrum of concerns: aesthetic, communal and political. There is no one disciplinary gaze. In practice, regardless of the artistic discipline chosen the building of a relational, community-oriented art process is central. What this requires of the artist is the capacity to undertake negotiations with groups and individuals towards the production of art. The chosen art form becomes a relational tool for individual and group expression. Indistinct boundaries require researchers undertaking PaR to draw upon a breadth of disciplines to articulate the constructs that underpin both their art forms and their research.

**Evolution of this research**

As is frequently the case, when in the creative process of making or enacting (or as Nelson suggests being in the process of the ‘know what’ and ‘know how,’) theorising must take a subordinate place in order to allow artistic practise to flourish. In order to create affective ceremonies, each case study required integrity of focus on what I have named the *Heart of the Matter*,\(^6^5\) to do their work. Therefore, the case studies had the praxial technique embedded from their inception in structure and processes. However, it was only *after* their enactment, in analysis of my artistic journals, videos and working drawings, that the case studies revealed their structure.

\(^6^3\) Nelson. 24-25.
\(^6^4\) Refer Book Two, Chapter Four: ‘Art of Community’
\(^6^5\) Refer Book Three, Chapter Eight: *Heart of the Matter*
Paradoxically, it was in their unfettered composing that the process of composing contemporary ceremonies could retrospectively be identified as the primary research focus. Given the trans-disciplinary nature of Contemporaneous Ceremony and the *bricolage* of influences and technologies concerned in its generation, a mixture of research methods has been necessary to reflect the trans-disciplinary rigour undertaken in this hybrid research space.

Methods for data analysis were at first unclear, however, what *did* become clear was that, in following an Indigenist oriented research paradigm, my own cultural and intellectual lineages had to be the focal elements of my analysis. As a result, I do not analyse Elders’ or communities’ processes, philosophies or theories of composition, but rather focus on interrogating my own story as a ritual-artist.

From this stance, the focus of researching compositional dynamics clarified, and the praxial technique began to reveal itself.

Inspired by Lefebvre’s relational and spatial dialectic on the production of space I began to draw, write and categorise ceremonial concerns from highly practical and deeply structural concerns, to the lived experience and poetics of ritual-art creation. In time, this data evolved through the drawing process to suggest that a structured but flexible analysis of the emerging categorisations was necessary.

Utilising Carla Willig’s interpretation of inductive and ‘abbreviated’ grounded theory it became clear that the data I was collecting and classifying, was revealing multiple matters of concern for composition. Continuing to use drawing as a way of “material thinking,” to capture the many considerations identified during designing and divining processes of practice (fusing the ‘technicity’ of ‘know how’ with the artist’s intuitive ‘know what’), I began to conceive of a theory.

As a grounded theory, the praxial technique is considered ‘offering’ rather than fixed method. The praxial technique highlights a spectrum of considerations all of which are open to individual interpretation, personal and cultural emphasis, and the ‘in the moment’ impacts of embodied improvisation. It is intended that other ceremony makers may utilize and adapt it to their needs. In delineating key areas of consideration, it is intended that this research will contribute to the creation of affective and thoughtful, contemporary rites in a range of settings.

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66 Wilson, Martin, et al. have all mentioned the ethical necessity to tell only one’s own story.
67 Refer Book Two, Chapter Five: Lefebvre and the Production of Ceremonial Space
69 Refer Paul Carter in Book Two, Chapter Five: Practice as Research (PaR) and research-creation
On the case studies

The Contemporary Ceremonies that form the case studies of this research were co-creations composed by myself, alongside various communities between 2007 and 2014. They were presented as site specific works in a range of public spaces in Australia, and one in South Africa. As examples of praxes, contemporary ceremonies explored the reflexive and reconciliatory potential of ritual forms. Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants (or black, white, and coloured South Africans) co-created narratives of belonging, recognition, and connection to land in public and affective rites of receptivity, held within the structural dynamics of ceremony. In effect the micro-communities collaborating on these ceremonies manifested these topics and concerns whilst performing them through the act of making and enacting ritual together.

In order to elucidate the praxial technique, as process as much as product, I have scrutinized a series of contemporary ceremonies in their entirety. During this analysis I reviewed each of the case studies for spatial and relational aspects of their conceptual and perceptual dynamics in process and considered how they were enacted as events.

The suite of case studies revealed certain onto-epistemological realms: including those of the ritual artist’s “know how;” the result of practice over twenty-five plus years. Thus, the processual and relational considerations of the case studies are primarily determined from my own analysis, however from an “objectivated” perspective. As Bourdieu suggests, the field researcher must consider: “…her social origins, her position and trajectory in social space, her social and religious memberships and beliefs, gender, age, nationality, etc., but also, and most importantly, her particular position within the microcosm...”

Whilst Bourdieu refers here specifically to the discipline of anthropology, I contend that for a researcher concerned with anti-colonial paradigms, an objectivated gaze, aware of the “…location she (or he) occupies within her professional universe” is an ethical and relational approach. An awareness of all of one’s privileges, positioning’s, and related problematics, is integral to the analysis of anti-colonial practice and the formulation of theory in the microcosm in which it takes place. With this awareness in mind, I scrutinized several “matters of concern” which I identified as foundational from the ‘lived realm’ of the ritual artist’s “know how.” This includes insights gained

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70 van Gennep, vi.
72 ibid. 283.
73 ibid. 283.
74 Refer Book One, Chapter Two: Matters of Fact and Matters of Concern
from concurrent pedagogic practice as a lecturer in ‘Community Performance and Ritual’ at an
Australian University. The case studies under scrutiny, chosen from a broader body of works
include:

- **Song of Ourselves – a meditation on reconciliation 2007 (SOO).**

- **Longing, Belonging, Land 2008 (LBL).**

- **Quiet Emergency 2009/10 (QE).**

- **Dreamtime at the ‘G’ 2010 – 2013 (D@G).**

The case studies reflect a variety of contexts and communities, enabling a considered analysis. For
example, SOO and LBL were both instigated by my concern for awareness of Indigenous issues in
the Australian consciousness at the time, however they were presented in very different contexts.
SOO was the culmination of my Masters in Theatre Design research project, which considered
‘design’ in a holistic sense to include all the congruent perceptual and conceptual design elements
of ceremony creation. This notion of ‘design’ extended to the exploration of the roles and
relationships between audience and space in achieving an affective, repeatable and immersive
work. ‘**Song of Ourselves – a meditation on reconciliation**,’ took the form of five indoor performances
held over a week, in which the audience was embedded into the work from the outset. Audience
numbers were restricted to approximately 25 for each performance and cast and crew consisted of
about 20 skilled artists. SOO was created at the height of the conservative Howard Government
era, six months before the historic *Apology to the Stolen Generations* by the then newly elected
Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, on February 13th 2008.79

The second case study **Longing Belonging Land** (LBL), was held approximately eight months after
the Rudd Apology, and was created with the intention to keep reconciliatory momentum around the
Apology and highlight public awareness of much ‘unfinished business’ between Indigenous and
settler Australians. LBL was part of the Opening Celebrations of the 2008 Melbourne International
Festival of Arts, and was a one off, evening, outdoor event, with a cast and crew of around 60, and
an audience of approximately 3000 festivalgoers.

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75 [https://vimeo.com/95719311](https://vimeo.com/95719311)
76 [http://margiemackay.com/recent/Longing_Belonging_Land](http://margiemackay.com/recent/Longing_Belonging_Land)
77 [http://margiemackay.com/recent/Quiet_Emergency](http://margiemackay.com/recent/Quiet_Emergency)
79 Refer Book One, Chapter One: The National Apology
The third case study, *Quiet Emergency*, was the result of an invitation by *Infecting the City Public Art Festival* to be involved in a residency in the city of Cape Town, South Africa. Inspired by the theme of ‘human rites’ a group of three artists (myself included) co-devised a daytime ceremony with approximately 60 community members, repeated over several days duration.

The fourth case study is the suite of Contemporary Ceremonies created for *Dreamtime at the G* 2010 – 2013. These were all one-off events held in one of the Southern Hemisphere’s largest sports stadiums, televised nationally, co-devised with Indigenous Elders, artists, and community members, and directed by myself. These four events were watched live by over 50,000 sports fans and involved some of Australia’s most celebrated Indigenous and non-Indigenous musicians.

**Intended contribution of this research**

Whilst there is a wealth of theoretical readings on ritual, from a vast array of disciplines (ritual studies, anthropology and ethnography, religious studies, performance studies, etc.), there is scant scholarly exploration of *ritual making* from a ritual-artist’s perspective; particularly as it pertains to contemporary practice in Australia. This research hopes to fill this gap, by theorizing a maker’s praxial technique for Contemporary Ceremony; outlining a philosophy and theory of ritual practice as insights into the experience of co-authoring, directing and producing these works are distilled from a ritual artist’s considered perspective.

**How this thesis is structured**

In structuring this thesis as a rite of passage, albeit an academic one, reasoning behind the choice of division and an overview of van Gennep’s tripartite schema is required. However, in addition to van Gennep’s theory, an understanding of my relational accountability to peers and community members should be acknowledged, as this is also reflected in the chosen thesis structure.

The first book is intended primarily, but by no means exclusively, for the community of scholars and outlines the major theoretical concerns addressed in this thesis. The second book is seen as an offering to the community of ‘artists-as-researchers’ who are primarily concerned with PaR methodologies and case studies. The final book is written in plain language and is intended for researchers, ‘artists-as-researchers,’ and particularly for community members and artists who may glean practical insights into their own ceremony creation from the description of the praxial technique. Each book may be read independently or as part of the whole. This structure intends to

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80 To my knowledge and research, scholarly texts from ritual-artists are very scarce in Australia, with Neil Cameron and Rachel Swain being the two scholars most aligned with this type of work. And in Swain’s case, she does not consider her work from a ritual studies perspective.
make the research findings as widely comprehensible to as many interested parties as possible. With this in mind, I turn now to an outline of van Gennep’s schema.

**Rites of Passage: trifold structure**

Arnold van Gennep’s 1908 publication *Les Rites de Passages* notes recurrent “ceremonial patterns” as dynamics evident in rituals performed to distinguish life’s many passages, be they individual or societal.81 Although written from a perspective in keeping with the intellectual climate of the time,82 his findings are of specific relevance to this research project. Van Gennep’s observation of ceremonial patterns and his subsequent classifications provide a starting point for an analysis of the compositional dynamics found in works of Contemporary Ceremony. Echoing Aristotle’s observations in his *Poetics* on epic poetry plot structure (beginning, middle, end)83 these three phases are, in van Gennep’s schema, identified as performing distinct functions that together constitute ceremonial process.

According to van Gennep’s analysis, “ceremonial patterns” emerged as recurrent dynamics between content and structure in ceremonial activities concerned with navigating an individual’s, and/or a society’s, safe passage through change or “life crises.” These rites were concerned with changes in an individual’s stages of being (e.g. birth, maturity, death) and/or shifting boundaries of social status (e.g. initiation, marriage). All were found to comprise of a three-part schema whose (enacted) dynamic, according to van Gennep, assisted participants in safely negotiating these ontological shifts.84 Van Gennep’s insistence on the importance of these ceremonies’ capacity to safely transition individuals and groups from “one cosmic or social world to another,” and their commonality in phases, led him to classify them as *rites of passage*.85

From these observations van Gennep developed his highly influential tripartite theory, naming the three distinct rites and phases: separation rites (pre-liminal), transition rites (liminal), and incorporation rites (post-liminal). According to van Gennep, *rites of passage* theoretically included all three phases, yet certain rites emphasized different phases, depending on their context and function.86 Hence a ceremony predominantly enacted as a ‘transition rite’ such as initiation would be structured in pre-liminal phase containing rites of separation, an emphasised liminal phase with rites

81 van Gennep. 10.
82 ibid. 3. Van Gennep’s use of the term ‘semi-civilized mind’ to refer to Indigenous cultures and their ontological frameworks affirms his positivist reading of alterity.
84 Arnold Van Gennep, “The Rites of Passage.” 10-11. Van Gennep considered ceremonies marking the cyclical changes in the seasons to also be *rites of passage*, ix.
85 ibid. 10.
86 ibid. 11. “… in specific instances these three types are not always equally important or equally elaborated.”
of transition, and a post-liminal phase with rites of incorporation. A marriage rite may ultimately be described as a rite of incorporation as this is the central intent of the rite’s purpose. However, as a rite of passage, the order of ceremonial patterns nested within the ceremony’s structure remains constant regardless of emphasis: pre-liminal phase (rites of separation), followed by liminal phase (rites of transition) culminating in post liminal phase (rites of incorporation); each phase preparing the participant to undergo the next.87

Rites of separation delineate and exaggerate boundaries, separating participants from a “previous world” in preparation for the transitional stage of the ceremony. This phase of a rite of passage marks the start of the ceremonial process and may delineate the matters of concern that intersect in a particular ceremony, preparing the way for safe passage towards a deeper immersion in the concerns, or what I have called ‘The Heart of the Matter,”88 of the transition phase. Purification practices like washing and cleansing, burning gum leaves or incense are some examples of activities which take place in rites of separation that prepare and orient the participant for the next stage in their passage.

Rites of transition, sometimes alluded to as “threshold rites,” are passages that transport participants to the “new world” order. These rites are often highly symbolic “spatial passages” which both image, and at the same time are, “spiritual passages” in which the new order is reconciled into the participant’s being at the same time as they are physically negotiated.89 Crossing over a threshold from one state of being to another may be enacted both physically and ontologically (e.g. crossing through a ritual portal or placing offerings at a mountain pass to signify passage both symbolically and actually.) As borders in being are breeched, participants are safely held within the ritual structure and process.

Rites of incorporation, are those rites which emphasize the passage back to a non-ceremonial space-time, often requiring the ingestion of food or drink, or the bearing of a mark of difference on one’s person or status. The changes in being that have been psychologically and/or physically manifest in the transition phase now require normalising and to be incorporated into everyday life.

Following van Gennep’s observations, this thesis has assumed his ascribed ritual order by using categorisations of separation, transition, and incorporation as starting points for this enquiry.

87 ibid. 21.
88 Refer Book Three, Chapter Eight: Inside the Matrix: The Heart of the Matter
89 van Gennep. 22
Book One: Cosmos – Rites of Separation:

This book introduces and delineates the scope of the study, defining the social, artistic and intellectual landscapes and fields of enquiry. It introduces the *Indigenist oriented research paradigm* and the epistemological concerns of this PaR enquiry. Predominantly focusing on ritual studies and Indigenous studies, and reflecting on specific post-humanist philosophies, Book One, as a rite of separation, delineates the boundaries of this research. It examines the ‘cosmos’ – the major onto-epistemological and conceived realms – of Contemporary Ceremony. In offering an emplaced and accountable reconsideration of ritual theory this book is the most theoretical of the three. In specifying the tone of the writing and the structure of the thesis, this book orients and prepares the reader for immersion in the next phase of ritual process.

Book Two: Community – Rites of Transition:

Book Two considers the perceived realm of ceremony composition. Named ‘Community’ this book reflects the matters of concern from an ‘art of community’ perspective and considers ritual studies theories for affective and dynamic concerns in composition. This book describes the PaR methodology, its rationale and its methods, and then offers an account of my lineages of practice. Praxis is examined in auto ethnographic accounts of the case studies and analysed using abbreviated grounded theory methods. In examining how the space of ceremony in each of the case studies is composed, relations between the conceptual grounds, the perceptual understandings, and the lived experience of ceremony composition are revealed.

As the transition phase Book Two reveals its ‘liminal’ moment as the point where the three realms of ceremony composition, and the ‘divinatory matrix,’ are revealed and come into my awareness as the artist-as-researcher.

Book Three: The Artist’s Self — Rites of Incorporation:

Book Three draws together theoretical frameworks with findings from analysis of the case studies through an iterative and inductive process. It describes the synthesizing of the praxial technique. Written with an awareness of my relational accountability as an artist working across different cultural spaces and paradigms, this book is intended to be accessible for the individuals and communities who were part of this research process. Therefore, this book uses plain language to reveal the praxial technique and to reflect on its future application.

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90 Nelson. 41-47.
In suggesting potential application of Grimes’ vectors of ritual critique, this book reveals how this theory might be further scrutinized and suggests possible avenues for further research. Book three, in concluding the ritual process, leads the reader out of the thesis and ends with concluding remarks.

How this thesis is written
Practice as Research and Performative text

In order to clarify how this thesis has been written in style and tone, a brief articulation of some of the problems posed by the written word is necessary.

Nelson’s model of ‘Practice as Research’ (PaR) in which an artist’s artistic knowledge, artistic skill and artistic experience constitute distinct but intersecting epistemological spheres, is of particular value to researchers engaged in research in the performing arts. Nelson notes an inherent conundrum in the ephemeral nature of performing art works, which endure in memory and traces rather than as "durable record" — often a requirement in academic institutions.\(^{91}\) Nelson notes that the ‘performative turn’ enables performance to be a vital measure in conceptions of both power and knowledge. As McKenzie notes, the economic imperative to "perform… or else"\(^ {92}\) has saturated Western culture. ‘Good performance’ is interpreted as an imperative for ‘success,’ ranging from products to people, individuals to corporate giants. Performance can also be interpreted as a mode of behaviour, the “living, embodied expression of cultural traditions and transformations.”\(^ {93}\) We perform roles throughout our daily lives, and are voyeurs to the performances of others, whether artistic, cultural, social or economic. Regardless of the arena, performance is capable of, and in many instances, is implicit in being judged.

There is considerable literature\(^ {94}\) supporting the trans-disciplinary rigor of creative research enquiries, and it is my aim to contribute to the field. However, this research does not present an examinable artistic outcome (product) that is accompanied with an equally weighted theoretical exegesis. This project’s findings are presented as a (largely) written text, in which an examinable, live-art performance is not part of the researcher’s or the research agenda. Instead, this project offers a fusion of academic exegesis written as ‘performative text’ and includes auto-ethnographic

\(^{91}\) ibid. 6.


\(^{93}\) ibid. 8.

\(^{94}\) Nelson, Bolt, Gray, Crouch, Conquergood, Mafe and Haseman, Schwab and Borgdorf et al, have all published considerable academic examinations of ‘artistic practice as research’ in academic research projects.
accounts, visual documentation, and various online resources. Reasons for omission of a live, artistic, assessable, ‘product’ will be discussed more fully in the *Methodology section of this thesis.*

**A note about writing about ceremonies**

Noting that writing about the “ephemeral medium of performance” is both a problematic and contested space in contemporary critique, performance studies scholar Nicola Shaughnessy suggests that an element of loss accompanies what might be described as the deathly act of writing out an event. A performance, which had former presence, becomes altered in its passing: an absence, which the act of writing can only hope to memorialise. ‘Loss’ of the performatve, the ephemeral enactment of art-in-process, is of no little matter in an analysis of composition; and risks reifying its form. Loss of the “aesthetic experience” signals the loss of experiencing ‘being’ in one’s “wholeness, wholly attending.”

However, Shaughnessy makes the important note that writing about performance can also be a transformational process wherein remembering and recreating events can offer opportunities for critical reflection and a ‘certain recovery’ of the original work, but in a different form. From an aligned perspective, Tim Ingold in his foreword to *Non-Representational Methodologies: Re-Envisioning Research* challenges the researcher to embrace the ‘performative turn’ and find a “different way of writing” to what he suggests is the “formulaic concoctions of academic prose.” He suggests we consider the act of writing as performatve inscription rather than “an act of verbal composition.” Ingold entreats writers to “… work our words as craftsmen work their materials, in ways that testify, in their inscriptive traces, to the labour of their production…” He continues that regardless of how constrained the writer may be by “… these tapped out words of ours, the beating heart of the tacit continues to animate our movements and feelings, and to show its hand in voice and gesture.”

The challenge presented by the potentially ‘deathly act’ of writing about an event, of capturing the “beating heart of the tacit,” is arguably multiplied for a PaR process and its findings, as articulation of the quandaries of research-creation (conducting case studies, leading creative teams, dialoguing with Elders, divining ritual elements, drawing models, designing, etc.) are often rendered mute by

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95 Refer Book Two, Chapter Five: Why this thesis is in (largely) written form
99 ibid. viii.
100 ibid. x.
101 ibid. x.
text. As Dwight Conquergood explains, these are the limitations of the “less than sensitive register” of the “textual paradigm.”

He stresses that “the non-verbal dimensions and embodied dynamics that constitute meaningful human interaction...” inevitably suffer. Non-verbal dimensions and embodied dynamics are integral, inherent, and inseparable from participation in rituals, so their loss requires their translation to reveal “the labour [behind] their production.” Conquergood reveals an inherent power imbalance, noting: “…the almost total domination of textualism in the academy makes it difficult to rethink performance in non-Eurocentric ways.” These observations present a conundrum for the representation of contemporary ceremony, as both process and performed – or enacted – practice, and for its multi-sited, post-colonial concerns.

Professor of Performance Studies Tami Spry astutely notes that the “crisis of representation” in the social sciences and humanities was “not so much a crisis for performance studies artist/scholars as it was a recognition of a familiar.” The very essence of the discipline revolves around the complexities of interpretation and the conundrums of representation. Spry maps the recent ‘cultural turn’ in performance studies and the ‘performative turn’ in ethnography as a “culture-performance matrix” heralding a “paradigmatic shift ‘from performance as a distinctive act of culture to performance as an integrated agency of culture.’” Conquergood similarly observes that:

“…performance is now a powerful locus for research in the human sciences, a rallying point for scholars who want to privilege action, agency, and transformation (Barish).”

He continues:

…Post-colonial critic Bhabha uses the term ‘performative’ to refer to action that incessantly insinuates, interrupts, interrogates, and antagonizes powerful master discourses, which he dubs ‘pedagogical’…drawing on kinetic imagery, he associates the performative with fluctuation, that which is in perpetual motion…

In these descriptions performance shifts from being interpreted as an ossified objectification of culture to a process possessing an emancipatory and motile valency. When utilised in the research domain – cognisant of the underlying ‘dialogic engagement’ – use of performative-text in an auto-ethnographic account enables a reflexive, anti-colonising scrutiny (of self and other), whilst being simultaneously capable of expressing a multiplicity of convergent concerns; be they ritual theories, post-colonial discourses, or rehearsal space revelations. Embracing Spry’s notion of the

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103 ibid.
104 ibid. 25.
106 ibid. 339.
107 Conquergood., 25.
108 ibid. 32.
‘performative-I’, this text is written with an understanding that the artist-self is both performing the role of an initiate researcher, whilst being transformed in the process, to a fledgling researcher. The ‘performative-I’ encourages interjections and disruptions to dominant discourses and allows for observations and experiences to be (re) presented as fragmentary or dislocated. Disruptions of the ‘performative-I’, such as the one below in green-tinted text, interrupt the writing offering comments upon the research, and footnotes and hyperlinks transport the reader to video documentations, glossary definitions, and appendices.

_Being in process – constant flux._

By way of example, as a result of personal insight and experiences, Spry explains the significance of the ‘methodological shift’ in her ‘positionality’ “…from participant-observer actor to a ‘performative-I’ subject(ive) researcher.” She notes that this recognition involved three fundamental insights. Firstly, she reinterpreted “textual forms as effects of the fragments and wreckage of experience,” which might “rupture … linear concepts of meaning making enabling “fragments of experiences” to be collaged or _bricolaged_ in form. Fragments and _bricolaged_ texts afforded by use of this ‘performative-I’ have the capacity to intervene on behalf of ‘cultural practices that resist linear concepts of time, space and closure,’” in a performed textual solidarity. She notes: “I began to see rupture and fragmentation as a form and function of performative ethnographic representation.”

Secondly, and following on from the prior observation, is that the “empathetic epistemology” of the “performative-I” enabled “critical and copresent reflection with others in transforming systems of dominance… acting an intervention” on “dominant cultural narratives.” Thirdly, that the ‘performative-I’ narrative enabled a construction of the self “…as a motile conflation of social/linguistic effects creating a performative participatory engagement with others.” Spry notes that “methodological solidarity with the other” is constituted as intervention in the “subtle and overt hegemonic colonizing practices of cultural representation, listening for both the silences and the songs of subjugation.” Thus, according to Spry: “A researcher embodying the performative-I positionality is a coperformative participant felt-sensing a hermeneutics of humility for listening to and assisting in the subversion of the ‘soundscapes of power.’”

She continues to suggest that in this way the auto-ethnographic text, interpreted performatively and in “the spirit of dialogic engagement… resists “closure” and offers comfort in the inconsistency and
This thesis embraces the possibilities of rupture, of subversion and of "felt-sensing" ways of transforming systems of dominance, echoing an ethos that drives my artist self to create. It also wholeheartedly embraces the "spirit of dialogic engagement" championing process over product, with an awareness of the limits of knowing in both artistic and research processes.

**Invitation**

This thesis proposes that in order to compose a Contemporary Ceremony the artist must enter into its processes fully: "in one’s wholeness, wholly attending." Aware of the limitations of any one mode of representation of this process, use of the 'performative-I' and auto-ethnographic accounts intend to capture some of the nuances of process in "thick description." Interjections made in textual fragments, images, drawings and online resources create alternative dialogues and signal alternative epistemologies within the text. With conundrums of representation in mind, resisting closure and fixity, and mindful of the transformations Shaughnessy suggests, this thesis is written as the ceremony and rite of passage that it undeniably is: both a ritual object (a thesis), and a ritual process (research) which, in being carried out, alters both self (researcher) and the researched (the composition of Contemporary Ceremonies) in new assemblages. As Cree scholar Shawn Wilson affirms in his book *Research is Ceremony*: “… research is a ceremony. The purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves.” He clarifies further:

> When ceremonies take place, everyone who is participating needs to be ready to step beyond the everyday and to accept a raised state of consciousness... As one Elder explained to me: if it is possible to get every single person in a room thinking about the exact same thing for only two seconds, then a miracle will happen. It is fitting that we view research in the same way – as a means of raising our consciousness.

With this challenge in mind, this thesis has been structured as a tripartite ceremony in three books. In adopting this form, I have intentionally borrowed from my own cultural and intellectual traditions, primarily utilising Arnold Van Gennep’s threefold schema of rites of passage as a structural starting point.

This introduction serves as invitation and orientation in order to enter in to this research as ceremony. It is also worthy of note that in each of these case studies there has been an ‘invitation’

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113 ibid. 342.
114 Turner, 128.
116 Wilson, 11.
117 ibid. 69.
118 van Gennep, 11.
to create these works which has either originated in the community approaching myself (*Dreamtime at the G*, *Quiet Emergency*) or myself proposing a concept to Elders (*Song of Ourselves* and *Longing, Belonging, Land*) and on their approval inviting communities to take part in co-creating the contemporary ceremonies. Invitation is an integral ceremonial dynamic identified in the praxial technique.

**The tone**

Mindful of Spry, Conquergood, Shaughnessy and Ingold’s insights on the potential of ‘performative text’ to infuse academic writing with a “beating heart,” this thesis adopts an informal tone which, through rupture and fragment, assists in revealing its research processes, with a conscious intention to disrupt “soundscapes of power.” Most importantly, the informal tone enables access to the thesis’ content: to be received as a reciprocal offering to collaborators and colleagues who have worked on these contemporary ceremonies whatsoever their cultural, social, geographic, and economic backgrounds.

There has been a ‘divinatory’ pulse driving the articulation of the compositional matters of concern of this thesis; to put the knowing and the doing found in the praxis into words, and academic form. Therefore, in rethinking text performatively, in ‘non-Eurocentric ways,’ this thesis adopts a creative and exploratory mode of “research-creation.”

Drawing inspiration from Manning and Massumi’s notion of ‘interference,’ acknowledging that there are many differing modes of knowing, the ‘performative-selves’ of this thesis endeavour:

> …to compose concepts of a certain kind, in writing. And in the composing it articulates in the breach, in the fragile difference between modes of thought, in the act... for it is in the breaching that thought acts most intensely, in practices co-composing.

As noted, these ‘co-composing’ performative articulations can be found throughout the body of the academic text – sometimes as illustrations, photos, diagrams or hyperlinks to videos of case studies – sometimes as adjunct arguments in the case studies or appendices; each modality offering their own distinct epistemological perspective on composition.

*Breach – a liminal space in which transformation occurs*

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120 ibid. viii. Their use of the term to ‘run interference’ comes from American football and suggests helping to achieve a goal whilst not directly taking part in the task. Whilst not exactly decoy or diversionary, in the above context of the thesis ‘running writing interference’ offers an alternative, non–dominant voice a legitimate entrée into the writing process.


122 Manning and Massumi. viii.
So, I will transgress here a little and speak plainly and offer to the reader what Robert Nelson suggests is a ‘clew’\textsuperscript{123} or thread – a point of reference to return to should the path become obscured. As previously noted, this thesis has adopted Arnold Van Gennep’s tripartite phasic theory of rites of passage as its organisational structure. The three books act as the clew, presenting a meta-structure of research and ceremony creation divided under the sub-headings of rites of separation, transition and incorporation.

With these clews in hand, heeding Ingold and Conquergood’s observations on style, and mindful of Shaughnessy’s insistence that writing about performance can be a transformational process, I intend that the act of reading it might be too (mindful that transformations can be small and intimate affairs). In reading this thesis, the reader is invited to participate: to enter into the stages of ritual process, albeit in academic form, cognisant that the unfolding text is performing a ritual undertaking.

The Books and Chapters

\textbf{Book One: The Cosmos}

This book comprises the introduction and the first three chapters of this thesis. As illustrated above, it represents the ‘Cosmos’\textsuperscript{124} as a realm concerned with ontological frameworks, and the conceived realm in which representations of the ‘space of CC’ are mapped in literature, primarily from ritual studies and Indigenous studies. Conceived spaces might be described as those ‘spaces’ both actual and metaphorical, which are ‘thought into being.’ The ‘Cosmos’ of Contemporary Ceremony

\textsuperscript{123} Nelson. 10.

\textsuperscript{124} Refer Book Three, Chapter Eight: Cosmos
is constituted by its onto-epistemological orientations, and grounded in theory from the above-mentioned disciplines.

**Introduction:** In this section I outline the intentions of the research, and the significance of the division of the thesis into three books based on Van Gennep’s trifold schema. Included in this section is discussion of the research contribution to new knowledge, an introduction to the case studies, and further definitions. It also includes my rationale for the tone and style of writing, and invites the reader to share the ritual process undertaken in this thesis.

**Chapter One:** In this chapter I further clarify CC through discussion of its background, emergence, and key influences. The ‘space’ of CC is considered in reference to key Australian historical events, specific government policies and community concerns, and in consideration of its ethical and relational concerns. This chapter includes a review of literature on Indigenous worldviews and research methodologies, whilst also considering the role of the researcher in decolonising narratives. It ends with an articulation of the Indigenist oriented research paradigm that has been adopted as ethical guide to the development of the research.

**Chapter Two:** This chapter considers the onto-epistemological orientations of Contemporary Ceremony from a dominant cultural perspective considering post-humanist philosophies of Latour and Sloterdijk. In doing so this chapter considers the ‘meta-matters’ of compositional concern, which overarch praxis. Latour’s quest to “compose a common world” by way of “rendering us sensitive” to the Anthropocene is reframed with reference to Sloterdijk’s writings on spheres and globes and Grimes’ writings on ritual and the environment. Reframed this chapter asks: how might one compose a common ceremonial language?

**Chapter Three:** This chapter reviews key theories from ritual studies from the ‘know that’ sphere of this research project. This chapter charts foundational theories on ritual as processes and practices. It also considers function and efficacy, and briefly charts the changing nature of analysis of ritual forms from 19th century anthropology to the nascent field of ritual studies. Ritual theory is considered for its relevance to CC composition with insights from the governing Indigenous oriented research paradigm.

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125 Shawn Wilson notes: “Dominant is used as an adjective to describe the culture of European descended and Eurocentric, Christian, heterosexist, male-dominated Canada or Australia. The term dominant, like the culture that it describes and the society created by this culture, is not meant to include those who fall ‘outside’ the powerful majority, such people who are not men, heterosexual, physically or mentally perfect or white, or any other people who for whatever reason do not fit in to the dominant culture.” Wilson. 35.
Book Two: Community – Rites of Transition:

This book signifies the second stage of the ritual process and as such is concerned with getting to the *Heart of the Matter*. It comprises three chapters and considers how CC composition might be perceived, focusing on the ‘know what’ and ‘know That’ of ceremony composition. This book, named ‘Community – Rites of Transition,’ charts the PaR process and considers CC as a relational, spatial practice with community collaborators taking part in the art form. It also discusses the naming of Contemporary Ceremony and charts the perceptual and affective aspects of Ceremony composition from a ritual studies perspective. The methodology is then delineated and the final chapter offers auto-ethnographic accounts of the case studies.

Chapter Four: Having ‘set the scene’ in the first book, book two shifts deeper into the *Heart of the Matter*, to consider the perceived realm of ceremony composition. This chapter includes a re-clarification of the research intent and the naming of CC, discusses ritual as an art-form, and considers the ‘affective field’ of ritual for its aesthetic dimensions in ritual practice as articulated in ritual studies and performance studies literature. This chapter ends with a discussion of the lineages of Contemporary Ceremony as ‘art of community’ and ‘contemporary’ practice.

Chapter Five: This chapter outlines the PaR methodology. It discusses the notion of PaR and research-creation, reiterates the Indigenist oriented research paradigm, and introduces the artist-as-researcher in giving an overview of my ritual-art lineages of practice. This chapter discusses the relational triadic dialectic of Henri Lefebvre and abbreviated grounded theory, clarifying the methods of analysis used in this research. The chapter ends explaining why this thesis is presented in largely written form.

Chapter Six: This Chapter considers the ‘sphere of lived experience,’ offering my auto-ethnographic accounts of the case studies, and whilst doing so highlighting recurring motifs and ‘matters of concern’ that arise during composition. In examining how the space of ceremony in each of the case studies is composed, the relations between the conceptual grounds, the perceptual understandings, and the lived experience of ceremony is considered.

As the transition phase Book Two reveals its ‘liminal’ moment at the point where ‘codings’ and ‘categories of meaning’ have been identified in common from each of the case studies, and the emergence of the praxial technique evolves.
Book Three: Artist Self – Rites of Incorporation:

Chapter Seven: Book three is the final stage of incorporation, which brings the research to completion. Chapter seven describes how the praxial technique came into being as a result of pedagogical process, praxis and research findings. It describes the material thinking of the ritual-artist in following intuitive and divinatory paths towards a grounded theory.

Chapter Eight: This chapter describes the three realms of ritual composition: the three spheres of Artist’s Self, Community and Cosmos; the Divinatory Matrix; and the Ceremonial Circle. It steps the reader through each aspect of composition and offers detail to the dynamics and vectors that operate in the praxial technique.

Chapter Nine: This chapter brings the research full circle and ends the research ceremony in presenting the final image of the praxial technique. In this chapter I offer conclusions to this research and suggest future directions for both praxial technique and the composition and enactment of Contemporary Ceremonies.
Chapter One: The ‘Space’ of Contemporary Ceremony

Introduction
This chapter considers key social, political and intellectual ‘matters of concern’ that have influenced the composition of Contemporary Ceremonies as emplaced and relational ritual activities in contemporary Australia. This section includes research from Indigenous studies on Australia’s history of colonization to present day, on Indigenous research methods, and on decolonising methodologies.

Reiterating the ‘space’ of Contemporary Ceremony
Contemporary Ceremony describes an emergent genre of contemporary ritual-art practice distinguished by its trans-cultural and multi-sited concerns. Inherently trans-disciplinary in nature, Contemporary Ceremony is composed from a variety of influences including different modes of ritual enactment, traditional cultural practices, performance modalities, and ‘art in community’ processes. Whilst the term Contemporary Ceremony may be applicable to many recently made ritual events taking place in the public sphere, for the purposes of this thesis when referring to Contemporary Ceremony, I intend to specifically reference works that I have made in consultation and collaboration with a variety of communities between 2007 and 2014. I have capitalised the term to distinguish between these works and other contemporary enactments.

In practice, Contemporary Ceremonies range widely in scale, from intimate indoor performances to large-scale outdoor events in civic spaces with audiences of many thousands.

Reiterating this Research ‘space’
Research into Contemporary Ceremony is primarily grounded in the nascent disciplines of ritual studies and Indigenous studies and considers the recent post-humanist philosophies of Sloterdijk and Latour. Further, being a trans-disciplinary contemporary art-practice, references and influences are made to aligned disciplines such as performance studies, anthropology, and post-colonial studies where they are applicable to compositional ‘matters of concern.’

126 Refer Book One, Chapter Three: Grimes’ Six Modes of Ritual Sensibility
127 These practices include smoking ceremonies, Welcome To Country rituals, wearing of possum skin coats, use of ochre, clapsticks and use of other musical instruments. Refer Glossary
128 Occasionally alternatively called Indigenous Australian Studies
The Australian Zeitgeist: some social, political, and intellectual spaces

Reflecting a “fully historical” and “fully cultural process,” Contempory Ceremony has been inseparable from its Australian context, and the historical and current state of relations between Indigenous, non-Indigenous, and migrant peoples. However, Contemporary Ceremonies’ compositional concerns and philosophical approaches are arguably applicable to the creation of public rituals in communities elsewhere, and within similarly contested cultural spaces. This flexibility in compositional technique is reflected in the third of the case studies presented in this research (Quiet Emergency), as this particular case study was conceived of and created in Cape Town, South Africa in 2010.

In order to comprehend the degree and depth of trans-generational disparity that exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and how these inequities have inspired response in Contemporary Ceremonies, a concise overview of recent history including significant aspects of the colonial past, certain governmental policies, and enduring social attitudes is necessary.

Emplacement: Australia in the 21st Century

In 2017, the Commonwealth of Australia could be described as a vast and multicultural, first world, liberal democracy boasting high standards of living, health, and education for many of its approximately 24 million residents. As the sixth largest country by landmass in the world, and enjoying a wealth of natural resources, which have been monopolized by both agriculture and industry, Australia was ranked the 12th wealthiest nation by GDP in 2016 by the OECD.

However, in spite of Australia’s (oft misconstrued) reputation as the “lucky country,” many have not benefited from its colonization, much less its economic success on the world stage. Australia’s First Peoples, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (TSI) peoples, make up just less than three percent of the population and enjoy a rich diversity of cultures, experiences, histories, languages and geographical locations. However, on each and every socio-economic indicator it has been found that Indigenous Australians suffer the highest rates of disadvantage of any demographic in

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132 In Hugh Mackay’s Introduction to the 6th edition of Donald Horne’s The Lucky Country, Mackay notes that Horne points out the erroneous and ironic interpretation given to his term, which is widely held and in common use. Horne intended it as reference not to Australia’s having innate ‘good fortune,’ but rather that only through luck has the country evolved, given the paucity of progressive thinking. Donald Horne, The Lucky Country, Sixth ed. (Victoria, Australia: Penguin Group, 2005).
133 It is widely agreed that there were around 250 different language groups across the Australian continent, with many hundreds of dialects. It is estimated that 160 languages are now extinct, 70 under threat and around 20 expected to survive in the short term. Refer: Michael Walsh, “Languages and Their Status in Aboriginal Australia,” in Language and Culture in Aboriginal Australia, ed. Michael Walsh and Colin Yallop (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007; reprint, 3).
the nation and are considered amongst the most disadvantaged Indigenous peoples on the globe.134

**Terra Nullius**

The colonization of Australia in 1788 was a devastating event for Indigenous Australians,135 which has had ongoing ramifications to the present day. When he first glimpsed the mainland in 1770, Lt. James Cook dismissed it in his logs as vaguely uninhabited.136 Indigenous ontologies and ways of living ‘on country’137 were not understood or respected from an 18th century Western European gaze. Australia’s First Peoples were dismissed as nomadic, and living within territories indiscernible to the colonizing agenda, were not considered legitimate ‘inhabitants’ of the land. As a result, the country was annexed as ‘Terra Nullius’ or ‘land belonging to no man.’138

The doctrine of *Terra Nullius* is a defining legal principle, which has shaped the history of Australia.139 The new colony, perceived legally as a settlement with no prior occupants,140 was subject to the desires and appetites of the invaders. In categorizing the land ‘Terra Nullius’ Australia became Crown land. Yet, this doctrine also meant that the Crown’s responsibility for treatment of any prior inhabitants was effectively nullified. Australia’s First Peoples remaining officially ‘unseen’ were therefore legally unrecognizable as citizens up until the landmark 1967 referendum. *Terra Nullius* in effect legitimized the appalling treatment of Indigenous people who were at the mercy of the early settlers, who themselves were far from any reproachful gaze of the motherland.141

From soon after first contact to the early-mid 20th century, there were massacres and wide-scale dispossessions of Indigenous people as the colonizers made their way further inland.142 There was some measure of resistance, but the successful invasion brought with it exotic diseases, such as

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137 Refer Glossary


139 Merete Borch, "Rethinking the Origins Terra Nullius," *Australian Historical Studies* 117 (2001). 224-238 Borch argues that it was not until the 19th Century – with the development of the penal colony in NSW and notions of racial superiority evolved during the Enlightenment era that Australia was seen as un-farmed and therefore uninhabited. During the 18th Century, Borch suggests, land was taken either by conquest or cession.

140 Borch points out (citing A.C. Castles) that Australia was considered a *terra nullius* because it was "uninhabited or inhabited by a primitive people whose laws and customs were considered inapplicable to a civilized race.", 222-239

141 Borch, 236. N.B. The doctrine of *Terra Nullius* was upheld for generations until the landmark ‘Mabo decision’ of the 3rd June 1992, when the High Court of Australia decided in favour of Torres Strait Islander elder Eddie Koiki Mabo’s irrefutable case for rights to his traditional lands.

smallpox and flu, which more than decimated the Indigenous population who had no natural immunity. When resistance was enacted punishments were harsh and brutal.  

In 1901 the Australian nation was born with the federation of the states and territories. It was at this time that an act, which has become known as *The White Australia policy*, came into effect. This founding document attempted to ensure that immigration was restricted to a European population, restricting further Asian immigration, and encouraged the ‘outbreeding’ of the Indigenous population, who were seen as an inferior and ‘dying race.’

Close on the heels of the White Australia Policy came the federally and state sanctioned removal of Indigenous children from their parents, an activity that started from earliest settlement through to the mid 1970s and which, many argue, continues to this present day. At first it was children of mixed heritage that were forcibly removed, then an extension made to any Indigenous child considered in need of ‘saving.’ Children were most often taken without warning, bundled into police cars and taken to missions or orphanages. Infants up to teenagers were all seen as being at risk if they remained with their Indigenous parents.

The implications of this mass forced separation first came to public recognition with the 1997 *Bringing Them Home Report*, a nation-wide study indicating that over 50,000 Indigenous children were forcibly removed. Upon hearing accounts of those who were taken, many felt contrition and that a formal apology was vital. However, the then Howard Government (1996 – 2007) dismissed this report as part of a ‘black arm band’ view of history and the nation would need wait another 11 years for redress.

There is much that is positive to report from the Indigenous community’s battle for recognition and rights, but rights were slowly ceded and hard won. In 1962 Indigenous Australians were given the federal vote, then the 1967 referendum determined that they should at last be included in the national census, ensuring that the Commonwealth would take constitutional responsibility for all of

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143 Langton. 41-42.
144 Refer: "The Oxford Companion to Australian History," ed. Graeme Davison, John Hirst, and Stuart Macintyre (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001). 686-687. “The 1901 Immigration Restriction Act was the formal name, and included under this act was the management and control of the movements of Indigenous Australians. TheIRA led to policies likely to bring about the numerical decline, even extinction, of those classified as inferior racial stock, such as the forced adoption or institutionalization of Aboriginal children – the Stolen Generations.”
146 Foley. 13-21.
147 ibid. 15-17.
149 "The Oxford Companion to Australian History.", 72. Term attributed to historian Geoffrey Blainey in his 1993 Latham Lecture, suggesting that the telling of Australian history had become overly negative.
its citizens. Prior to 1967, Australia’s First Peoples came under the purview of state legislations — many of which were racist and punitive. In the 1970s and 1980s many emancipatory and reconciliatory activities and institutions were born (the establishment of the ‘tent embassy’ in Canberra, Freedom rides across the Eastern States, the Wave Hill Walk off, etc.). In 1992, the historic Mabo High Court decision found the Meriam people legitimate holders of native title, which effectively nullified the concept of terra nullius and presented the possibility for successful native title claims to be made elsewhere across the country. However, this decision was not unilaterally celebrated. There was considerable resistance from conservative think-tanks, public media and press which Cowlishaw charts, noting: “The cleavages and hostilities which exist have been historically generated out of specific social conditions, including a body of specific laws which differentiated on a racial basis.” Cowlishaw sums up an inherent racism noting: “A fundamental characteristic of the debate has been the encompassing sense of disquiet and disbelief that Aborigines have rights in land which the rest of us must respect.”

From across the other side of the earth the argument against segregation, as evidenced by anti-apartheid freedom fighters in South Africa, was beginning to slowly garner international attention. However, as South Africa was moving into an era of ‘Truth and Reconciliation,’ post the 1994 inauguration of Nelson Mandela as South African President, Australia was heading in a different direction. For eleven years between 1996 and 2007 Australia was governed by the ultra-conservative Australian Liberal Party, under the Prime Ministership of John Howard. Howard categorically dismissed the severity of effect and degree of the removal of Indigenous children from their parents and refused to express anything other than ‘remorse’ for past wrongs. To offer apology was considered risking a legal quagmire. Native Title Legislation had threatened the rights of the colonial ‘squattocracy’s privilege over landownership and the threat of financial compensation loomed large in the public imaginary.

The National Apology

On the 13th February 2008, the long awaited ‘National Apology to the Stolen Generations’ was tabled as ‘first business’ by the then newly appointed Labour Government. For many thousands of

152 ibid. 45.
154 Cowlishaw. 43-63.
Australians, it was one of the most elevating and deeply sorrowful of days in recent memory. The nation watched as the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd led the opening address to parliament with the now historic Apology. It was a day of national reckoning.

On that day, hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their supporters gathered on the lawns in front of Parliament House and waited, expectantly, whilst inside invited members of the Stolen Generations filled the galleries of the House of Representatives to receive the historic address. Thousands of Australian schoolchildren watched the Prime Minister’s address on TVs in classrooms and assembly halls across the land, whilst untold numbers of people gathered together, in public spaces in towns and cities across Australia, to witness the live broadcast of the Prime Minister’s Apology.

There was a great deal of excitement and anticipation: just how the Apology would be given and received an unknown. To many this day felt like a ‘coming of age,’ an overdue rite of passage for the nation. Indeed, the Apology was a very 21st century ceremony, as media and technologies contracted the perceived distance from the epicentre of the Apology.

We were all there together, waiting in attendance, participating publically and privately, in person and virtually, in an unbounded liminal and hopeful space. Many Australians commented on a sense of ‘togetherness,’ albeit fleeting, as this ritual of contrition was enacted – publically, politically and symbolically.

This sense of unity came from recognition of the long overdue necessity for a formal apology. It was also a promising indication of the newly elected government’s commitment towards a respectful and reciprocal dialogue with Indigenous Australia. It appeared to be a sign of an emerging ethic within the very governmentality of the nation state, and a new chapter in the nation’s history. The Apology contained the potential to alter both the state’s and the individual’s relationship with

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156 Bronwyn Fredericks et al., "Stolen Generations after the Apology," *Frontline* 16 (2008). This journal contains reflections from Indigenous women who relate their feelings on the day, and how they feel the nation has progressed since the Apology.


158 A key stage of ritual structure is commonly recognized as the liminal phase (and/or space). Refer Book One, Chapter Three: Victor Turner – Social Dramas, *Communitas and Liminality*.


161 Here referencing Foucault’s concept on the ‘art of government,’ which is not limited to partisan politics but rather embraces a broader conception of the power plays and grand narratives at work in governing/ creating a nation state. Thomas Lemke, "’The Birth of Bio-Politics’: Michel Foucault’s Lecture at the College De France on Neo-Liberal Governmentality," *Economy and Society*, no. 2 (2001):190-207.
Australia's First Peoples. Unsurprisingly the act of apology has meant very different things to different groups, but this tangible, if fleeting, experience of unity occurred in spite of ourselves and of the polyphony of Australian lived experience.

In hindsight, the Apology has attained a tarnished patina. That day is no longer viewed as the dawn of a new era, for the flaws in follow up (in practical terms) of ‘closing’ the many ‘gaps’ in health, education, income and expectations have left many jaded and cynical about the sincerity and impact of the Apology.162

Age of Apology

It has been suggested by Nayanika Mookherjee that we currently live in an “Age of Apology.”163 Mookherjee has charted the recent phenomena in countries around the globe whose governments, heads of state and religious leaders have sought to redress for past wrongdoings. The media has been full of such stories, ranging from apologies by the catholic church to abused children in their care; the British Monarchy for violating the treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand; shame faced corporate high-flyers for their greed and lack of integrity as innumerable dodgy business and banking deals come to light.164 Apology appears so ubiquitous that it may even be deemed fashionable.

Importantly, an apology is a ritualised exchange. There are preparations and transformations that both giver and receiver of an apology must undertake if the apology is to be sincere and accepted. Clear and careful wording is not just something that Governments rehearse. All of us have muddled over ‘how to say sorry’ at one time or other in our lives – or as Rudd eloquently explained the process:

In doing so, we are doing more than contending with the facts, the evidence and the often-rancorous public debate. In doing so, we are also wrestling with our own soul. This is not, as some would argue, a black–armband view of history; it is just the truth: the cold, confronting, uncomfortable truth — facing it, dealing with it, moving on from it. Until we fully confront that truth, there will always be a shadow hanging over us and our future as a fully

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162 Refer to the following:


164 Ibid. 346-347.
united and fully reconciled people. It is time to reconcile. It is time to recognise the injustices of the past. It is time to say sorry. It is time to move forward together.\footnote{165}

We know the process is one of introspection, of ‘wrestling with our own soul’, and when apology is sincerely meant it is deeply felt. In listening to an apology the receiver attends and awaits that liminal moment – perhaps the moment wherein the words are finally said – but when, most importantly, the sincerity of intention is felt and communicated.

Aaron Lazare examines what he describes as the “anatomy of an apology” in his article: \emph{Go ahead – Say You’re Sorry},\footnote{166} suggesting that apologies require great strength and the successful balance of four components. Firstly they require an acknowledgement of the specific violation, secondly an effective explanation as to why the offence was committed in the first place, thirdly that the offence has caused the perpetrator anguish and is something that is deeply regretted, and finally, the vital ingredient of reparation or making amends.\footnote{167} Rudd’s speech more than adequately covers the first three components but, many argue, falls short in the final degree as the offer of reparation remains purely symbolic. Reparation is the one item of the Apology that remains the most contested in Australia today and is arguably why some consider the Apology to have been a failure.\footnote{168} Politics aside, the act of apologising can ultimately be seen as “an interactive negotiation process in which a deal has to be struck that is emotionally satisfactory to both involved parties.”\footnote{169}

In Rudd’s Apology, he offered a centuries old practice in the ritualistic rhetorical form of a trifold ‘epistrophe.’\footnote{170} To have said sorry once was insufficient – this Apology demanded emphasis. When you state things thrice your words cannot go unheard. The Apology was unequivocal in its delivery:

\begin{quote}
We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians. We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country. For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry. To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.
\end{quote}

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.¹⁷¹

An apology is an intentional act, which can transform both parties, and the bedrock of what many define as a necessity to reconcile. Apologies therefore are liminal moments in which there is a definite ‘before:’ the time of conflict and transition, and an anticipated ‘after:’ the moment of reconciliation and incorporation, where a psychological shift (ideally for both parties) has occurred. However, an assumption that apologies right all wrongs is folly. Apologies can fail and can be rejected, so an element of tension and risk always surrounds them. An apology is not fixed in its meaning as its interpretation can shift and change over time. Sorry was simply ‘the first step’ towards reconciliation in a National context: ably and ritualistically stated in artist Jorge Pujol’s candle installation on the evening of the Apology in front of Parliament House.¹⁷²

Rudd’s apology was historic, it was needed, and certainly for many it contributed to some degree of healing and change. However, even this apology might arguably be deemed forfeit (and indeed has been by some Australians) if the actions that follow on from it do not ‘live up to’ and honour the words offered.¹⁷³

Further complexity arises given the spectrum and number of recipients. The 2008 National Apology has meant different things to different people, without singular interpretation. Many of the Stolen Generations wept openly with relief on the day, but now some years later, private conversations with friends and individuals have indicated that they have been left feeling defrauded, noting that there has not been any significant improvement in their day to day experiences living in this country.

¹⁷¹ Parliament of Australia.
Others still thank Rudd for his sincerity and feel a sense of relief from a burden of years of being ignored and unrecognised. Tony Smith, who in his article in the Australian Review challenges us all in noting: “…it is not the role of government alone to right the injustices of the past and present. Australians now have the opportunity to follow this strong act of leadership and to implement the spirit of apology.”

Apologies are positional and mutable, but undeniably powerful challenges to a society when enacted on the world stage. However, since the Apology, little has changed for most Indigenous Australians. The following statistics are shocking. Indigenous communities continue to suffer the lowest levels of household income, employment, educational achievement, and proportionally, dramatically far higher rates of incarceration and child removal. Within the Indigenous population there are higher rates of psychiatric morbidity, especially in the areas of depression, post-traumatic stress disorders and comorbidities. Suicide rates are on average two times higher and life expectancy remains more than 11 years less than non-Indigenous Australians.

For young Indigenous people in the 35 - 44 age bracket, mortality rates are a staggering five times higher than those for non-Indigenous Australians. Rates of diabetes, heart disease, and renal failure are also disproportionately much higher than the norm. Unsurprisingly, ‘major life stress events’ and significant trauma are more prevalent in Indigenous communities who suffer significantly from repeated grief and loss. Racism and discrimination, such as the institutional racism enacted since the ‘White Australia policy’ and the impacts of removal upon the Stolen Generations, have a noted negative impact on trans-generational health and wellbeing, and are particularly associated with an increased risk of anxiety and depression, with possible associations with diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease. As chronic stress impacts on physical health, identifying and treating psychiatric conditions appropriately is commonly agreed to be of paramount importance in improving overall health outcomes. A holistic approach to health and wellbeing is

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174 Smith., 4.
176 ibid. 13.
178 "Australia’s Health 2016," ed. Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (online: Australian Government, 2016). http://www.aihw.gov.au/australias–health/2016/in–brief/health–inequality/"Indigenous Australians are 3.5 times as likely to have diabetes, 5 times as likely to have end-stage kidney disease, twice as likely to die from an injury, and twice as likely to have coronary heart disease as non-Indigenous Australians.”
180 There is much evidence to support this statement – refer: ibid., Pat Dudgeon et al.,Canuana., et al.
identified as an essential approach towards healing, longevity and self-determination.\textsuperscript{181} As part of this approach, ceremonial life is recognised as one of the important cultural activities that promote wellbeing.\textsuperscript{182} However, it must be stressed that in no way does Contemporary Ceremony endeavour to create a space of ‘healing for Indigenous Australians’ – although this may from time to time occur in the process. Indigenous practitioners, storytellers, dancers, song men and song women have their own ancient and enduring spiritual and cultural practices, and ceremonies which are appropriate to this task. From the ethical and philosophical perspective of CC, which acknowledges and follows the protocols of ‘being here,’ the ceremonial intention is not to heal Indigenous participants, but rather to engage the mainstream, to bring ‘whitefellas’\textsuperscript{183} in particular, into the ceremonial space for deep reflection.

Whilst acknowledging that the role that Contemporary Ceremonies might play within this critical space may be small, hopefully their practice and enactment is a positive contribution towards non-Indigenous Australia’s recognition and acknowledgment of past injustices and current inequities. In doing so one of the intentions of CC has been to create receptive states in which participants, through ceremonial enactment, feel the invitation to cross a threshold into a space of reflexivity: to reconsider self, each ‘other,’ and the land.

**Age of Reconciliation**

Whilst it is suggested that we live in an ‘Age of Apology,’ it could also be said that we live in an age of reconciliation. Acts of apology and reconciliation share similarities, and their concurrence as descriptive of an era point to some scale of societal shift. Today, many countries with histories of Indigenous oppression struggle to come to terms with the inhumanity of past regimes and are challenged by International pressures to make redress. In 2007 the United Nations (UN) added to the Universal Charter for Human Rights with the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This addendum to the charter was described in a UN media release:

UN Declarations are generally not legally binding; however, they represent the dynamic development of international legal norms and reflect the commitment of states to move in certain directions, abiding by certain principles. This is the case for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well. The Declaration is expected to have a major effect on the rights of indigenous peoples worldwide. If adopted, it will establish an important


\textsuperscript{183} Refer Glossary
standard for the treatment of indigenous peoples and will undoubtedly be a significant tool
towards eliminating human rights violations against the over 370 million indigenous people
worldwide and assist them in combating discrimination and marginalisation.\textsuperscript{184}

There is some irony that four of the so-called ‘new world’ countries – those first world members who
have the most brutal colonial histories: Australia until recently among them – were the only nations
who voted against adopting the declaration.\textsuperscript{185}

A few years later, the UN proclaimed 2009 to be the International Year of Reconciliation, and
according to the Subjective Experience and Research (SER) Foundation, a non-government
organization associated with the UN, the assembly:

\textit{...wanted to pursue reconciliation processes in societies affected or divided by conflicts,
with the goal of working towards firm and lasting peace. The assembly invited governments
and non-governmental organizations to support reconciliation processes in these
societies. It also invited them to implement cultural, educational and social programs to
promote reconciliation.}\textsuperscript{186}

The necessity for redress, promoting cultural, educational, and social programs to instigate
reconciliatory processes, has had varied receptions in Australia. Debates around reconciliation
continue to play a powerful role in Australian politics and are considered from many angles and
agendas. Nina Burridge has chartered some of the contested attributes of reconciliation in Australia
noting that the: “‘unfinished business’ of reconciliation, those rights based issues of treaty,
compensation, self-determination and first nations rights, still remain at the crux of dispute about
what constitutes reconciliation.”\textsuperscript{187}

Burridge urges that good leadership; active campaigns and the education of the nation in
‘unfinished business’ are vital if reconciliation is to become part of the national discourse. She notes
the multitude of meanings that continue to impact dynamics in the discourses of reconciliation,
which change variably according to ideology, belief and political agenda. She notes:

\textit{Politicians, policy makers, church groups, political lobbyists, the media and academics and
many ordinary citizens have had different perspectives on what constitutes reconciliation.}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Terms such as ‘practical’ reconciliation; ‘symbolic’ reconciliation; ‘genuine’ reconciliation;
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{184} Division for Social Policy and Development Indigenous Peoples United Nations, "Frequently Asked Questions:
\textsuperscript{186} Steffen Thorsen, "2009: U.N. International Year of Reconciliation," Time and Date AS,
\textsuperscript{187} Nina Burridge, "Perspectives on Reconciliation and Indigenous Rights," Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Journal 1, no.
‘true’ reconciliation; ‘substantive’ reconciliation; ‘soft’ reconciliation and ‘hard’ reconciliation were and are used to help in defining the term.\textsuperscript{188}

The 2007 United Nations declaration and 2009 initiatives point to the existence of a worldwide understanding that holds Indigenous Rights and reconciliatory processes to be of significance in the creation of Just societies. However, as the Australian context reveals, reconciliation means different things to different groups and individuals, as do human rights. It is therefore important within this enquiry to be aware of some of the myriad discussions that exist around reconciliation and examples of its practice. There has been much rhetoric, writing, symbolism, enactment and attempted definition of the term. Reconciliation remains a ‘contested concept.’\textsuperscript{189}

Eric Doxtader has chartered the evolution of reconciliation from its roots in Ancient Greek literature, through Enlightenment philosophy, to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the present day. He suggests: “The history of reconciliation documents a struggle to grasp a potential that defies singular form. At a basic level, the issue in question has less to do with what reconciliation is than how it can be as a modality of becoming.”\textsuperscript{190}

This ‘modality of becoming’ is a transformative process. Reconciliation is a highly ritualized form, which must be enacted and ‘lived’ to exist. Like ritual without embodiment, reconciliation remains theory if not embodied – unlived and therefore un-challenged. Invention, inspiration, the ability for reflexive thought, and trust are some of the qualities required here. Reconciliation is a concept which has liminality at its core, for as Doxtader points out: “Its defining question is how human beings can invent and express the potential to be (come) by standing between what they are and what they are not.”\textsuperscript{191}

Perhaps the most globally recognised example of a reconciliation movement can be traced to South Africa; where during the late 1980s and early 1990s the movement played a powerful, grassroots role in dismantling the apartheid regime. In February 1990, the world turned its gaze to South Africa as Nelson Mandela, newly released from 27 years imprisonment, stood on the balcony of Cape Town Town Hall and in addressing thousands of supporters continued to champion non-violence and reconciliation as the way ahead for the nation.\textsuperscript{192}

\textsuperscript{188} ibid. 165.
\textsuperscript{190} ibid. 275.
\textsuperscript{191} ibid. 267.
\textsuperscript{192} Mandela’s compatriot Archbishop Desmond Tutu was one of the main architects of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in post apartheid South Africa. The TRC was set up in terms of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No. 34 of 1995, and was based in Cape Town. The mandate of the commission was to bear witness to, record and in some cases, grant amnesty to the perpetrators of crimes relating to human rights violations,
In Australia, the debate between ‘practical’ and ‘symbolic’ reconciliation was at its peak during the Howard Government era, which espoused ‘practical’ reconciliation over symbolic or legislative forms in order to avoid the contentious issue of an Apology. Professor Mick Dodson AM, and 2009 Australian of the Year, in response to then Prime Minister’s stance commented:

Don’t be distracted by notions of practical reconciliation, because they mean practically nothing. Now although issues of health, housing and education of Indigenous Australians are of course key concerns to us as a nation, they are not issues that are at the very heart or the very soul of reconciliation. But they are, to put it quite simply and plainly, the entitlements every Australian should enjoy…Reconciliation is about deeper things, to do with nation, soul and spirit. Reconciliation is about the blood and flesh of the lives we must lead together, and not the nuts and bolts of the entitlements as citizens we should enjoy.193

The distinction Dodson draws here is important. He suggests that as citizens Australia’s First Peoples are entitled to enjoy human rights equal to all of Australia’s citizens. The nation’s failure in achieving this equity, however, is a concern of “deeper things” than practicalities. The flaw he points towards concerns our national psyche. The ‘heart of the matter’ troubles our “soul and spirit” and our willingness to lead lives together, in a relationship of accountability, recognition, reciprocity, and respect.

When wrestling with reconciliation as thematic for Contemporary Ceremony it is wise for the composer to heed Doxtader’s warning:

Fearing the exploitation of its ambiguity, critics also worry that reconciliation can harbor neo-colonial agendas, foster unrealistic expectations of change, and undermine redistribution efforts in historically unequal societies. In short, reconciliation cannot mean everything. It is one form of conflict resolution among many, a mode of human inter (change) that means little if it cannot be differentiated from its counterparts.194

Age of Agnotology

As previously noted, in spite of some advances towards recognition of Indigenous prior sovereignty and land rights, Australia, with each passing governmental term, has continued to fail to ‘close the gap’ between Indigenous and mainstream disparity.195 Many Australians claim to have never met an

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194 Doxtader., 268.
195 Refer Glossary
aboriginal person but just as many offer opinions on how to ‘fix the aboriginal problem’ ignorant and unaware of the devastating impacts of colonisation.\textsuperscript{196}

Paul Gilroy, in his 2006 address in Nuuk, Greenland introduces the idea of ‘agnotology.’ This term points to the culturally induced and deliberate ‘patterned forms of ignorance,’ or perhaps amnesia and denial, that saturate contemporary life.\textsuperscript{197} Proctor, who coined the term, conceives of ignorance as owning a “political geography” being: “A place where knowledge has not yet penetrated.”\textsuperscript{198} He also sees it as manufactured as part of a distinct and deliberate plan. Wherein ignorance (doubt or uncertainty) is “something that is made, maintained, and manipulated by means of certain arts and sciences.”\textsuperscript{199}

Ignorance has many interesting surrogates and overlaps in myriad ways with — as it is generated by — secrecy, stupidity, apathy, censorship, disinformation, faith, and forgetfulness, all of which are science-twitched. Ignorance hides in the shadows of philosophy and is frowned upon in sociology, but it also pops up in a great deal of popular rhetoric: it’s no excuse, it’s what can’t hurt you, it’s bliss.\textsuperscript{200}

As Cowlishaw et al. have demonstrated, Australia’s media, many social institutions, government policies, and political debates are saturated with a deliberate and manufactured ignorance and racism.\textsuperscript{201} Agno-politics in Australian public debate could be described of as endemic, a default position.

In 2017 Australia is caught in a constitutional hiatus. Until very recently, Australians were poised for another land-mark referendum, this time for constitutional recognition of Australia’s First Peoples echoing and augmenting the celebrated 1967 referendum. However, today the future of constitutional reform, and the practical forms it could take, is tentative at best and hugely reliant on positive indicators of public support and bipartisan agreement to remain current and in the public


\textsuperscript{199} ibid. 8.

\textsuperscript{200} ibid. 2.

\textsuperscript{201} A. Pedersen et al., “Attitudes toward Indigenous Australians and Asylum Seekers: The Role of False Beliefs and Other Social–Psychological Variables...,” \textit{Australian Psychologist} 40, no. 3 (2005). 170-178.


interest. Initially intended for public vote in 2013, the poll has been postponed with no guarantee that the referendum will actually take place.

The next few years are seen by many as a crucial time in which there is an acute need to build awareness surrounding constitutional reform in order to keep the agenda alive and current in public debate. Marcia Langton in a recent public address suggested that only through informed, democratic, public discourse will Australians be able to determine what form of constitutional ‘recognition’ of Australia’s First Peoples should take, and whether the body of the text requires major overhaul to compliment 21st Century values. She noted:

This is why I hope a robust but intelligent debate on the issues I have raised will begin. And it begins with imagining that an Aboriginal man or woman is not some version of the ‘noble savage’, but a person who should have the opportunity to fulfil her potential. Removing the barriers to that aspiration means ending the colonial commitment to ‘race’ and the era of indigenous exceptionalism. It also requires imagining the Australian society in which we see each other as individuals — each unique and with a multitude of characteristics. Being Aboriginal in that circumstance would not be extraordinary or contentious or reason for hatefulness. Our status as the first peoples would be a simple acknowledgement of historical fact and our aspiration for cultural maintenance an unarguably reasonable one.202

However, the 2017 “Uluru Statement – Message from the Heart,”203 advising practical approaches for constitutional reform, in addition to symbolic ones, has just recently been rejected by the current Australian Prime Minister. This has placed the issue of “ending the colonial commitment to ‘race’ and the era of indigenous exceptionalism,” on the proverbial ‘back burner’ – once again.

Having offered a synopsis of some historical, social, and political landscapes influencing contemporary Australia which are vital to consider in composing CCs – it now remains to examine ethical landscapes upon which CCs are founded.

**Governing Paradigm and Ethics**

‘Research is Ceremony’: An overview

Wilson’s 2008 contribution to Indigenous Research Methodologies describes a relational paradigm, which champions many of the values outlined by scholars in the previous section of this thesis. Wilson stresses that choosing a research paradigm is an important consideration as it consists of “broad principles that provide a framework for research,” and being based on beliefs and assumptions about the fundamental nature of reality, paradigms are necessarily and “intrinsically

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202 Langton, 18.

203 Refer Glossary
value laden.” Thus an adopted paradigm positions the research as it reflects one’s relationship to this reality – as is evidenced by ontological assertions, epistemological concerns, methodological frameworks and axiological perspectives.

Wilson scrutinizes four major Western research paradigms found in Guba and Lincoln’s 1994 Handbook of Qualitative Research (Positivism, Post-Positivism, Critical Theory and Constructivism), and notes that although the last two share much in common with an Indigenous Research Paradigm, in ethical intentions of research, all four share the contention that knowledge is “individual in nature.” This notion he stresses diverges dramatically from an Indigenous perspective in which knowledge is held to be communal and “…as belonging to the cosmos.”

Thus, similarly to Martin, he notes his disaffection with efforts to ‘decolonise’ Western research methodologies due to the near impossibility of removing the “…underlying epistemology and ontology upon which the paradigms are built.”

Wilson champions continuing inclusion of Indigenous beliefs, customs and values in research. However, for Wilson, these must be considered from an Indigenous paradigm upholding a relational ontology – and its ramifications – in all aspects of research. He notes that an Indigenous Paradigm is cyclical in construction, diverging from a Western linear construction of logic, and that it is driven by an iterative dynamic of relationality and relational accountability. He Notes: “…a change in one affects the others, which in turn effects new change in the original. All parts of the circle are equal; no part can claim superiority over, or even exist without, the rest of the circle.”

### Lineages of Indigenous Scholarship in Research Methodologies

**Dominant and alternative worldviews**

Canadian First Nations academic Michael Hart describes ‘worldviews’ as cognitive, perceptual, and affective maps, entrenched in individuals (and communities), which are used continuously to “make sense of the social landscape.” These mappings, he notes, fall into the two meta-categories of either dominant or alternative worldviews. Dominant ones, being as the name suggests, held by the
majority of a society’s members, whilst alternative ones most often the purview of the marginalised.210 Dynamics of power play a part in the creation and practical application of worldviews in which the notion of ‘worldview’ itself is a thoroughly Western construct. As Moreton-Robinson notes (citing a stream of like-minded scholars), ‘whiteness’ remains “the invisible norm against which other races are judged in the construction of identity, representation, decision-making, subjectivity, nationalism, knowledge production and the law.”211 Supporting this claim, Hart finds that worldview is most frequently determined and defined according to its “cognitive processes” without cognisance of, or regard for, the perceptual and affective dynamics that come into play in its creation. This preference is a reflection of the (dominant) Western Cartesian hegemonic, which accedes superiority of mind over body, and negates (with its total absence) any notion of ‘spirit.’

Hart stresses, however, that in a relational worldview there is an “emphasis on spirit and spirituality and, in turn, a sense of communitism”212 and a “respectful individualism” in which “individuals take into consideration and act on the needs of the community as opposed to acting on self interest alone.”213 He goes on to describe the spiritual dimension as one that is intimately interconnected with the “physical realm” and as such is perceived to be in a reciprocal relationship of influence with it.214 Indigenous epistemologies are most evidently inflected with this spiritual dimension in storytelling (as pedagogic tool) where its expression emerges and “is garnered through dreams and visions, and is intuitive and introspective.”215 For Hart: “Indigenous epistemology arises from the interconnections between the human world, the spirit, and inanimate entities.”216

However, Indigenous epistemologies also include “perceptual experiences,” a concept which requires some explication beyond mainstream usage. Perception, Hart reminds us, has been defined as “…the extraction and use of information about one’s environment (exteroception) and one’s own body (interoception).”217 Indigenous notions of perception, he explains, extend this definition to embrace “the metaphysics of inner space…a form of experiential insight.”218 This metaphysical alignment suggests that divinatory ways of knowing are integral to Indigenous

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210 ibid.
212 Hart.
213 ibid. 3.
214 ibid. 7.
215 ibid. 8.
216 ibid.
217 ibid.
218 ibid. 8.
epistemologies, and it is my contention that a perceptive state of relational insight is a major consideration in the composition of Contemporary Ceremonies. This notion is further explored later in this thesis.  

Scholar Douglas L. Morgan makes clear fundamental conundrums that he finds between Indigenous and the dominant culture’s ontologies and epistemologies. He suggests that the “heart of the problem” can be found in the Western scientific tradition’s inability to account for all phenomena and experiences of ‘reality’ through scientific analysis. Morgan contends that Western culture’s economic and scientific growth have occurred as a direct result of their colonial plundering of Indigenous people’s natural and physical resources; a continuing dispossession and detriment to these communities. Contiguous with this plunder is the appropriation of traditional wisdoms and “local knowledge” (use of medicinal herbs, hunting animals, etc.) to enable survival “in environments alien to Western understanding.” Morgan asserts that the “encompassing body of knowledge” found in Indigenous epistemologies from countless generations of emplaced application, has commonly been “widely rejected or devalued as little more than witchcraft or sorcery.”

Morgan points out that in spite of recent findings in modern physics in which “a reality which is interconnected and dynamic” is thought to exist, the “absolutist, mechanistic” notions of a Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm continue to pervade “nearly every aspect of Western ontological and epistemological beliefs about the world and people’s interactions in it.” This he stresses creates “logical inconsistencies” related to Western perceptions of time and the nature of intuition. Along with an abstract and linear perception of time, Morgan observes that most languages in the West are “tensed” as past, present, or future. He argues that the notion of linear time, in which the present is conceived as “moving across a space-like dimension results in a confusing and inconsistent ontology” that wrestles between fatalism (past events and future ones are unchangeable – thus logically also present ones) and an individual’s agency to shape their future via the “logic” of cause and effect and “free will” (a major premise of Western thought). He neatly

\[\text{Refer Divination – knowing what}\]


\[\text{ibid. 39.}\]

\[\text{ibid. 37.}\]

\[\text{ibid. 37.}\]

\[\text{ibid. 39.}\]

\[\text{ibid.}\]
debunks arguments and ontologies that, housed in mainstream white privilege, have remained largely unchallenged.

According to Morgan, a “spiritual paradox” can be identified in the gulf between Western science and Western religion and demonstrates the flaw in separating the spiritual from the physical. Morgan proposes that science fails in its inability to prove or disprove ‘God’s’ (or spirituality’s) existence through empirical measurement, whilst Western religion fails in its ability to be validated by science (its current post-Enlightenment ontological anchor), and thus must be deemed to be of “no influence on people’s lives.” He deems such inconsistencies as the result of a “compartmentalized” thinking typical of a Western mechanistic view of the universe, which affirms definitional boundaries and taxonomic thinking. Morgan wryly notes that such mechanistic thinking, “…leads to its own negation and an ontology of interconnectedness, similar to Indigenous understandings of ‘reality.’”226 Indigenous thinking, he contends is “…mostly holistic and contextual” wherein:

Identity, place, time, knowledge, spirituality, learning and assessment are all inseparable aspects of each other. By contrast, Western culture remains largely committed to a reductionist, mechanistic worldview in which reality is divisible and knowable in terms of discrete things.227

Morgan observes that recent contributions by postmodernism, post colonialism, and feminism, (among others), have done much to erode the hegemonic order of Western science’s “concrete conceptions of reality.” He remarks: “It is little wonder then, that the dissatisfaction with Western science led to an appreciation of Indigenous wisdoms and knowledges – systems which make no distinctions between the fields of understanding of the physical and spiritual.”228

It becomes clear that Morgan’s description of a research paradigm does not labour under the “logical inconsistencies” of mainstream taxonomic boundaries, but is capable of embracing existence as a dynamic, multivalent and interconnected reality.

In conclusion Morgan champions a philosophical transformation in higher education institutions: calling for culturally sensitive and flexible structures in academia, capable of embracing Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. Morgan encourages a “cross-cultural challenge” to embrace diversity in methodological research paradigms, sagely and somewhat ironically noting: “If modern

226 ibid. 46.
227 ibid. 44.
228 ibid. 43.
physics is any guide to the nature of reality, then there is no objective position from which to evaluate the cultural beliefs of others.”

**Indigenous Research Methodologies**

According to Wilson, Indigenist Research revolves cyclically in a relationally focused ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology. Other leaders in the field of Indigenous studies and research methodologies now require respectful mention given the significance of their contributions.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s influential book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, first printed in 1999, articulates many of the concerns (for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars) that are inherent in the research environment. Smith notes an ‘orientalising’ compulsion prevalent in Western discourses; where ideas about the ‘other’ are conjured from the interchange of the “formal and scholarly and the informal, imaginative, and anecdotal” constructions within the research environment. Quoting Edward Said’s contention that such processes of knowledge construction are upheld by “institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles,” Smith argues for a systemic rethinking of how Indigenous peoples and their ontologies and epistemologies have been traditionally framed by mainstream institutions. Research, she stresses, “…is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized.” As such, the decolonizing research project is not solely intended to deconstruct Western scholarship in order to give voice to Indigenous ways of knowing and being, but to “address social issues within the wider framework of self determination, decolonization and social justice.” Smith urges: “To resist is to retrench in the margins, retrieve what we were and remake ourselves. The past, our stories local and global, the present, our communities, cultures, languages and social practices – all may be spaces of marginalisation, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope.”

Lester-Irabinna Rigney, a significant progenitor of Indigenous Research Methodology in Australia, contextualises and charts the rise of what he terms “a renaissance regarding Aboriginal intellectual life,” noting that it has only been since the 1990s that Indigenous participation has been part of the Australian intellectual landscape. He suggests the change is one from being “scientific object to

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229 ibid. 47.
230 Wilson
232 ibid.
233 ibid. 4.
234 ibid.
scholars of science investigation.” Rigney, (citing Homi Bhabha), alerts the reader to the “epistemic violence” and what he terms an “intellectual nullius” imposed upon Indigenous peoples, in which traditional knowledges, cultural, and intellectual traditions and their methods of transmission are dismissed as invalid or illegitimate. Rigney urges the ongoing need for “quiet methodological revolution” and intellectual emancipation from the dominant mindset. His writings from the mid 1990s, unashamedly political, champion what he perceives as an “Indigenous epistemic revolution,” which, being alert to the hegemonic mechanisms of mainstream discourses, is “grounded in the Indigenous struggle for self-determination and sovereignty.”

Rigney offers three tenets, “embedded in the Indigenous Australian experience,” for an Indigenist Research Methodology. He defines this specifically as a “strategy for Indigenous research by Indigenous peoples, for Indigenous peoples, and in the interests of Indigenous peoples.” These “core, inter-related principles: Resistance (as the emancipatory imperative); political integrity; and privileging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices,” were moves towards Rigney’s goal to create visible, emancipatory, counter-narratives capable of articulating “process-centred” Indigenous Australian intellectual praxis and research approaches, and Rigney’s hope for a “non-neo-colonial future.”

Quandamooka, Noonuccal scholar Karen Martin has similarly been a significant and acclaimed voice in the articulation and emancipation of Indigenous knowledge systems and research methodologies. Within the first pages of her 2003 paper: Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing, Martin observes that certain cultural protocols need to be addressed before proceeding with her academic argument, and thus offers a personal introduction in which she notes that she is “claiming and declaring my genealogy, my ancestry, and my position as researcher and author.” Martin cites fellow Indigenous scholar Aileen Moreton Robinson’s explanation of this cultural imperative on meeting – whether in the confines of the spoken or the textual: “The protocol of introducing oneself to other Indigenous people is to provide information about one’s cultural...”

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236 ibid.
237 ibid. 7.
238 ibid. 10.
239 ibid. 8.
240 ibid. 8-10.
241 ibid.
242 Martin. 2-3.
243 Martin. 2-3.
244 Martin.
245 ibid. 3.
location, so that connection can be made on political, cultural and social grounds and relations established." 246

This protocol, enacted by Martin in written form, can be witnessed in Indigenous community members’ interactions across Australia wherein strangers meet, and ask: “Where you from?”

The protocol of introducing myself with ancestral particulars is one I use in commencing each of the classes, and each of the projects I work on. When asking participants to disclose heritage and other aspects of their identities (not simply name and ancestry) there is often a transformative effect on a group, as intimate stories are shared and family histories unveiled. Revealing a private aspect of self to a cohort can be both challenging and a delight. It is often a humbling experience for all concerned, as one listens and pays witness to revelations about relationship to ancestry. Participants often become aware of an identity that has coalesced across millennia. We find we are never really alone, but embody as echo our ancestors and our cultural located–ness. We identify traces of identity – sometimes as much in their negation or absence as in their apparent resonance. By locating one’s self (present) within a genealogy or lineage, the individual reconsiders identity as a shared connection with ancestors (past) and views themselves as hybrid - of varied and nuanced cultural lineages.

I often ask students to consider the following phrase, by the late Birri Gubba and Kunggalu elder, performer, playwright and poet, Aunty Maureen Watson:

“We are the ancestors of tomorrow.” 247

In this simple sentence past, present and future collide and dispel linear conceptions of time. The importance of becoming a responsible elder is made abundantly and simply clear.

Whilst acknowledging Rigney’s considerable contribution to Indigenist Research, Martin diverges from Rigney’s “position of resistance” and what she sees as a “reactive” stance towards Western research frameworks, instead drawing upon what she terms the “strength of my Aboriginal heritage.” She continues: “Therefore, I research from the strength and position of being Aboriginal and viewing anything Western as ‘another,’ alongside and amongst Western worldviews and realities.” 248

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246 ibid. 2.
247 Aunty Maureen Watson gave permission for Neil Cameron Productions (NCP) to use this phrase in one of our fire events at the Woodford Folk Festival. Refer Book Two, Chapter Five: The Ritual-Artist’s lineages
A published version reads slightly differently – but captures the same essence: "Those of us who are alive today, we are the ancestors of the future ... Everything we say, do, think and dream is defining what kind of ancestor we will leave for the children of the future." Queensland Government, "Queensland 2020: A State for All Ages: A Discussion Paper About the Ageing of the Population in Queensland," ed. Department of Families (2003). 1.
248 Martin. 4.
Martin expands Rigney’s principles to incorporate the “proactive, progressive and visionary purposes” possible within Indigenist research, and as such she champions a framework that places Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies as foundational to such a paradigm. Martin notes that rather than attempting to decolonise Western research methodologies (which can simply result in Indigenous researchers carrying out Western style research), by embracing a relational ontology, that lies at the heart of an Indigenous understanding of being, alternative worldviews and knowledges to those held by the dominant culture might be articulated. For it is within this paradigm that one develops “an awareness and sense of self, of belonging and for coming to know our responsibilities, and ways to relate to self and others.”

Martin stresses that this worldview she describes is not her sole authorship but an intergenerational paradigm that has been passed on through cultural beliefs and practices over millennia. Acknowledgement and recognition of the inter-subjectivity of experience, traversing beyond the tensed confines of Western languages and the dominant cultural paradigms, is an inherent part of this relational way of being. Thus, it includes a relational accountability that extends outside the limitations of Western linear concepts of time and category to include ancestors and other beings.

For Martin, among others, a relational ontology is not restricted to humans, but includes the “Land … Waterways, Plants, Climate, Skies and Spirits.” Martin refers to these as “Entities,” capitalising their nouns to distinguish that each of these ‘Entities’ are respected and recognised within a non-hierarchical schema. She continues: “Whilst they are differentiated, these relations are not oppositional, nor binary, but are inclusive and accepting of diversity.”

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249 ibid. 6.
250 ibid. 7.
other ‘Entities’ with which one comes in contact in relational and reciprocal connections, enables a shift in self-perception as individual to being one of many, “an Entity amongst other Entities.” She continues: “Through a relational ontology, the connections are restored, relatedness reciprocated and maintained.”

Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing

With these core principles made explicit, Martin outlines the major thesis of Indigenist research in three central constructs: “Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing.” Martin describes Ways of Knowing as purposeful and contextual processes that reflect and reveal the relational ontology of all ‘Entities.’ These varying types of knowledges are: “…learned and reproduced through processes of: listening, sensing, viewing, reviewing, reading, watching, waiting, observing, exchanging, sharing, conceptualising, assessing, modelling, engaging, applying.”

I contend that the verbs Martin has chosen, reflect the divinatory processes of the ritual-artist, who, in the process of composing retains an open and reflexive gaze, a learned way of knowing-through-experiences - alert to multiple concerns that influence the knowing, being, and doing of composition.

Martin goes on to explain that the resulting knowledges in Indigenous knowledge systems, are not held by one person who knows all, but rather that each ‘Entity’ (here including but not confined to human ones) contributes “sets of knowledges to fulfil particular roles” which when operational contribute to the wider group’s function and thriving. She explains: “This keeps the Entities known to and in a network of relationships. Without this knowing we are unable to ‘be’, hence our Ways of Knowing inform our Ways of Being.”

This notion might also be applied to the community of scholars, artists and teachers who contribute their knowing, not just to each other, but also equally to the world around them - often for the betterment of their cultures. The dominant culture alternatively champions hierarchy, with an inherent reluctance to recognise that knowledge is fundamentally communally or inter-subjectively constructed. If one considers the lineages of thought and ancestry of ideas that inform any intellectual endeavour, then that knowledge once publically shared ideally (even if requiring citation) becomes the province of all rather than solely the province of those who have access to it.

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251 ibid. 8.
252 ibid. 9.
253 ibid. 9.
254 ibid. 10.
This “network of relations amongst Entities” that Martin describes, influenced deeply by context, affect ‘Ways of Being’ which must evolve as relationships and contexts shift over time. However mutable in application, the fundamental tenets of this relational ontology remain constant. Martin citing Moreton-Robinson once again describes this state of being: “One experiences the self as part of others and that others are part of the self; this is learnt through reciprocity, obligation, shared experiences, coexistence, cooperation and social memory.”

Central to this understanding is the practice of drawing upon what has been “taught from…Elders and family members as proper forms of conduct” which Martin suggests necessarily shapes indigenous ‘Ways of Doing.’ She continues: “Our Ways of Doing are a synthesis and an articulation of our Ways of Knowing and Ways of Being. These are seen in our languages, art, imagery, technology, traditions and ceremonies, land management practices, social organisation and social control.”

In spite of the ongoing devastation of colonisation and an involuntary immersion in Western paradigms, Martin contends that Indigenous Australians never relinquished the “essence of our Ways of Knowing and Ways of Being.” She contends that this can be seen in lived experience as “reflected in our Ways of Doing.” The individual, guided by these relational constructs, therefore becomes tangible proof of this embodied ontology in spite of the pressures of colonisation. Even where forms of behaviour have evolved to suit the demands of contemporary living, these ‘Ways’ dominate most Indigenous individuals’ experience.

Similarly to other Indigenist scholars, Martin observes that the notion of ‘research’ is a foreign activity to an Indigenous worldview and a purely Indigenous research framework thus an oxymoron. However, by way of articulating an Indigenist Research Methodology that is aligned with Indigenous onto-epistemologies and in concert with certain Western qualitative research frameworks, Indigenous researchers can be both recognised as legitimate within the academy whilst doing so in culturally appropriate and non-violent ways.

Martin proceeds to outline where Indigenous and non-Indigenous research paradigms intersect and considers eight constructs of structure, process and procedure upon which to devise a rigorous Indigenist Research Methodology. These include: “research assumptions; research questions;
Indigenist Research assumptions, and every research ‘matter of concern’ and method that devolves from them, are based in a relational understanding, in which the “protection and preservation” of country, of all ‘Entities’, and specifically of the three ‘Ways’ of culture are held sacrosanct. Martin notes that she “is often confounded by the levels of trust” that have been created through utilising an inherently relational Indigenist Methodology. However, she also reminds us that the task of designing Indigenist Research, which celebrates a relational ontology, is no simple or straightforward task, for it requires:

… flexibility and reflexivity that is more than a matter of matching methods of data collection to the research question. Flexibility in design demonstrates the extent to which the researcher is prepared to show respect and responsibleness to understand that research is not a priority in times of crisis, grieving, celebration, ritual or maintenance amongst Entities ...

Reflexivity in research design affords ‘space’ to decolonise Western research methodologies, then harmonise and articulate Indigenist research … Reflexivity challenges us to claim our shortcomings, misunderstandings, oversights and mistakes to re-claim our lives and make strong changes to our current realities. Being reflexive ensures we don’t compromise our identity whilst undertaking research.

Martin’s insistence on reflexivity in research design, culturally appropriate methods, heightened awareness of ethical concerns and of personal shortcomings, bound by adherence to relational accountability resounds with Shawn Wilson’s influential thesis that Research is Ceremony.

Ontological Foundations of Wilson’s Indigenous Research Paradigm

Wilson’s research, although focusing primarily on Australian and Canadian Indigenous Scholarship, notes a complicité of gaze that unites many Indigenous peoples globally with a “distinct way of viewing the world and of being.” He urges that this relational paradigm is one which: “needs to be followed through all stages of research.” In detailing how this works in practice, he explains two major conceptual and cultural threads that underpin Indigenous scholarship, which, in relation to each other, form his proposed Indigenous Research Paradigm:

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260 ibid.
261 ibid. 13.
262 ibid. 16.
263 ibid. 14.
264 complicité as it is understood in French as ‘togetherness.’
266 ibid. 7-15.
…1. the shared aspect of an Indigenous ontology and epistemology is relationality (relationships do not merely shape reality, they are reality). The shared aspect of an Indigenous axiology and methodology is accountability to relationships. 2. The shared aspects of relationality and relational accountability can be put into practice through choice of research topic, methods of data collection, form of analysis and presentation of information.267

This paradigm creates a culturally ‘safe place’ where the researcher, their research design, those participating, and the endpoint of research itself upholds the relational accountability that lies at the heart of Indigenous worldviews, and whilst doing so maintains the notion that knowledge is communal – to be shared. Where research becomes or is ceremony, Wilson suggests, lies in its capacity to strengthen and support relationships and potentially to “… bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves,” for to Wilson this strengthening of interconnectedness is the central purpose of all ceremony.268

An important aspect of ‘research as a ceremony’ can be found in Wilson’s attention to procedural details of ceremony and research creation, rather than a focus on product or outcome. He notes, using a performative turn of phrase, that: “… an integral part of any ceremony is setting the stage properly … everyone who is participating needs to be ready to step beyond the everyday and to accept a raised state of consciousness.”269

He continues: “The research that we do as Indigenous people is a ceremony that allows us a raised level of consciousness and insight into our world.”270 The schema that Wilson describes can be viewed as being accountable to all ‘Entities,’ which makes valued and communally constructed contributions to the field of knowledge. This commitment to a relational practice, making connections and strengthening them, requires flexibility and patience of the researcher. As Wilson notes research as ceremony takes: “a lot of work, dedication and time.”271

An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, or just with research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos, it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge … You are answerable to all your relations when you are doing research.272

267 ibid. 7.
268 ibid. 11.
269 ibid. 69.
270 ibid. 11.
271 ibid. 89-90.
272 ibid. 56.
The “space between things,” between people, places, and other Entities, is where relationality plays out its dynamics and creates knowing. This ‘space between’ reverberates among a spectrum of possibilities, from one of distance and lack of engagement to one of intimacy, mutual respect, and care. A relationship with land and environment becomes a pedagogy of place, as knowledge, and ultimately survival, can be found in “caring for country” and respecting its Entities; cherishing the intimacy of relationship and accountability. Indeed, Wilson views the functioning of Ceremony as operating within a relational and spatial paradigm in which this bridging of distances between Entities (animate and inanimate) is a core concern. He notes:

The space and therefore the relationship between people and their environment are seen as a sacred key concept within many people’s spirituality. By reducing the space between things, we are strengthening the relationship that they share. And this bringing things together so that they share the same space is what ceremony is about. That is why research itself is a sacred ceremony within an Indigenous research paradigm, as it is all about building relationships and bridging this sacred space.

This interrelated spatial and relational paradigm (which Wilson suggests is core to many people’s notions of spirituality), describes “one’s connection to the universe,” and thus “any exercise that increases connection or builds relationships is spiritual or ceremonial in nature.” He goes on to elaborate:

Indigenous research is a ceremony and must be respected as such. A ceremony … is not just the period at the end of the sentence. It is the required process and preparation that happens long before the event … it is, in Atkinson’s (2002b) translation, dadirri, the many ways and forms and levels of listening. It is in Martin’s (2003) terminology, Ways of knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing. It is in the knowing and respectful reinforcement that all things are related and connected. It is the voice from our ancestors that tell us when it is right and when it is not. Indigenous research is a life changing ceremony.

A transformational, relational, and spatial paradigm, of knotted and emplaced relationships (with ideas as much as with entities) has become central to my articulation of composing Contemporary Ceremonies. However, there are further depths to Wilson’s paradigm that inform the Indigenist oriented research paradigm adopted in this research that must be explored.

273 Altman and Kerins. 29. “Caring for country encompasses being spiritually bound to country through intimate connections with ancestral beings still present in the land and waters…looking after these powerful and sacred places: protecting their values, ceremonies, songs and stories, as well as associated processes of spiritual renewal, connecting with ancestors, food provision and maintaining language, law, knowledge systems and importantly, kin relations.”

274 Wilson. 87.

275 ibid. 91.

276 ibid. 60-61.
Indigenous Epistemologies and Ontologies

Wilson’s analogy of a relational circularity, that finds the four aspects of his Indigenous research paradigm in a matrix of continual flux, is mirrored by a circularity of thinking and storytelling that is essential to Indigenous epistemology. Wilson points out that Indigenous ontologies, as similarly found in constructivist paradigms, may be constituted of multiple realities. However, what distinguishes Indigenous from constructivist paradigms is that rather than there being ‘external truth’ or ‘truths’ that exist outside of the self, the essence of reality according to an Indigenous construct lies in the relationship one has with the truth/truths. He explains:

Thus an object or thing is not as important as one’s relationships to it. This idea could be further expanded to say that reality is relationships or sets of relationships. Thus there is no one definite reality but rather different sets of relationships that make up an Indigenous ontology. Therefore reality is not an object but a process of relationships …

In the speech of Aboriginal Australians, other Indigenous people are referred to as ‘cousin’, ‘brother’ or ‘auntie’. This demonstrates an epistemology where the relationship with something (a person, object or idea) is more important than the thing itself. Inherent in this concept is the recognition that this person, object or idea may have different relationships with someone or something else. Someone who is my auntie is undoubtedly someone else’s sister, mother or cousin.

These ideas at first may seem foreign to Western ears, immersed, as many of us are in a culture that champions individualism. However, Wilson’s example demonstrates an Indigenous perspective of shared relations rather than of possession, a state of awareness that de-centres self from a role of primary importance, to consider oneself, as Martin suggests, as part of a “network of relations amongst Entities.”

The Indigenist Oriented Research Paradigm

Being non-Indigenous, of Celtic descent, I feel it would be inappropriate to use the term ‘Indigenist oriented research paradigm’ (IORP) without qualification. Being ‘oriented’ is a relational and spatial term suggesting an embodied and emplaced positioning. ‘Oriented’ as here used, hopes to reflect the multiple “matters of concern” in creating research from a perspective that seeks to honour and embrace ‘Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing’ that, although inappropriate to be claimed as my own, resonate deeply with my own. Hart (citing Sue and Sue) urges that it is pertinent to remember: “… it is very possible for individuals from different cultural groups to be more similar in worldviews than those from the same culture,” and that “… individuals can adapt and use behaviours …

277 ibid. 73.
278 Martin. 10.
279 ibid.
associated with another worldview." This research seeks to demonstrate and uphold this position, a position that is echoed by Canadian scholar and artistic-researcher Virginie Magnat, who champions “… the development of methodologies situated at the intersection of Indigenous epistemologies, performance studies, and experimental ethnography.” Discussing her own approach, she states:

The ethical research principles advocated by Indigenous scholars have guided me throughout the research and writing process and enabled me to develop a range of writing strategies to engage with questions pertaining to positionality, lived experience, and embodied ways of knowing. Creating space for such epistemological and methodological possibilities will entail resisting dominant theoretical frameworks that pre-determine research outcomes, and acknowledging that each step of the research process is part of a larger collective journey. How we come to know might then perhaps no longer be experienced as a competition for knowledge between individuals striving for academic recognition, but as a relational process dependent on mutual trust, collaboration, and healing.

In suggesting that the paradigm is Indigenist I intend to stress and acknowledge Indigenous “intellectual sovereignty” over the conceptual basis of the paradigm, and to further emphasize my position of alterity. Wilson iterates that the term “Indigenist” is usable by “anyone who chooses to follow its tenets,” he continues: “And it is then the choice to follow this paradigm, philosophy, or world view that makes research Indigenist, not the ethnic or racial identity of the researcher.”

So in order to describe and use the paradigm, researchers and authors need to place themselves and their work firmly in a relational context. We cannot be separated from our work, nor should our writing be separated from ourselves (i.e., we must write in the first person rather than the third). Our own relationships with our environment, families, ancestors, ideas, and the cosmos around us shape who we are and how we will conduct our research. Good Indigenist research begins by describing and building on these relationships.

In producing research from an IORP, my own cultural lineages and worldviews are revealed, along with an awareness of the inter-subjectivity of experience that informs and shapes them. Wilson suggests that research paradigms (much like worldviews) describe an interconnected set of “underlying assumptions” as:

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280 Hart. 2.
283 Rigney. 2.
285 ibid. 194.
… the beliefs that guide our actions as researchers. These beliefs include the way we view reality (ontology), how we think about or know this reality (epistemology), our ethics and morals (axiology), and how we go about gaining more knowledge about reality (methodology).286

Alert to appropriation and the continuing abuses meted out through colonization, I am aware of the potential of enacting yet another colonising act in adopting an IORP. Tuck and Yang’s article Decolonization is not a metaphor287 offers unequivocal warnings for a focused awareness of the incommensurate status and experience between colonizer and colonized. As noted earlier, Tuck and Yang warn against a form of “settler anxiety” as part of “the settler move towards innocence” rather than the “unsettling work of decolonization.”288 This tendency they suggest, can often be found in settler scholars who “may gain professional kudos or a boost in their reputations for beings so sensitive or so self-aware.” However, they stress that the results of these “… moves towards innocence are hollow, they only serve the settler.”289 They note: “Solidarity is an uneasy, reserved and unsettled matter that neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict.”290

It must be strongly noted that adopting an IORP is not a neo-colonial attempt to ‘legitimize’ or champion Indigenous research methodologies. An Indigenist oriented research paradigm presents both a framework that is culturally appropriate for the praxial and lived concerns of Contemporary Ceremony (creating ceremonies between colonized and colonizer in a colonised land), and an approach that holistically supports the trans-disciplinary and non-dominant291 cultural spaces of this specific Practice as Research project, and the multiple relationships and “matters of concern” that are central to its realisation.

These declarations will be problematic for some and belong to public debates on appropriation and colonisation that are current in contemporary Australia, not just within the circles of academia, but beyond in realms of art, land ownership, culture, copyright law, and the very nature of belonging – and for some the longing to belong. The research paradigm guiding the thesis embraces and encourages this healthy and essential debate.

Alert to the above critiques and the incommensurable differences that they defend, the adoption of an IORP is therefore a serious business, and not to be taken lightly. In choosing to adopt a guiding paradigm that is oriented towards Indigenous worldviews, I am aware that I have a duty to uphold

286 Morgan; Wilson. 13.
287 Tuck and Yang.
288 ibid. 9.
289 ibid.
290 ibid. 3.
291 Wilson. 35.
its central tenets. It is a journey in being and becoming where part of the being and becoming lies in knowing and owning *your own* ancestral story and belonging – and being accountable for how this impacts on all your relations. Wilson outlines the key features as those of "any healthy relationship."

For emost are respect, reciprocity and responsibility. 292

[292 Refer Book Two Chapter Five: Protocols, Permission and Ethical Research]
Chapter Two: Onto-epistemological orientations – a ‘dominant paradigm’ perspective

Meta Matters of Compositional Concern

An important but increasingly common ceremonial practice, a *Welcome to Country*, opened the recent Performance Studies International Conference (PSi) at the University of Melbourne in Australia. Performing this ritual on the traditional lands of her ancestors, Wurundjeri elder Aunty Diane Kerr welcomed visitors to the conference by locating herself relationally, in place. Referencing a complex web of interconnected entities in the scar trees, neighbouring peoples of the Kulin nations, river systems, creator spirits, and nearby sites of ceremony, Aunty Diane declared a sovereign relationship with ‘country’, an issue that is of enduring social, cultural, political, and spiritual importance to her community. Aunty Di (as she often calls herself) ended her speech with the following words: “When we look after each other, and we look after country, country truly looks after us.”

This simple philosophy guides much of this Practice as Research (PaR) project, and the account of Aunty Di’s *Welcome to Country* brings together a temporal, spatial, and relational example of many of the ‘matters of concern’ to be taken into account when composing Contemporary Ceremonies. Therefore, as previously alluded to, I shall now discuss the philosophical concepts undergirding CC composition, from a dominant paradigm perspective. The following ideas presented by Bruno Latour and Peter Sloterdijk I find ‘in concert’ both with Aunty Diane’s reminder to care for country, and the ethical, ontological and relational ‘matters of concern’ that have been identified in the previous chapter: the “networks of relationships between Entities.”

Zeitgeist: the Anthropocene

The PSI conference theme ‘*Performance Climates*’ signals that climate change is of current concern within the trans-disciplinary arena of Performance Studies, and the many modalities that fall under

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293 Refer Glossary

“An Acknowledgement of Country recognises the unique status of Aboriginal people as the original owners and custodians of the land and waters of Australia. The conference is an opportunity for members of PSI learn more about Australia’s geography, biology, climates and indigenous history.”

295 Refer Glossary
296 Refer: Everett., 53-64. (Welcome to Country …Not!) re: the conflicting implications of performing an act of sovereignty whilst it being symbolic with no political or legal sway in real terms.


298 Martin. 10.
its metaphorical umbrella.\textsuperscript{299} Climate change is also a major concern for Indigenous communities globally, as impacts on these communities are expected to be most severe.\textsuperscript{300} It is likewise of focal concern to Contemporary Ceremony, as an undeniable presence in the contemporary zeitgeist.

Latour, in his key-note address entitled \textit{On Sensitivity: Arts, Science and Politics in the New Climatic Regime}, summed up the conundrum of our situatedness, as a result of Enlightenment scholars’ misguided division of nature and society, and the surmised supremacy of humanity. He explains that in face of a nature no longer “indifferent” but “hypersensitive” to humanity’s modernizing projects “… that can master and possess us without even attaching any importance to our survival,” humanity is rendered vulnerable and exposed.\textsuperscript{301} He implores us to ‘reset’ this faulty perspective. He continues: “What we are fearful of hearing is, as Sloterdijk says, the announcement — a terrifying one for those who have always lived under the tension of transcendence — of this “monogeism”: there is no God, there is only one Earth.”\textsuperscript{302}

As a ‘meta-matter of concern’ influencing the composition of CCs, climate change is one of the dominant existential crises of our era. Its cause attributed to the polluting activities of humans since the scientific and industrial revolutions, and due to measurable changes in the earth’s strata Geologists have afforded our era geological import, naming it the \textit{Anthropocene}.\textsuperscript{303} Some scholars consider this term contentious, for them the term is ultimately anthropocentric, giving too much agency to humans and too little to the ‘natural’ world.\textsuperscript{304} However, others such as environmental philosopher Deborah Bird Rose consider the term apt when considering the devastating impact of human behaviours on our dynamic ecosystems. Bird Rose suggests that the \textit{Anthropocene} is “something of a mirror” in which the horror of human agency is reflected, “… which 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.”\textsuperscript{305}
If the Anthropocene is “something of a mirror” then like Narcissus, humanity has seemingly all but lost the reflexive capacity to stand back and view us, viewing ourselves, and our reflection. Like Narcissus we have lost reason, fallen in love (with our ‘modernizing frontiers’ of progress), and with the misguided ‘expectation of immunity’ are at risk of drowning in our own reflection.

The ‘expectation of immunity’ that Bird Rose observes, is echoed in philosopher Peter Sloterdijk’s recent writings in which he argues that religion should be viewed as a defunct immunizing device against the great unknown(s). An overview of Sloterdijk’s theories will be discussed later in this section, however as preliminary orientation to ‘resetting’ our perspective, further perspectives on the Anthropocene indicate why it is of concern to Contemporary Ceremony. Bird Rose, echoing both Latour and Sloterdijk, offers her definition of the current era: “The ‘we’ of the Anthropocene includes nonhuman animals as well as human-beings; and includes plants, soils, atmosphere and oceans, and involves dynamic relationships and processes within an extremely dynamic biosphere. And while it is manifestly true that we are not all situated identically, no situatedness is granted immunity.”

In his 2003 article Ritual and the Environment Grimes makes a cogent argument for the contribution that rituals might offer in facilitating attitudinal change towards climate change. Whilst aware that the claim is an unverifiable one (and potentially futile) Grimes notes that “moral principles and new legislation do not by themselves ground world views or form attitudes,” he urges:

Attitudes are not merely emotional, nor worldviews merely intellectual. Each collaborates with the other in determining how people act, what they perform, and therefore how they behave. A sailboat’s attitude is its tilt, the result of a complex negotiate between wind, water, and rudder. Human attitudes, too, are complex expressions of one’s characteristic tilt in and toward the world.

However, to change attitude requires sensitivity to the dilemma at hand. In his key--note address, Latour contemplates what might equip humanity to be “rendered sensitive” in the face of this looming crisis. He argues that being rendered “sensitive to hitherto unknown phenomena,” includes an awareness of atmosphere in both its poetic and literal sense, and proposes that the

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309 Rose, 1.
311 ibid. 33.
312 Latour, "On Sensitivity Arts, Science and Politics in the New Climatic Regime ". Latour, SciencesPo, and Medialab. Refer vocabulary section notes to aestheticize: “…is to engender, by recolling, a sensibility towards other existents…”
‘overlap’ between the three aesthetic regimes of science, politics, and art might ‘equip’ us to face the challenges of this “new climactic regime.”

Latour notes that the impact of aesthetics “consists of making oneself sensitive to alterity.” Playfully referencing Benedict Anderson, Latour champions imagination and creativity seeing artworks as “capable of representing and narrating, the ‘imagined communities.’” These communities are to be considered in a holistic sense, beyond human and political realms, to include all of the planet’s stakeholders. Importantly, he notes, “without the aesthetics – the sensibility – that works of art accord to political assemblies, we will never be able to compose the common world.” Without composing a ‘common world’ consensus on combatting climate change might never be reached.

Latour includes the requirement of science in his analysis, without which the degree and rapidity of change in climate might never be apparent. He asserts the importance of politics, which assembles the ‘relevant stakeholders’ including representation of the Earth itself and all other non-human entities. Importantly, Latour also calls on the requirement of art, as: “we don’t seem to be endowed naturally with the right sensitivity to absorb the magnitude of the ecological mutations.”

As sea levels continue to rise and consume low-lying homelands, in spite of ongoing debates, unilateral agreements, and international protocols, it is increasingly clear that: “we are in a mess.”

Or, as Deborah Bird Rose elucidates: “Not just entangled in webs and networks of process, we are all tangled up in dynamics, edges, patches and zones of colliding uncertainties. Time and agency are troubled, relationality is troubled, situatedness is troubled. We are tangled up in trouble.” In this tangle of networks and their troubling associations, Latour challenges us that: “between modernizing and ecologizing we have to choose.”

Indigenous peoples and climate change

Latour’s proposition is made further resonant by recent research findings indicating that climate change will have the most profound effects on the health and wellbeing of the world’s Indigenous

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313 PSI Melbourne. Homepage ‘Key Note Address’ http://www.psi2016.com/
314 Latour, SciencesPo, and Medialab. Refer vocabulary section: “…aesthetics consists of making oneself sensitive to alterity, to others, that is to say to all that circumvents – thus it is a multimodal term.”
315 Ibid. vocabulary section FIC– POL (Fiction and politics) “Without works capable of representing and narrating, the “imagined communities” constantly milled by the political Circle would be impossible to sustain.”
316 Ibid.
317 Ibid.
318 Grimes. 1.
319 Rose. 1.
320 Latour. 8.
populations, and that loss of diversity and species will increase. While much of the remaining diversity on the planet, including biological, cultural, geographical and linguistic diversities, is to be found in Indigenous homelands, it is widely understood that in the future, Indigenous communities will continue to be the most vulnerable with “unique exposures and sensitivities.” These unique exposures are due in part to “nonclimatic stresses” which include poverty, loss of land, and multiple sociocultural stressors. For communities whose “…close relationships with and dependence on land, sea, and natural resources” for “livelihoods; culture; and habitation” the threat is increased as their homelands experience “rapid climatic and socioeconomic change.”

Yet, the capacity for Indigenous populations to contribute ‘traditional knowledge’ of adaptation and survival remains under-acknowledged, due to the perceived inferiority of Indigenous knowledge systems. Instead there is a prioritizing of “positivist disciplines at the expense of the interpretative, creating knowledge detached from its local context.” There is some increment of change in these attitudes, as Indigenous knowledge systems slowly gain traction in Western scientific literature. ‘Two-way learning,’ is one such approach capable of recognising: “…an equitable and respectful space for knowledge co-creation that brings together local Indigenous and conventional scientific paradigms for the purpose of developing climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and actions.” The significant contribution of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing are summed up in this statement: “The main knowledge-holders of the site-specific holistic knowledge about various aspects of this diversity, Indigenous peoples, play a significant role in maintaining locally resilient social-ecological systems.”

With these observations in mind, further investigation of Latour’s ontological enquiry into the ‘modes of existence’ that require our sensitivity for equitable survival, will clarify the plural ontological gaze that aligns with the world-view of the IORP.

321 Ford.
324 Ford. 1260.
325 ibid.
326 ibid.
327 ibid.
328 ibid.
329 Refer Book Two, Chapter Five: Protocols, Permission and Ethical Research
330 Green and Raygorodetsky. 242.
331 Refer Book One, Chapter One: Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing
332 Green and Raygorodetsky., 239.
Modes of Existence

On opening the home page of Latour’s innovative project, the *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* (AIME) website, compendium to his book of the same name, the reader is entreated by the following question: “How do we compose a common world?” It is a simple but profound query and one which, for Latour and his colleagues, hinges on an understanding that multiple ways of being exist, and that the question of existence can no longer be limited to the human realm, or defined from a “dispassionate study of external phenomena.” Latour prizes open categorizations, challenging the habitual critiques of dominant ‘social’ institutions and hegemonic traditions within the academy. He notes that the long held belief that the researcher is “not supposed to be to be involved in what you study” no longer holds up to scrutiny. It is an argument that can no longer be “maintained,” and comes with the understanding that a reconsideration of our institutions is necessary.

Canadian scholar Heather Davis suggests that the strength of the AIME project lies in its intention to “unravel all of the primary institutions… in order to recompose a modality where we can begin to rebuild the political systems that are necessary to confront what is coming towards us.” In accepting that there are many modes of existence one embraces the plurality of experiences possible – cognizant of their multiple “networks” and associations – the crossing points that constitute and inform them.

Drawing upon the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, seeing reality as a dynamic process, and the pragmatism of William James,’ emphasising acts over words, Latour combined these philosophical positions to posit his theory. According to Foster, in doing so: “…modernity’s iconoclastic drive for the ultimate critique is rejected in favour of an ecology of modes of existence.” Whilst accepting that categories are useful, if one admits to multiple modes a category’s single definition or ‘absoluteness’ must be reconfigured, open to translation from different perspectives, and in consideration of a spectrum of matters of concern.

333 Latour, SciencesPo, and Medialab. Home page
335 ibid. 44.
336 ibid. 49.
337 Latour. 308.
339 ibid.
Latour explains that an extended reading of the term ‘modes of existence’ retains all of its most obvious connotations, but directs attention beyond an individual’s or a groups’ way of being (their morals, behaviours, ethology, ecology, habitat and habits) to include “the things that humans concern themselves with – and the questions they ask themselves.” This approach enables alternative answers to arise from the “classic question: ‘what is?’” which, Latour assures us, will not be the usual “essence-based answer.” The answer may prompt further questions, pointing as Latour suggests to the “possible multiplicity of beings that we must learn to “collect” with an attentiveness that is “distinct every time.” In questioning each entity’s ways of being, doing and thinking, through consideration of their “modes of extension” we become mindful of what they “…leave in their wake when we follow their particular trajectory through the numerous networks…”

However, Latour warns of the inherent challenges in this approach as: “…many terms are multi-modal, and yet specialized by the way they have been elaborated into history. The reading has to be transversal.” Latour concedes that for the pressing issue of climate change, this transversal detection is far from a speedy process, but he stresses that the “preparatory work required to meet Gaia” asks us “to think slowly about what we have done.”

In the twenty first century, as Latour contends, facts and values have become entangled in the increasing complexity of our planetary inter-relations negating Enlightenment era assumptions of the notion of a singular reality. Social scientist Doreen Massey clarifies this idea noting that: “The imagination of globalization as a historical queue, does not recognize the simultaneous coexistence of other histories with characteristics that are distinct (which does not imply unconnected) and futures which potentially may be so too.” She continues by describing a current awareness of “…the contemporaneous existence of a plurality of trajectories: a simultaneity of stories-so-far.” In these plural trajectories and myriad stories we find situated and temporal epistemological dimensions acknowledging the coexistence of both “matters of fact” (belonging to a singular ontological focus) and “matters of concern” (a consideration of plural ontologies).

340 Latour, SciencesPo, and Medialab.
341 Ibid.
342 Ibid.
343 Ibid.
344 Latour and Davis. 53.
345 Ibid. 51.
347 Ibid. 12.
Matters of Fact and Matters of Concern

I have used Latour’s turn of phrase “matters of concern” throughout this thesis echoing his assertion that although facts are not to be dismissed, their use without consideration can be reductive by failing to take into account the many entities that might collide and cross in analysis. Latour observes that ‘matters of fact,’ as a constative turn of phrase, is a “powerful enunciative vector by which we take position to be an unquestionable and obstinate presence.” In face of such immovability, Latour suggests an “irreductive” perspective to consider ‘matters of concern’ through examining ‘networks’ and their ‘associations.’ In this way, he notes: “Matters of fact are a particular sub-set of matters of concern because even when we manage to define that which is not open – or is no longer open – to discussion, we maintain the position of interlocution inside which the appeal to facts is always stated.” This dialogic and relational approach is fundamental to the compositional paradigm governing the composition of Contemporary Ceremonies, has been integral to the evolution of the proposed grounded theory, and supports ongoing praxis.

In adopting the premise of ‘matters of concern’ this research embraces onto-epistemological realities as poly-modal and poly-vocal understandings of the nature of being and the nature of knowledge. Relational networks and associations form the conduits and substance that enable modes of ritual, as modes of existence, to assemble, disassemble and reassemble.

Latour’s plural and relational ontological gaze is in concert with the ethical and emplaced ‘matters of concern’ of Contemporary Ceremony. He summarises: “Whereas ontology has often based itself on the being-as-being, AIME seeks to define being-as-other.” This is resonant with Karen Martin’s articulation of the relational accountabilities that undergird Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing in the “networks of relationships between Entities.” Having clarified some of the terminology that Latour uses, it is important to recall and reiterate the intent of his claims: contemplating what might ‘render us sensitive’ to the “new climactic regime.”

348 Latour, SciencesPo, and Medialab. Vocabulary section
350 Refer Appendix Two: Latour’s Networks
351 Latour, SciencesPo, and Medialab.
352 Latour. 162.
353 Martin.
Sloterdijk: Spheres, Gaia and Globes

Peter Sloterdijk, a contemporary of Latour’s, shares an aligned and influential philosophical gaze. Both locate their recent theories in reference to climate change, and their complementary philosophical concerns assist in clarifying the ontological perspective of this enquiry from a Western paradigm. An overview of Sloterdijk’s theories of spheres will also assist in comprehending the ‘aesthetic’ – that which renders one sensitive\(^{354}\) – of Contemporary Ceremony composition. Whilst it is not within the compass, or intention, of this research to fully articulate Sloterdijk’s philosophies from his vast body of writings, his core ideas resonate with the ontological orientations that have arisen in the research process, and have assisted in conceiving and articulating the praxial technique.

**Being within spheres**

Peter Sloterdijk’s trilogy of *Spheres (Bubbles, Globes, and Foams)*\(^{355}\) reconsiders humanity’s ‘being in the world’ (according to the Western philosophical tradition), from a predominantly temporal paradigm of being to an inherently relational and necessarily spatial one. In concert with Latour’s quest to reset modernity,\(^{356}\) he interrogates and charts Western hegemonic “modernizing frontiers” – the thoughts and ‘isms’ that have englobed the earth – noting that forces of imperialism, capitalism and individualism have contributed significantly to the risk of mass species extinction.

Sloterdijk’s writings refocus Heidegger’s notion of *Dasein*, from an existential and individual query of what it is to ‘be in the world’ to a spatial one – to where it is that we find ourselves in the world, and with whom we share it.\(^{357}\) In the *Spheres* trilogy he interrogates meta-narratives of Western thinking for “how philosophy conceptualises its locus,”\(^{358}\) and suggests a rethinking of both our emplacement and our interrelatedness. His ‘metaphorological’ use of spheres – micro, macro and plural – makes this distinction clear.\(^{359}\)

In *Bubbles*, the first volume of *Spheres*, Sloterdijk charts the essential interrelatedness and intimacy that humanity is bequeathed with, from our own ‘coming in to the world’ from womb with placenta, to

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354 Latour, SciencesPo, and Medialab.
*Globes: Macrospherology*, trans. Wieland Hoban, 3 vols., vol. 2, Spheres (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2014).
NB. ‘Foams’ had not been translated into English at time of writing.
356 Refer: Appendix Two: Latour’s Networks and Modernizing Frontiers
358 ibid. 13.
359 ibid. 11-13.
the dyadic “mother-child interfacial relationship,” to our “inter-cordial relationships” with others, other entities, and with where we find ourselves emplaced.360

In Globes, the second volume, Sloterdijk considers the geometrical and architectural conceptualisations of spheres, from the evolution of a geocentric conception of the cosmos in antiquity to a heliocentric and currently ‘globalised’ one. He distinguishes the political and psycho-spiritual associations of these ideas, and taking a distinctly ‘anti-European, anti-colonial’ stance, suggests that the “terrestrial globalisation” of the Earth in voyages of ‘discovery’ heralded the beginning of the current hegemonic order imposed by the notion of globalisation.361

In Foams, Sloterdijk moves to the idea of plural-spherology in which he “…uses the image of foam in order to analyse the interlinked and connective relations between human spheres.”362 Elden and Mendieta explain: “Foam here means the bubbling of bubbles within a large liquid matrix. The single foam is to the large soap bubble what the bachelor pad is to the large apartment complex: singular by virtue of forming part of a larger collectivity.”363

He charts the rapacious appetite of capitalism alongside an expanding population, of “simultaneous singularization in the midst of socialization”364 in a model that no longer has any space. As Latour notes of Sloterdijk:

No outside is left. As usual Peter has a striking way to bring this up when he says that the earth is finally round: of Course we knew that before, and yet the earth’s rotundity was still theoretical, geographical, at best aesthetic. Today it takes a new meaning because the consequences of our actions travel around the blue planet and come back to haunt us.365

As Sloterdijk amply illustrates, the sphere as an iconic bounding object has been used since antiquity in art, history, and geopolitical endeavours to form cosmological models of the universe, to map our planet, and as a symbol which groups ideas together in domains. The sphere as ‘globe’ now expresses what Sloterdijk sees as an extension of the European project of empire in ‘globalisation,’ Sloterdijk notes:

Spheres… are shared spaces set up by shared common inhabitation within them. They are the first product of human cooperations; they form the immaterial, yet the very realest result of a primal work that only takes place in resonances. The process of civilisation was

362 Elden and Mendieta.11.
363 ibid.
364 ibid.
advanced not by the division of labor, but of spheres; it is the primal agreement of community about itself and within itself.\textsuperscript{366}

**Practice and repetition**

In the face of this immanent “Great Catastrophe,”\textsuperscript{367} Peter Sloterdijk entreats the reader with Rainer Maria Rilke’s\textsuperscript{368} phrase: “You must change your life!” The current challenge for humanity, he contends, arises from a “crisis of form”\textsuperscript{369} contained in the European Enlightenment and Modernist imperative to ‘work’ towards an ever illusive, unsustainable, and unattainable ideal: to ‘progress.’ Sloterdijk instead urges for change in form, from the current inclination towards progress and the production-driven ethic of ‘work’, towards the contemplative, repetitive and considered notion of ‘practice.’

Practice for Sloterdijk is fundamentally an “operation that provides or improves the actor’s qualification for the next performance of the same operation.”\textsuperscript{370} To use a musical analogy one practices the piano – not in order to work to achieve the perfect product – but rather to improve one’s technique for future performances. The future and repetition are implicit in the idea of practice. Being able to improve technique through practice, the individual’s engagement is not concerned with working towards ‘product’ but with the process of becoming, in practice, a better pianist, or a better composer of CCs. Sloterdijk suggests we should transform our thinking, suspending the very language of “humans as working beings” and translate this idea to “practicing, self-forming, and self-enhancing” beings. He declares: “It is time to reveal humans as the beings who result from repetition.”\textsuperscript{371}

**Cyclical Practices and Archetypal Enactments**

From a different perspective and another era, Romanian anthropologist Mircea Eliade in his book *The Myth of the Eternal Return; or Cosmos and History*\textsuperscript{372} (originally published in 1949) offers an aligned appraisal of repetition and comes to surprisingly similar conclusions. Eliade’s historicist view (published four years after the cataclysmic atomic bomb strikes on Japan,) posits the practice of repetition in rites of ‘eternal return’ as possible solutions that might equip modern man to survive the “increasingly powerful pressure of contemporary history.”\textsuperscript{373} For Eliade, the re-enactment of myths

\textsuperscript{366} Sloterdijk, *Globes: Macrospherology*, 2. 966.
\textsuperscript{367} You Must Change Your Life: On Anthropotechnics. 444.
\textsuperscript{368} ibid. 21. Citing the final line of Rainer Maria Rilke’s poem *Archaic Torso of Apollo*
\textsuperscript{369} ibid. 3.
\textsuperscript{370} ibid. 4.
\textsuperscript{371} ibid. 4.
\textsuperscript{373} ibid. 141.
and annual rites found in “archaic societies” resulted in the abolition of historical time. According to Eliade, practicing cyclical rites cleansed participants from past incidents and established a new cycle of possibility wherein history, ritually annihilated, had no place. This non-linear appreciation of time enabled participants to live outside of history in a recurrence of mythical moments in which an individual’s ‘fall from grace’ would be purified and obliterated in rites of renewal; cyclically and metaphorically having one’s slate swept clean.

Eliade surmised that cyclical practices and repetition of archetypal enactments might inoculate contemporary humanity against the ‘descending arc’ of the ‘Terror of History’ and its “baneful consequences.” For, he continues, “whether through philosophy or through mysticism … the historical moment, despite the possibilities of escape it offers contemporaries, can never, in its entirety, be anything but tragic, pathetic, unjust, chaotic as any moment that heralds the final catastrophe must be.” Alert to the increasing perils of the ‘fall’ into historical time, Eliade notes:

... as the terror of history grows worse, as existence becomes more and more precarious because of history, the positions of historicism will increasingly lose in prestige. And a moment when history could do what neither the cosmos nor man, nor chance have yet succeeded in doing – that is, wipe out the human race in its entirety ... it is not inadmissible to think of an epoch, and an epoch not too far distant, when humanity, to ensure its survival, will find itself reduced to desisting from any further “making” of history in the sense in which it began to make it from the creation of the first empires, will confine itself to repeating prescribed archetypal gestures, and will strive to forget as meaningless and dangerous, any spontaneous gesture which might entail “historical” consequences.

Whilst Eliade’s insistence on a cosmogony of primordial acts and archetypal gestures which annihilate historical time is problematic (particularly so in reference to his ‘case studies’ of Aboriginal tribes in Australia,) his insistence in the efficacy and import of rites of renewal and the purification that they offer, exhibits his extreme discomfort with his own times and historicist ontological constructs. His insistence on the power of rites of passage as consolation and cleansing is made clear.

Eliade, Latour, and Sloterdijk entreat us, in the face of increasingly immanent planetary catastrophe, to undertake nothing less that a fundamental paradigm change. In the face of Gaia’s indifference and might, Latour wishes us to “reset modernity” and reconsider ontology as many ‘modes of

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374 An undeniably difficult term – Eliade also uses the term ‘primitive man’ – an anthropologist of his time.
375 For me, this idea resonates with Girard’s famous phrase that: the function of ritual is to purify violence
376 Eliade. 131.
377 ibid.
378 ibid. 153-154.
379 Refer Book One, Chapter Three: The Eternal Return – metaphysical realms
existence.’ Eliade laments that modern man, having left the ‘horizon of archetypes and repetition,’ can only seek solace from the terror (of historical time) in God. He notes: “Christianity incontestably proves to be the religion of ‘fallen man,’” having fallen from the practice and the paradise of archetypes and repetition.\textsuperscript{380} One senses in his writing a harkening to a past and irretrievable era. Sloterdijk, on the other hand, offers no solace in the ‘spectre of religion’\textsuperscript{381} in this ‘post-secular’ age.\textsuperscript{382} Instead he declares that: “no ‘religion’ or ‘religions’ exist, only misunderstood spiritual regimens, whether they are practiced in collectives...or in customized forms through interaction with the ‘personal God’ with whom the citizens of modernity are privately insured.”\textsuperscript{383} Sloterdijk asks us to consider instead that there are “only regimens that are more and less capable and worthy of propagation.” But in order to consider what these ‘worthy’ regimens might be, Sloterdijk has introduced into the argument a necessary questioning of values.

In consideration of these value-laden regimens, Sloterdijk suggests that an “altered perspective” might arise from “the introduction of an alternative language...for a group of phenomena that tradition tended to refer to with such words as ‘spirituality’, ‘piety’, ‘morality’, ‘ethics’ and ‘asceticism.’”\textsuperscript{384} The reader is urged to confront what Sloterdijk, with characteristic hyperbole, considers “one of the most massive pseudo-evidences in recent intellectual history.”\textsuperscript{385} A falsity not only found in the non-existence of religion, according to his criteria of “misunderstood spiritual regimens,” but in the very spectre of faith: “the unverified faith in the existence of faith.”\textsuperscript{386} For Sloterdijk “faith in the existence of ‘religion’” is a comparatively recent fiction uniting both believers and non-believers – what Latour might describe as a ‘category mistake.’ Religion has been “inadequately understood in its particularity.”\textsuperscript{387} The nineteenth and early twentieth century anthropologies of Durkheim, among others, set the scene for this fiction which according to Sloterdijk were founded on the inadequacy of categorizing religions primarily as symbolically structured behavioural systems, without sufficiently interrogating the co-comprising religious practices that were founded upon “autoplastic procedures”\textsuperscript{388} that were enacted and locally emplaced. Rites, ceremonies, and rituals might fall under Sloterdijk’s category of ‘autoplastic procedures’ as in spite of their prevalent symbolism, they are physical and relational practices.

\textsuperscript{380} Eliade. 162.
\textsuperscript{381} Sloterdijk playfully begins with a play on the opening lines of Marx and Engel’s Communist Manifesto.
\textsuperscript{382} Refer also Book One, Chapter Three: Post-secular and Spiritual.
\textsuperscript{383} Sloterdijk, You Must Change Your Life : On Anthropotechnics. 3.
\textsuperscript{384} ibid. 4.
\textsuperscript{385} ibid. 5.
\textsuperscript{386} ibid. 3-5.
\textsuperscript{387} ibid. 5.
\textsuperscript{388} ibid. 6.
(involving self, other and the cosmos) that nurture reflexivity, and which in the process of enactment inspire and support capacity for change.\footnote{389}

In concert with Sloterdijk’s notion of “autoplasic procedures” Grimes notes that rituals are “sustained, value-laden” practices in which “human beings discover, then embody and cultivate their world views, attitudes and ethics.”\footnote{390} As such, he summarises the role ritual might have in rendering us sensitive to climate change:

So asked whether ritual is good for the environment, I am inclined to say yes. For attitudes to become definitive they must be cultivated by practice. And the name for sustained, value-laden attitude practice is ritual. In ritualizing, human beings discover, then embody and cultivate their world-views, attitudes, and ethics. Rites are not only about confirming views that people already hold but also about divining ways to behave.\footnote{391}

**Networks and Spheres: Onto-epistemological concerns of Contemporary Ceremonies**

Latour and Sloterdijk propose a philosophical model that embraces both of their metaphors in the entanglement of networks and spheres. The major ‘category mistakes’ that they both identify are rooted in the persistent division of humanity from nature, and consciousness (\textit{res cogitans}) from matter (\textit{res extensa}) inherited from Cartesian ontology.\footnote{392} Latour notes that \textit{res extensa} in particular is an “highly idealist projection” which "is an unfortunate confusion of the properties of geometrical forms on white paper with the way material beings stand.”\footnote{393}

He goes on to claim there is no coincidence in the proposal of spheres and networks as alternative to Cartesian models of thinking as climate crisis and ‘the environment’ becoming increasingly pressing matters of concern in the current ‘global’ zeitgeist. The notion of society holding an exterior place, outside of nature, is defused and made redundant in the sphere and network model. As Latour comments: “There is no reserve outside which the unwanted consequences of our collective actions could be allowed to linger and disappear from view.”\footnote{394}

For Latour spheres are seen as localizing and relational devices, able to house things, while networks trace multiple relations, allowing respect for “…the objectivity of the sciences without having to buy the epistemological baggage that drags it down. For the first time since the bifurcation
of nature … we might have a way to throw Dasein into the world without misrepresenting either Dasein or the world into which it is thrown.”

From the perspective of ritual studies, Grimes appears to be in concert with these notions. He comments: “Thinking of ritual as a form of web-making helps reconceive its interconnectivity and boundaries, because it attends to the relations between rites and their contexts – social, economic and environmental.”

Plurality and Paradox

With Latour and Sloterdijk’s philosophies in mind, and in honouring the Indigenist oriented research paradigm, this research project is predicated upon embracing plural ontologies, and honouring relationships between entities in respectful, reciprocal and accountable ways. Such relationally based ideas are not new to non-Western intellectual traditions (e.g. Ubuntu and Advaita), however in an academic tradition whose foundations are based on the premise of dichotomies and binary oppositions (‘cause and effect’ or ‘mind versus body/matter’), the ability to allow for the conundrums and paradoxes inherent in the notion of plurality, requires nothing less than a fundamental shift in paradigm.

Clarifying the tensions inherent in paradoxes, Professor Latha Poonamallee’s paper on the practice of Advaita (‘non-duality of being’), defines paradox as: “the simultaneous presence of two mutually exclusive assumptions or statements; taken singly, each is incontestably true, but taken together they are inconsistent.” Within this frame, paradoxes and contradictions are held as co-determinants that transcend binary oppositions of positivistic thinking, and the hierarchies and privileging they commonly infer. As philosopher Bhaskar elucidates: “…both subjective and objective realities are valid expressions of the Ultimate. But they are different kinds of reality and one cannot be reduced to the other.”

Inconsistencies can be troublesome concepts for Western hegemonic institutions, however, the recent works of Latour and Sloterdijk have done much to reimagine the notion of the multiplicity of ways of being, doing, and thinking in Western thinking with their complimentary and potentially interlocking theories of networks and spheres.

395 ibid.
398 ibid. 190.
“Deontology” and Contemporary Ceremonies

Latour argues for the need to reappraise our “ontological scruples,” as we have become “corseted by too narrow a set of legitimate agencies,” to account for other “legitimate” ways of being. He sees this as a result of the hegemonic spread of “various modernizing fronts” and urges their diffusing in line with recent developments in postcolonial ethnography, gender studies, and anthropology of science. For Latour these developments have indicated, “…too limited a set of templates to account for the realities mentioned by our informants,” which have broken our relations with them.

The necessity to repair our relationships with other entities, he suggests is by “…negotiating a plausible account that enlarges the number of templates we are collectively able to entertain and with which we may resume future relations.”

Latour proposes that in considering ontology it would be helpful to take a more ‘diplomatic’ approach mindful of not ‘shocking’ those entities you encounter by imposing on them “… the wrong type of reality to the agencies that keep them moving.” In response he offers ‘deontology’ as a diplomatic approach that reconsidersthe networks of relationships of being between all entities. He defines deontology as: “the exquisite science (or rather delicate art) of being respectful of those with whom we deal by being entangled within a set of beings whose status has been fully recognized.”

Having considered both Latour and Sloterdijk’s philosophies, and taken into account the Indigenous worldviews and concerns outlined earlier in Book One, it is possible to contemplate the onto-epistemological concerns of Contemporary Ceremony. I have listed some of these in a table found in the appendices, noting resonances between them. However, it must be stressed that the table fails to grasp the nuances and crossings – indeed the relationships that exist between these concerns – within its linear format. With this in mind, if conceived of as a three dimensional image this table would no doubt resemble a knot – a complex ball made up of the intersecting crossings and relationships between each of these modes conceiving of the nature of being. As Latour notes: “… it is one thing to say … that no identity exists without the relations with the rest of the world –

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401 ibid.
402 ibid.
403 ibid.
404 ibid.
405 Refer: Appendix Three: Onto-epistemological Concerns for Contemporary Ceremony Composition
and it is quite another to be reminded visually and experientially of the way this could be done.\textsuperscript{406} In refining the praxial technique, I intend to embrace this visual and experiential challenge.

I return to Sloterdijk (et al) and his observations on power relations in what he describes, (reminiscent of Latour on the failure of Modernity), as an “unfulfilled Enlightenment.” The following articulates some of the ‘interpretive struggle’ this research has faced:

Because there are no truths which can be occupied without a struggle, and because every knowledge must choose its place amidst dominant and oppositional forces, the means by which knowledge is accorded validity seem almost more important than knowledge itself… The demand that what is reasonable also be generalizable draws Enlightenment into the maelstrom of politics, pedagogy and propaganda. Here Enlightenment consciously represses the acid realism of older doctrines of wisdom …\textsuperscript{407}

Chapter Three: The Conceived Sphere – Ritual Theory – ‘Know That’ and ‘Know How’

Introduction

Book One: The Cosmos

Figure 6: The Conceived Realm – Ritual Theory and the ‘Know That’ and ‘Know What’ of PaR research

This chapter considers how the ‘space’ of Contemporary Ceremony is represented in propositional discourses – the ‘know that’ of ritual theory, and procedural knowledge – ‘know how’ of ritual practice as conceived in the field of ritual studies. It is important to reiterate that this PaR project is grounded in Grimes’ argument for a “revised theory of ritual” in which “the fuzzing of boundary lines that separate ritual from art, theater, politics, and therapy” might serve to delineate and reconnect ritual to some of its “vital sources and tributaries.”

Contemporary Ceremonies embrace a multitude of “sources and tributaries” within a paradigm that, as elucidated in the previous chapter, embraces many “modes of existence” and plural ontological frames.

A Spectrum of Activities

From the cleansing morning shower to the binding exchange of vows, the term ritual is commonly used to describe a wide spectrum of activities, variable in practice and intention. It is a term that encompasses both a wealth of habitual or instinctual activities (greetings, morning coffee, cleansing etc.) as well as events of psychological, social and /or spiritual importance (e.g. a funeral service). Defining the term is a fraught endeavour, for as noted in the introduction to this thesis, the term enjoys no single agreed upon definition. Nonetheless, rituals shape our daily human experiences and are ‘performed’ or ‘enacted’ ubiquitously, in every culture across the globe.

410 Some scholars employ the verb ‘perform’ whilst others, like myself wary of the over identification of ritual forms with dramas, opt for the less value-laden verb ‘enact’.
some scholars, we perform some rituals unknowingly and at times compulsively.\textsuperscript{412} However when events of life altering importance occur, many people engage in rituals and ‘rites of passage’ wholeheartedly, with focus and intent. We recognise ritual behaviours and spaces in other cultures, even when we do not have a full grasp of language or meaning, as such ritual appears to be a mode we instinctively seem to ‘know.’

As this spectrum of activities suggests, events cannot be readily divided into being either rituals or non-rituals. Grimes points out, “… rather, actions display degrees of ritualization … instead there is a continuum.”\textsuperscript{413} Given this spectrum, Grimes urges for a “soft definition” of ritual – one that “typically congeals around nascent phenomena and calls attention to the bounding process itself or to the spaces between boundaries.”\textsuperscript{414} The ‘bounding and boundary’ metaphor is a pertinent one, both for the process of composing Contemporary Ceremony, and in researching its composition. ‘Soft’ definitions assist the researcher in their ability to allude to a set of mutable qualities without risking reification or imposing conformity: being too tightly bound. As Grimes reflects: “In field research on ritual, boundary debates are inevitable, because rituals inhabit physical and social environments that can be bewildering in their complexity.”\textsuperscript{415}

One of Grimes’ ‘soft’ definitions for ritual is that is “embodied, condensed, and prescribed enactment.”\textsuperscript{416} That ritual is necessarily embodied and enacted, is notable but self-evident, that it is “condensed” because it is “more condensed or elevated than quotidian behaviour,” raises questions. Some rituals are quotidian (such as handshaking on greeting), and some rituals are protracted rather than, or as well as, condensed (certain rites in some cultures can stretch over days), so it depends on the mode of ritual one is interrogating for this definition to fit. That ritual is “prescribed” suggests that there is an accepted or expected way of enacting, an attitude or approach that one is expected to adopt. This prescriptive quality is sometimes a mimetic response to how others enact, and sometimes the dynamic of the ritual itself will impel certain types of responses. Grimes acknowledges the limitations of this definition, but suggests in adopting a soft approach, which does not seek to be definitive, links and overlaps with other forms of human activity might be made.\textsuperscript{417}

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412 e.g. exchanging a kiss on greeting, raising a glass in toast, making the morning coffee etc.
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415 \textit{The Craft of Ritual Studies}. 40.
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\begin{flushleft}
416 ibid. 195.
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417 ibid. 196.
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Further conundrums arise when considering ‘quotidian’ and ‘elevated’ rituals. The now antiquated division of rituals into two meta-categories of ‘the sacred and the profane,’ has evolved in ritual studies scholarship to consider “modes of ritual sensibility,” and I will turn to these shortly. However, matters of ‘spirit’ and ‘spirituality’ and allusions to the ‘sacred’ may operate within Contemporary Ceremonies – depending on the individual participant in attendance. Therefore these terms require that further articulation of meaning is necessary.

Post-secular and Spiritual

Spirituality is often a perilous subject in both art-making and academic traditions. Since Nietzsche’s madman infamously declared that: “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him” and Charles Taylor’s writings pronounced ours ‘a secular age,’ there has been debate amongst scholars as to the meaning of the term ‘post-secular.’ Some see it as a time where there is a “renewed interest in the spiritual life” after a ‘godless’ secular age, whilst others suggest that in terms of society it describes an era that is not definable as either religious or secular but embraces both as contemporaneously extant.

Rachael Kohn questions whether we have ever lived in a secular age at all, nullifying the need for the post-secular term. Kohn argues that, other than in the halls of Western academe, religion is and always has been alive and well: “Enormous and varied spiritual movements swept across North America (and Internationally) at precisely the time Robinson was gathering pall bearers for God’s funeral” In an era of increasing fundamentalism in many religions world-wide it is clear that religion, if not spirituality, is alive and well.

Unsurprisingly, use of the term ‘spirituality’ raises similar debate and unease. To clarify my own position, I embrace Grimes’ simple ‘networked’ definition: “By spirituality, I intend practiced attentiveness aimed at nurturing a sense of the interdependence of all beings and all things ordinary.” Grimes offers a similarly broad and non-religious definition of the ‘sacred’ as: “the name we give to the deepest forms of receptivity in our experience.” These secular renderings of two

418 Beginnings in Ritual Studies. 35-50.
423 Grimes, Beginnings in Ritual Studies. 70-71.
424 Ibid. 63.
highly emotive and contested terms lose nothing of their poignancy and intent, but ‘recycled’ preserve a dynamic that has been central to many rituals and ceremonies over millennia. When I allude to these terms in this thesis I do so in concert with these renderings.

A trans-disciplinary “unifying activity”
Noting the affective, trans-disciplinary and performative nature inherent, Ronald Grimes suggests:

Ritual is one of the oldest forms of human activity we know. It may have been the original multimedia performance – an archaic unifying activity. It not only integrated storytelling, dance and performance, but it also provided the matrix out of which other cultural activities such as art, medicine, and education gradually emerged, differentiating themselves from one another.\textsuperscript{425}

As ancient and multivalent, rituals can be further identified as performed and embodied phenomena, ones (many scholars argue) that are vital to our collective survival.\textsuperscript{426} It could be this necessity that makes ritual a rich agent and which when married with issues of import (to individuals and/ or society,) can offer deep reflexive potential. As one's world or one’s self alters and changes, rituals can assist in understanding, or mark as significant, our journeys in being. Rites of passage mark our births, deaths, coming of age and marriages. We attend them with varying levels of participation depending on who and where we are contextually. Rituals and ceremonies can afford individuals the time and space to reflect on privately held beliefs in shared, if fleeting, moments of public communion.

Transformation, transcendence and catharsis, are considered by some scholars to form the rationale for rituals, whilst others contest that they effect any change at all.\textsuperscript{427} I will revisit these claims later in this chapter, however first it is important to trace the lineages of these ideas back to their sources.

Lineages of ritual studies
An overview
In the late 1970s, the study of ritual diverged from the fields of anthropology and religious studies and emerged as a discreet discipline.\textsuperscript{428} Prior to this development, ritual had been largely considered to be tradition bound and invariant in form. In Rite out of Place, Grimes charts the evolution of ritual studies in broad terms. In the 19th Century he suggests that ritual was seen as a

\textsuperscript{425} Deeply into the Bone: Reinventing Rites of Passage (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). 13.
\textsuperscript{427} Grimes, The Craft of Ritual Studies. 189-192.
\textsuperscript{428} ibid. 6.
In the early 20th Century he claims Durkheim and Freud classified them for what they appear to ‘do.’ Seen to be functioning as a ‘social glue,’ they focused on rituals’ impacts on the psyche in creating moments of “collective effervescence;” an effective means of providing consolation. By the mid to late 20th Century Grimes purports that, with the aid of Victor Turner’s vast scholarship in the field, ritual was seen as acting on participants psychologically – through the anti-structural diffusions of ego in liminal stages or rituals – either towards a sense of communitas or possibly subversion.

In the 21st century Grimes finds that rituals have become identified with “boundary issues” — acts of “marking off.” Rituals can both introduce and exaggerate boundaries. An exploration of funerals or initiation rites, for example, will indicate psychological and physical states, which the primary subject of the ritual (and sometimes all in attendance) must confront as part of the structure of the rite’s enactment. The living must make final and permanent separation from the dead, and the child must surrender childhood’s ways to prepare the adolescent self to take on the responsibilities of adulthood.

Before exploring these “boundary issues,” an investigation of the sources from where these ideas evolved will help distinguish where and why ritual theory has made ‘overlaps and linkages’ with other forms of human activity.

Sources and Tributaries

The Golden Bough and Elementary Forms of Religious Life
The influential late 19th century writings of James Frazer considered an evolutionary progression of human culture, typical of the Victorian era “myth and ritual school” of thinking, which pivoted on the relationship between a culture’s understanding of the world as described in their mythologies, and the “dramatic enactment” of these stories in magical rites and religious ceremonies. Frazer compiled twelve volumes of a comparative study of myths and rituals, which charted an evolutionary progression in humankind from barbarism to civility. According to Frazer, cultures whose myths were based on seasonal fertility rites and divine hierarchies displayed the ‘magical’ beliefs of

432 Grimes, Rite out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts. 12.
435 Stephenson.
‘primitive’ man. He asserted that over time more sophisticated cultures evolved to develop mature religious beliefs, which in turn evolved to ‘modern’ man’s superior comprehension of the world through scientifically deduced facts. Although Frazer’s evolutionary progression is now largely discredited, his work paved the way for future comparative studies of myths and rituals. It is worth acknowledging that Frazer’s positivistic stance formed the basis upon which Western culture built its enquiry and understanding of ritual forms, and to be alert to legacies of this approach that may endure. One such legacy, I suggest, is the labelling of rituals as “dramatic enactments,” to use Latour’s turn of phrase a potential ‘category mistake.’

Following in a similar vein, Emile Durkheim’s classic tome *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life (EFRL)* charts his theories of the nature and emergence of religions, and the function of rituals within them. In doing so, Durkheim too upheld a positivist intellectual stance that saw the separation of man from nature and the scientific equation of cause and effect as absolutes. He considered that his quest was to “comprehend the religious nature of man, that is, to reveal a fundamental and permanent aspect of humanity” and in doing so saw the function of ritual as to be socially cohesive. In other references he notes the binding qualities of rituals as engendering a state of “collective effervescence” – a turn of phrase that was to be echoed in Turner’s notion of *communitas*, to which we will turn shortly. Like Fraser, Durkheim saw rituals as “akin to dramatic performances,” so much so that he inferred a similar goal when discussing Arunta ceremonies as being to transport participants into another realm where “imagination is more at home; they entertain.”

An anti-colonial reading of Durkheim finds many ‘category mistakes’ in his interpretation of Indigenous ceremonies, and his dismissal of Arrernte ceremony as entertainment throws much of his theorizing into question. Thomassen in *Liminality and the Modern* illustrates the functionalist thinking of Durkheim and of van Gennep’s critique of Durkheim’s assumptions. Van Gennep takes a contrary stance championing a more complex and empirically based reading of cultures. Thomassen notes:

> Among the Arunta … males run most of the institutions, but at the same time they display clear signs of matrilineal descent. Durkheim had taken this as an indication and indirect

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436 Frazer. Part VI. The Scapegoat, 354.
437 Refer Book One, Chapter Three: Beyond Turner
438 Durkheim. 1-18, 431.
439 Ibid. 1.
440 Ibid. 227-228.
441 Ibid. 383-384. Arunta or Aranda/Arrernte: central desert peoples of the Northern Territory, Australia.
442 Ibid.
proof that matrilineal descent was the original mode of social organization, and that over time it had been replaced by patrilineal descent. Van Gennep argues back that in many Australian societies parallel systems can and do co-exist in time and space, and that it is really rather risky to speculate about origins in the absence of further empirical evidence.\textsuperscript{443}

Massimo Rosati offers a reinterpretation of Durkheim’s structuralist viewpoint of ritual, declaring that: “Ritual and the sacred have to be understood as the deep grammar of society,”\textsuperscript{444} being the “…elemental building blocks of individual and social life” that we “regularly and unwittingly use,”\textsuperscript{445} as part of the sociological fabric – they are “the skeleton on which every social phenomenon rests.”\textsuperscript{446} In Rosati’s reading the function of ritual has shifted from social cohesion, to a more fundamental level, the very building blocks of society – a type of original social syntax.

It is important to note, that Durkheim’s structuralist and reductive interpretation of ritual was not shared by all of his contemporaries. Foremost amongst his critics was Arnold van Gennep. Interestingly, Durkheim’s \textit{EFRL} does not pay any attention to the writings of van Gennep, despite the fact that van Gennep’s book was published a few years previously, an omission that some scholars attribute to academic competitiveness.\textsuperscript{447}

\section*{Rites of Passage}

As noted in the introduction to this thesis, van Gennep’s celebrated theory of ‘rites of passage’ is pivotal to this research project and forms an important poetic and formal component of the praxial technique. Arnold van Gennep’s 1908 publication details his observations and analysis of the “ceremonial patterns” he found in rites concerned with life’s passages.\textsuperscript{448} According to van Gennep these ceremonial patterns were imbricated in rites that navigated an individuals’, and/or a society’s, safe passage through “life crises” or the passage “from one cosmic or social world to another.”\textsuperscript{449} These rites included those that emphasised changes in age (e.g. birth, maturity) and social status (e.g. initiation, marriage).\textsuperscript{450} Wary of the limitations of theorizing “generalizable causal explanations on the basis of single examples,”\textsuperscript{451} van Gennep stressed the importance of examining more than a single example and to view rites in their entirety, within their social and cultural context. Through

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Thomassen} Bjørn Thomassen, \textit{Liminality and the Modern: Living through the in-Between} (ProQuest Ebook Central: Taylor and Francis, 2014). 50.
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid.
\bibitem{Refer} Thomassen. Refer Chapter Two. 47-70.
\bibitem{van} van Gennep. 10.
\bibitem{ibid} Ibid.
\bibitem{ibid} ibid. 178-181. Initially he included those rites that marked celestial and seasonal changes in his classification, such as moon phase rituals and New Year ceremonies.
\bibitem{Hockey} Jenny Hockey, “The Importance of Being Intuitive: Arnold Van Gennep’s the Rites of Passage,” \textit{Mortality} 7, no. 2 (2002): 211.
\end{thebibliography}
empirical observation, and in contrast to the content driven analyses of earlier anthropology, van Gennep focusedconcertedly on formal concerns intending to “yield up their commonalities” in the dynamics of composition. From this research van Gennep’s highly influential tripartite schema emerged in which he discerned three distinct phases: separation (pre-liminaire), transition (liminaire), and incorporation (post-liminaire).

According to van Gennep, rites of passage theoretically included all three phases, yet certain rites emphasized different phases, depending on their context and function. For example whereas at first instance a funeral might be primarily considered a rite of separation, the crucial moment for both the dead and the living lies in the transition phase. Here a fundamental transformation in states of being occurs with the irreversible relinquishing of the deceased’s earthly remains, and the finality of death – in an ‘earthly’ sense – is made real. Couched in rites of separation that culminate in rites of transition, the dead and the living make the necessary changes in their statuses, crossing a threshold or limen (grave, funeral pyre, etc.) to become on the one hand an ancestor and on the other a descendent.

Similarly, rites of initiation emphasise the transitional stage signifying becoming part of the adult community. Nested in their overall structure are rites of separation emphasising the leaving behind of childhood and preparing for adulthood, and rites of incorporation celebrating new identity and status. Whatever their social purpose or emphasis placed on a certain phase, van Gennep insisted that rites’ “underlying arrangement” was constant: pre-liminal rites (rites of separation), followed by liminal rites (rites of transition) culminating in post-liminal rites (rites of incorporation).

In Performance Theory and the Study of Ritual Grimes argues that van Gennep’s theory is “predominantly” based on male initiation rites, and as such cannot necessarily be assumed as a meta-structure for all rituals. Whilst van Gennep did not suggest this extension in his text, Turner’s writings extend the schema as a meta-structure for ritual processes in general (which will be discussed shortly), but interestingly excluded ceremonies from his analysis as being of mundane rather than spiritual import. Further, it must be noted that van Gennep was specifically referring to ceremonies in his text, as the original French subtitle of his book translates as “cultural ceremonies”

452 ibid. 212.
453 van Gennep. 11.
454 Hockey. 212.
455 van Gennep. 11.
rather than the somewhat opaque term used in the English translation: "cultural celebrations." Further, although van Gennep does afford the majority of word-length to the articulation of observations regarding initiations, he charts the whole of his book as a life cycle and includes rites of pregnancy and birth, childhood and adolescence, betrothal and marriage, and rites for death to argue his case. One could argue that rites of transition, as the most "magico-religious" phase of a rite of passage in its liminal stage is also the most profound stage by way of the transformation it affords, which therefore required the most explanation.

As noted, van Gennep was not in agreement with Durkheim’s structuralist assumptions that saw rituals to be ultimately socially unifying devices. This interpretation was not a nuanced enough interpretation for van Gennep who appreciated the role of the individual, their individual transformations and their agency in enacting rites. He therefore did not intend an interpretation of rites, beyond what was immediately apparent (marriage, initiation, death etc.), but instead focused on articulated the underlying dynamics that he saw embedded in the ceremonial process.

Of significance to this research, is van Gennep’s penultimate chapter: *Other Types of Rites of Passage.* Among these he lists: “rites pertaining to hair, to veils, to the use of special languages, sexual rites, practices of flagellation, seasonal rites, and some others.” This inclusion of “other types of rites of passage” signals that CCs may in fact be considered in some sense a rite of passage of a contemporary kind. Enactment in public-view is a rite of passage for many of the participants, and the attendance and shifts that this activity affects within individuals and communities involved cannot be quantified or reduced.

**Van Gennep and the Liminal**

In articulating his discoveries, van Gennep devotes a chapter of his book to “The Territorial Passage.” This inclusion emphasises the centrality of the liminal stage of his schema, articulating borders and crossings with the useful analogy of the “neutral zone” – a zone entered into when crossing a country’s borders. He offers this explanation:

> Because of the pivoting of sacredness, the territories on either side of the neutral zone are sacred in relation to whoever is in the zone, but the zone in turn, is sacred for the inhabitants of the adjacent territories. Whoever passes from one to the other finds himself

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458 Thomassen. 74.  
459 van Gennep. 13.  
460 ibid. 26-40  
461 ibid. 166-188.  
462 Ibid.
physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds.\(^{463}\)

This zone has direct physical implications for the individual making the passage, he notes they must pass “between” or “under something” which delineates the change “by which a person leaves one world behind him and enters another.”\(^{464}\) Van Gennep furthers an understanding of this spatial analogy by offering a cascading scale of shrinking “neutral zones” from country borders, to town, a temple, and a house until “…it ceases to exist except as a simple stone, a beam, or a threshold.”\(^{465}\)

According to van Gennep, rites enacted at this threshold are not cleansing rites (pre-liminal) or union rites (post-liminal), but rites of preparation – a gateway through to the changes in being that the union rite will consolidate. In this way he sees that a “…rite of spatial passage has become a rite of spiritual passage.”\(^{466}\) Pointing to an embedded quality within this schema, van Gennep notes that the liminal phase may include rites of entering and rites of exiting. He stresses that: “one should remember that the threshold is only part of the door and that most of these rites should be understood as direct and physical rites of entrance, of waiting, and of departure – that is, as rites of passage.”\(^{467}\)

In honing his theory, van Gennep was influenced by the gulf he perceived between spiritual and secular realms of existence, stressing that: “So great is the incompatibility between the profane and the sacred worlds that a man cannot pass from one to the other without going through an intermediate stage.” It is not possible to enter the liminal state without preparation and border crossings. In his schema, separation is thus posited as the first state that ritual participants enter into. As previously discussed, this phase of the ritual process marks out a necessary boundary, separating and demarcating the commencement of the ritual process from quotidian concerns. Separation signifies and manifests a certain rupture from ‘life as usual’ in which the ritual paradigm is delineated and its ‘cosmological’ concerns defined. For example, those often repeated lines forming the start of many western marriage ceremonies: ‘Dearly beloveds, we are gathered here today to join in matrimony…’ signifies to all in hearing distance that a very specific ritual is commencing whilst concurrently, and with “locutionary force,”\(^{468}\) both manifesting and demarcating the commencement of the ritual.

\(^{463}\) van Gennep. 18.
\(^{464}\) Ibid. 19.
\(^{465}\) Ibid. 19.
\(^{466}\) Ibid. 19-24.
\(^{467}\) Ibid. 25.
\(^{468}\) J.L.Austin. 98.
Importantly, van Gennep notes: “... a single rite may be interpreted in several ways, or a single interpretation may fit several rites whose forms differ greatly.”\(^{469}\) It is of note that other scholars have similarly referenced ‘blurred boundaries’ in ritual categorizations and interpretations – an essence indicative of an inherent multi-modal dynamic. In theorising composition, it has been necessary to heed the mutable and dynamic forces that underpin CCs and to envisage a flexible technique rather than a fixed and formalist method, ever mindful that rites are nested within rites.

**Van Gennep and the seasons/ cosmos**

Whilst conceding to a cyclical and regenerative nature of being, van Gennep (surprisingly) suggested that the seasons were of no concern to humans “… except for their economic repercussions on the more or less industrial life of winter and the primarily agricultural and pastoral life of spring and summer.”\(^{470}\) However there is a tension perceptible in his writing that suggests an oscillation of his ontological positioning, as, in the opening paragraphs of the first chapter, van Gennep writes of a patterning in which “man’s life resembles nature, from which neither the individual nor the society stands independent.” He dismisses such patterning as simply “… a cosmic conception that relates the stages of human existence to those of plant and animal life and, by a sort of pre-scientific divination, joins them to the great rhythms of the universe,”\(^{471}\) in keeping with an intellectual climate that saw humankind as somehow outside the animal kingdom and cosmic laws. Yet, in other parts of the text van Gennep again asserts the interconnectedness of our being within the cosmos. He states: “The Universe itself is governed by a periodicity which has repercussions on human life, with stages and transitions, movements forwards, and periods of relative inactivity.”\(^{472}\) The relationship, as conceived by other scholars, between the cosmos and ourselves deserves further investigation.

**The Eternal Return – metaphysical realms**

In *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or Cosmos and History*, the 20\(^{th}\) century Romanian anthropologist Mircea Eliade offers a nuanced development of his predecessors’ thinking, proposing consideration of ontological frameworks that “revolt against concrete, historical time” dwelling in their own “autonomous ‘history’” which includes a “periodical return to the mythical time of the beginning of things, to the ‘Great Time.’”\(^{473}\)

\(^{469}\) van Gennep. 9.
\(^{470}\) ibid. 179.
\(^{471}\) ibid. 194.
\(^{472}\) ibid. 3.
\(^{473}\) van Gennep. ix.
Eliade proposed that in enacting rituals, humans extended their imagination beyond their individual lives to embrace archetypal expressions of the continuum of life, suggesting that in ritualising our lives we mythologise them and colour them in allusion to the epic experience. Ritual was seen to offer context, continuity and connection and from this perspective, rituals could be seen to offer glimpses of eternity, or even to negate the “problem of history,” itself releasing humankind from the mundane of the everyday.

In an emplaced, post-colonial reading of Eliade, distinct problems associated with his writings arise. These are profoundly made evident in Tony Swain’s book *A Place for Strangers*. Swain, echoing the crux of Sloterdijk’s spatial and relational spheres theories, points out that the Western worldview preferences notions of history and chronology: “the central place of temporality in the Western mind” as the ultimate ontological gaze. Swain notes that in Indigenous Australia it is rather “place and space” that is central to understandings of being. Swain argues for an “hermeneutic ontology” – an “interpretation of being” which might allow for a plurality of positions regarding the nature of being, rather than one axiomatic truth.

Swain’s main objections to Eliade’s writings are a critique of a European anthropologist who analysed Indigenous Australian rites and ceremonies without consideration of his own ontological bias, ignorant of both languages and the diversity of Indigenous cultures on the continent. In his insistence on primordial archetypes and acts that occurred “ab origine” Eliade’s conclusions are cosmogonic rather than cosmological, and reflect a monotheistic and chronologically bound understanding of being which, Swain notes, is not compatible with Indigenous relational and cosmological understandings of the nature of being.

**Victor Turner – Social Dramas, Communitas and Liminality**

Victor Turner’s vast body of fieldwork, scholarship and writings on ritual offer further insights to the study of ritual and owe much to the writings of van Gennep. His fieldwork amongst several Central and Southern African tribes formed the rationale for his findings, and in analysing stages of particular group interactions classified them as “social dramas.” Turner was openly exploring performative analogies in order to express his anthropologic findings. Alert to the limitations of ‘thick

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474 Eliade. 17-21.
475 ibid. 151.
477 ibid. 2.
478 ibid.
479 ibid.
480 Eliade. 30. Eliade translates the Latin *ab origine* as “for the first time.”
descriptions,’ he found in the emerging field of performance studies, and his collaborations with Richard Schechner, a means of expressing and exploring what he observed, both by use of performative terminologies and in ‘acting out’ specific rites he observed.482

In overview, Turner viewed ‘social dramas’ as having four distinct phases. Originating in a transgression or ‘breech’ phase upsetting the social order, followed by an escalation of hostilities, the ‘social drama’ reaches its second stage in ‘crisis’. At this point the third stage evolves, in which measures of redress are sought. Finally, in the fourth phase, the factions are either reintegrated or reconciled, or the schism recognised.483 Turner found that in the last two phases of ‘social drama’ rituals of redress or judicial proceedings were frequently enacted. According to Turner ‘social dramas’ interrupted everyday life and in doing so forced a group to consider their values and “…even to question at times the value of those values. In other words, dramas induce and contain reflexive processes and generate cultural frames in which reflexivity can find a legitimate place.”484

Turner analysed the rituals that formed subsets to his notion of ‘social dramas.’ He developed his ideas upon van Gennep’s original theory of the tri-fold structure of rites. However, Turner extended his interpretation of liminality to include notions of “anti-structure” or status suspension as a result of the social breech:

I have used the term ‘anti-structure,’ … to describe both liminality and what I have called ‘communitas.’ I meant by it not a structural reversal … but the liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc., from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses.485

According to Turner the process by which this liminal moment is achieved necessarily involves states of dislocation or disruption to the participant/s. Similarly to van Gennep, he sees this zone as concurrently physical, temporal and contextual, owning a “parallel passage in space.”486

The liminal phase he articulated was a highly reflexive “threshold experience.” A “betwixt and between” state, containing physical enactments that echoed changes in psychological or spiritual states of being. According to Turner, the liminal zone could be seen as an ambiguous moment of reckoning and potential: a space-time replete with symbols which refine and exaggerate liminality and physically demand a dislocation or separation from one state of being in order to gain another.

Here Turner describes the phenomena:

484 ibid. 92.
485 ibid. 44.
486 ibid. 25.
liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualise social and cultural traditions. Thus liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to the eclipse of the sun or moon.\(^{487}\)

Communitas is the name Turner ascribed to the fleeting and impermanent state achieved during the liminal phase of a rite. He saw it as a state exhibiting “… a strong sentiment of ‘humankindness,’ a sense of the generic social bond between all members of society – in some cases transcending tribal or national boundaries.”\(^{488}\) In this quote we can hear echoes of Durkheim and his descriptions of “collective effervescence”\(^{489}\) but remodelled into mid 20th Century parlance. Turner’s view of communitas as the ‘quick of human interrelatedness’ has an ontological quality; it involves the whole being in relation to other whole beings. He notes that communitas can seldom be maintained for very long, as it is dependent on a suspension of quotidian power or status to arise, and that at some stage the status quo must be returned. Turner’s theory of anti-structure is pivotal in his definition of communitas and in part could be attributed to the time his writings on anti-structure started to emerge. It was the dawn of the civil rights era, a time in which ‘anti-structure’ was a potent cultural moré, and an enacted reality in protesting the Korean and Vietnam wars.

Turner’s main contribution to my thinking has been his continued use of the verb “attendance.” There is a sense of being patient, doing service, listening and giving focus in this term, which I have found to be integral to the divinatory processes of composition. It is also a state which I have witnessed participants enter into – as the ceremony unfolds – with their involvement requiring each of these qualities to discern what Grimes might describe as the ‘desired prescribed enactments.’

Turner’s theories on Liminality and communitas have been less influential upon my work due to the frame of ‘anti-structure’ that Turner imposed on these states as a result of his ‘social drama’ model. Issues for CCs identified in some of Turner’s theories are discussed in the next section.

**Beyond Turner**

In his recent writings, Grimes urges the ritual scholar to get ‘beyond Turner,’\(^{490}\) critical of the “transformationism”\(^{491}\) that Turner claims, and more recently of the “dramatization” that is central to

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487 ibid. 95.
489 Durkheim. 227-228.
his argument. Grimes observes that for Turner, rites of passage, and in particular the liminal stages of male initiatory rites, generate transformation. From a feminist stance, basing theory on observation of largely male rites alone refutes the validity of Turner's model as all encompassing. I will not argue the feminist case here, but note that an interrogation of assumptions made about cultures and their seemingly static boundaries, from such a perspective, is one area for future research.

In defusing the “transformationism” of Turner’s model, Grimes identifies that while some rituals do transform, others’ primary function is to conserve; often in form, content and intent. To limit the affect of rituals to a singular alignment state is to belie the myriad individual intentions that ritual participants (and no doubt ritual composers) might intend in enacting certain rites. This is an argument I will return to a little later in this chapter.

My critique of Turner’s work, which has direct impact on identifying the dynamics of composing CCs are based on a number of key observations. Firstly, Turner’s basis for his theories on ritual process stem from rites that were embedded in ‘social dramas.’ This is problematic on two fronts. Firstly, in using the Ndembu peoples’ social and spiritual lives for his case studies, casting a colonizing gaze upon a culture that was not his own, his resulting conclusions are highly questionable. Zimbabwean scholar C.V. Kwenda wrote on the problems of this gaze noting that Turner’s Enlightenment model of practicing the Human Sciences “… points out, hides and obscures, in the name of scientific objectivity, the experience and response of colonized cultures.” Kwenda describes Ndembu religion as a “contact phenomenon” and faults Turner for abstracting “… Ndembu religion from its historical context and situation in colonial rule … ” whilst paying “… no attention to the question of the meaning of world and of the human in the colonial situation.” In failing to recognise their differing ontological framings his structuralist assessments of Ndembu culture appear flawed at best and do not fit within this research paradigm.

Secondly, this conundrum raises questions about the agonistic and dramatic model Turner imposed, and upon the subsequent theory for ritual process he proposed. Turner himself admitted that his model was an agonistic one, and although he recognised the similarity between his model

492 The Craft of Ritual Studies, 87.
494 ibid. 122.
496 Grimes, The Craft of Ritual Studies; ibid.
497 Refer Book One, Chapter Three: Cameron’s Alignment Processes
498 Chirevo Victor Kwenda, "True Colors: A Critical Assessment of Victor Turner’s Study of Ndembu Religion" (Syracuse University, 1993). Abstract
499 ibid. Abstract
for ‘social drama’ and Aristotle’s schema for Tragedy, he maintained that he had not been influenced by it. Whether he was or not, for me, is immaterial. The choice of an agonistic model upon which to base his theories of both liminality and communitas, and one that so closely echoes ‘Tragic’ form, is distinctly problematic for the concerns of Contemporary Ceremony. To make amends or redress for a ‘wrong-doing’ after a ‘social breach’ was not the intent of my artwork, and in my opinion would have seemed a presumptuous response to two hundred years of ongoing colonization.

Whilst I was interested in composing pieces that fostered reconciliation, and potentially meditated upon it, their compositional intent was to compose a reflexive atmosphere where such responses were given space to emerge. Adopting the agonistic model that Turner offers, which is open to manipulation of psychological states in participants operating in a structure resembling that of ‘tragedy,’ was neither ethically nor artistically acceptable for composing CCs. My inclination was to more thoroughly examine van Gennep’s model and his articulation of rites of passage as triadic structures (mirroring Aristotle’s trifold basis for ‘good’ or whole poetry) that are not insistent on ‘crisis’ for both the liminal state to arise, nor for ‘affect’ to be achieved.

In Aristotle’s Poetics, he remarks on the causality of the ‘general origin’ of poetry as having evolved from innate imitative human tendencies and the wish to express experience, he notes: “creating poetry out of their improvisations.” He then charts poetry’s evolution into two forms, epic and a lower form (iambs), which then in time enabled the evolution of tragedy and comedy. Aristotle notes that although they share many elements (character, etc.) aside from the imitative and experiential, poetry and tragedy differ in three important ways. The first lies in poetry having a consistent kind of verse and narrative arc, the second that it is not bound by conventions of time limit, and finally that, tragedy includes certain elements not found in epic poetic forms. I will not persist with an analysis of Aristotle here, but note the importance of these distinctions in modelling and typology.

Turner’s overtly dramatic modelling of ritual is a problematic way of viewing rituals, an approach that first emerges in the writings of both Frazer and Durkheim. The ‘performative turn’ in ethnography occurred at a similar time to the development of these theories and may well have been a strong influence on Turner. There is some benefit in the thoughtful use of performative analogies for a form
that is necessarily enacted and embodied, however, for me the metaphor has been overextended and become reductive. Some rituals, as Grimes points out, are far from being dramatic and can be downright boring, whilst others are ‘cultural ceremonies,’ as van Gennep rightly indicated, which require their own cultural frame of reference to assess and categorise them.

Grimes offers three ways in which one might conceive of the relationship between theatre and ritual. As historically or developmentally related, as related through analogy, or as owning a common fundamental source from which they then are differentiated. Grimes dismisses the first example – as being without foundation, the second is problematic as the boundaries between ritual and theatre must be kept clear – but often are not – to the point of sometimes erasing them, and the third example, in his opinion, is only viable with three provisos. Firstly, that differences and similarities should be amply indicated, secondly that one should resist using one to validate or ‘serve’ the other; and thirdly, that “one should allow for the both the convergent and parallel interaction of ritual and theatre.” I will debate the usefulness (or not) of performative analogies and dramatic terminologies in Book Two, but point to the potentially erroneous conception of ritual as a dramatic or theatrical mode of human activity.

**Meaning and Function**

Given the broad spectrum of ritual sensibilities, it is evident that rituals can and do serve many functions and hold potential for many meanings as well, dependent of the intent of the ritual. However, even if a ritual is intended for a particular function or to provoke meaningfulness, rituals can and do fail. If they act upon us in one way, they are often capable of functioning in the opposite way as well. Rituals may empower certain groups – providing the social cohesion that Durkheim claimed – but in doing so they may disempower others. Ritual’s transformative qualities can be equally met with claims to their reinforcing qualities, and while certain rituals may successfully attune or align us into certain states of being, they may equally “dis-attune” us if we find them lacking – dependent on the ritual intent, the ritual’s design, and the individuals’ receptivity and orientation in enacting it. An individual’s experience of a ritual is just as important to consider as a group’s response. There is no single way in which rituals function, nor, as van Gennep pointed out, only one way of reading them.

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506 Ibid. 226-227.
508 Refer Book Two, Chapter Four: Performance and Enactment – theatre and ritual
As Grimes notes rituals can make or ‘unmake’ meaning, conceding that the idea of ‘meaning’ itself can be multilayered.\textsuperscript{510} He describes the relationship that ritual has with meaning as “… akin to the way in which dance or music is meaningful’ and that meanings “… are extrinsic rather than intrinsic. Meanings are laid atop rituals, so they are infinitely variable.”\textsuperscript{511} Rituals may be a way of making meaning, but it is possible that some rituals may dissolve meaning with inscrutable symbols or actions, or they may simply be outside of one’s cultural understanding. Therefore, it is important to be very clear exactly which ritual mode (or modes) are being considered in analysis.

I will address the taxonomy of ritual modalities shortly, however a few observations regarding the functioning of rituals in enactment and their affect needs to be considered. Grimes offers the verb “to attune” to account for the affects /effects of ritual enactment. He notes: “The metaphor implies that bodies (minded, cultured, and gendered) “vibrate” or “resonate” with something else: other bodies, environments, whatever is deemed holy. These vibrations may also be dissonant …”\textsuperscript{512}

Similarly to the ambivalence in ritual’s affect, there is often a paradoxical internal state that arises within participants in enactment, in the process of ‘tuning in.’

The ‘Imagined’ and the Real

Similarly to its contested cousin theatre, many scholars argue that rituals are enacted in the subjunctive mode, with the question ‘what if?’ or the intent “let it be so” poised at its core.\textsuperscript{513} The perceived schism between function and symbolism (form and content), in ritual is further reiterated by performance scholar Colin Counsell who suggests: “… the purpose of these activities is not functional but symbolic, for the primary goal of religious celebrations, shamanistic ceremonies, totemic and initiation rites and so on is to image the divine, to create in the profane world a moment in space/time that is sacred.”\textsuperscript{514} However, his own argument is lost when after stating that: “the primary goal is to image the divine, …” he continues with a functional intent – “… to create in the profane world … etc.” This indicates the paradoxical effect that rituals can have not only on participants, in the act, but also in describing them upon theorists.

Whilst ritual may be an imaginative space and procedure, it is also paradoxically concurrently very much a real space and process. A tension arises between the ‘what if’ of ritual imaginary, and the witness of our senses as we find ourselves enacting ritual processes. When we find ourselves

\textsuperscript{510} ibid. 318.
\textsuperscript{511} ibid. 318.
\textsuperscript{512} ibid. 309-310.
\textsuperscript{513} ibid. 201.
physically implicit, and our sensorium engaged, strong cognitive alignments occur which make the imaginary manifest. A double ontological state occurs within the participant, as the ritual process requires both an imaginal state envisioning transitions, reflexivity, or change, whilst it also does the work of consolidating this state through the requirements of embodiment. Grimes describes this conundrum in the following: “the deep world because it is an imagined, performed cosmos, is momentary and occasional, but it is also metaphorically and utterly real, as real as anybody’s smokestack or weedwacker.”

He clarifies:

There is no special religious faculty or transcendent way of knowing anything. Rituals operate in a matrix that is both cultural (therefore variable) and cognitive, or genetic (therefore invariable). Links between ritual actors and either their brains or cultures are not direct; rather, they are mediated by mental representations. Ritual is a behavioural technology employing various techniques such as sonic rhythm to “penetrate” the psyche, thereby “driving” cultural meanings into human bodies.

From another perspective, anthropologist and mythologist Joseph Campbell suggests the function of ritual is to “give form to human life, not in the way of a mere surface arrangement, but in depth.”

Campbell interprets rituals as coded behaviours that help guide one’s passage and experience as a human being through life and that they function as reminders to take cognisance of important life occurrences and activities. Implicit in this notion is the idea that ritual is capable of giving our lives both form and meaning concurrently. For example, we can often immediately understand the basic narrative level of a ritual in terms of what it is ‘about’, which is inherently tied to its form. A wedding (narrative/content) is identifiable in most cultures as bride and groom are the focus of attention and are physically positioned and ‘decorated’ (form) in “a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege.”

We understand that the intention is to get the two protagonists wed, and when rings are exchanged (as in most Western ceremonies), and the final illocutionary pronouncement made, we know they are wed. Nonetheless, there are other levels of intent to consider in the ritual process; in what the ritual proposes to ‘do’ or the ‘affect’ it attempts to instil within the participants. The wedding ceremony is a legally binding ceremony in many cultures, so the act is both an acknowledgement of a couple’s love and commitment as well as signalling the emergence of their new legal status. Or indeed the wedding may be arranged and signal the continuance of family lineages rather than necessarily focusing on love. Weddings also serve to cement and bind new family connections, as the extended families must both ‘act out’ roles

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515 Grimes, Rite out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts. 153.
516 The Craft of Ritual Studies. 309.
while internally recalibrating their new network of associations. Rites of passage, as van Gennep reminds us, operate on numerous levels and do not have one single function.

**Efficacy**

Much scholarship has been conducted on the efficacy and the inefficacy of the ritual process.\(^{519}\) Whilst efficacy is important to consider in composition, there is no way to guarantee it, nor is a ceremony ever likely to be considered efficacious by all in attendance. Efficacy seems to be "a case-by-case basis."\(^ {520}\) In *The Problem of Ritual Efficacy*, Sax urges the contemporary ritual scholar to look beyond mere representational theories of ritual to recognize that their very reason for being lies in their efficacy and capacity to create affect.\(^ {521}\) Rituals affect bodies physically, as well as psychologically, spiritually, and emotionally, and have the potential agency to affect states of being on both individual and group ontological levels. Sax stresses that a representational tendency to "... interpret ritual (e.g., the Christian Liturgy) in terms of what it 'symbolizes' rather than what it actually does..." leads to a myopic understanding of ritual "in terms of the underlying ideas, emotion, structures, or relations that it 'represents,' 'symbolizes,' or 'expresses,' rather than the ends toward which it conduces."\(^ {522}\) He argues for the instrumentality inherent in ritual, noting an important differentiation between the doer and the theorizer of rituals.

The theorizer sees and identifies certain activities as 'rituals' whilst the doer – caught in the midst of the ritual process – enacts "technique."\(^ {523}\) If, as Sax suggests, there is 'technique' in *enacting* ritual this supports the possibility of an underlying technique\(^ {524}\) in the *composing* of rituals. Technique suggests an informed procedure that might be adopted in instrumenting an affective design: a matrix for accomplishing the ritual's intended purpose. In fusing the representational with the affective and the intentional realms of ritual, composition may be seen as an instrumental dynamic, melding forms and content within alignment processes.\(^ {525}\)

In Sax' view ritual is "... precisely the negation of the modern, scientific episteme" and as an "analytic category" cannot be measured or defined in "essentialist terms," as it is always a question of one's relation to it.\(^ {526}\)


\(^{520}\) ibid. 185.

\(^{521}\) ibid. 5.

\(^{522}\) ibid. 4.

\(^{523}\) ibid. 2.

\(^{524}\) Refer Book Two, Chapter Five: A Praxial Technique

\(^{525}\) Refer Book One, Chapter Three: Cameron's Alignment Processes

\(^{526}\) Sax, Quack, and Weinhold. 7-14.
However, from another mode of enquiry into efficacy, the study of the neurological functioning of ritual behaviour has emerged. Ethnologist Charles Laughlin and neurologically trained psychiatrist Eugene D’Aquili examined brain function and ritual and in their 1974 co-authored treatise coined the term *Biogenetic Structuralism.* Grimes describes this field as the scientific proposal to explain what effects ritual has on the brain and how the “extended brain mediates ritual action,” which includes the impact of perception of symbols on experience. Guthrie notes that Laughlin and D’Aquilli propose that ritual behaviours stimulate the hyper-arousal and/ or hyper-quiescent systems in our brains, which in turn stimulate the limbic system regulating our emotions. Given that their research could be described as ‘the efficacy of affect,’ this field of enquiry is one that might be a rich source for the composition of Contemporary Ceremonies. However, given that this discipline is far beyond my own trans-disciplinary reach, I shall not pursue this line of research, but note its potential.

Given that ritual is seen as potentially efficacious, that it is a relational and contextual experience, and that its affect is linked to cognitive pathways, Grimes and Cameron have created taxonomies for ritual that are invaluable for the composer to consider. Grimes, finding the terms mundane and secular insufficient to distinguish the many affective modes of ritual behaviour offers six classifications of ‘ritual sensibility,’ whilst Cameron considers the psychological changes that certain rituals may instil.

**Ritual as a Way of Knowing and ‘Know How’**

As illustrated earlier, rituals may serve more than one function and similarly they can also be domains for more than one way of knowing. I have listed those that Grimes mentions in *The Craft of Ritual Studies* in the appendices, and have added some examples relevant to Contemporary Ceremony for reference. Grimes warns that it is important to note that if one type of knowledge is “inscribed,” that the ritual “simultaneously courts a corresponding kind of weakness or ignorance. So the tenacious student of ritual queries: To what does this ritual blind (or deafen, or …) its participants?”

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529 ibid. 36.
530 *The Craft of Ritual Studies.* 326-327.
531 Refer:

Appendix Four: Grimes’ Five Ritual Knowledge Bases and Examples from Contemporary Ceremony composition
process of composition for fear of creating a tokenistic or didactic “piece of bad poetry.” It is important to note that a single ritual may contain all or just a few of the ‘knowledges’ listed.

**Taxonomies of Ritual**

**Grimes’ Six Modes of Ritual Sensibility**

Grimes employs the terms “mode” and “sensibility” rather than ‘form’ to describe his categorization of ritual, suggesting that they are active, sensitive and informed procedures. However, ‘mode’ is also resonant as a musical metaphor as it describes alternative ‘tunings’ of musical arrangement. Ritual, like music is composed in different tunings and arrangements – or modalities.

The first mode he suggests is “ritualization” – a classification that unites us with the animal kingdom in our compulsive, repetitious quotidian functions such as eating, drinking, mating and reproducing. The second mode, “decorum,” he describes as those expected rituals with which society regulates itself. He sees these as being of an intimate scale, such as the gestures of etiquette we adopt, including handshaking, introductions, opening doors for others etc. “Ceremony” is Grimes’ third mode, which he sees as inherently political interactions as they enforce and symbolize respect for the offices and power bases of society. Coronations, award presentations and writing obituaries are all ceremonial practices.

“Liturgy” is the fourth mode which Grimes sees as operating in an “ultimate frame of reference and the doing of which is felt to be of cosmic necessity.” He further describes it as a symbolic action, hinging on “deep receptivity” in which contemplation and meditation are cultivated. Clearly religious rituals fall into this category, as do many rites of passage, and potentially emergent secular or humanist based rituals might be included. Grimes’ fifth category is “magic.” He views rituals of magic as utilizing transcendent frameworks in order to create change “in the ordinary reality of social interaction.” In desiring change, magic rituals, like hexes and curses, declare and seek to invoke supernatural powers to control and affect consequences.

The sixth and final category described is “celebration.” Grimes points to the ludic and spontaneous roots of celebration as ritualised expressive play. Importantly, it is a mode in which there is “…no

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533 Deeply into the Bone: Reinventing Rites of Passage. 12-13.
534 Beginnings in Ritual Studies. 35.
535 ibid. 43.
difference in value between what is utterly serious and what is playful.”

Grimes points out that these six categories can co-exist and should not be regarded as exclusive or independent of each other. Often rituals are an orchestrated blend of modalities.

Cameron’s Alignment Processes

In querying the affective classification of rituals, Neil Cameron’s 2004 Master’s thesis *New Alignments in Ritual, Ceremony and Celebration* is a valuable contribution to study in this field. Cameron, a former colleague of mine, focuses mainly on large community based celebrations, arts festivals, and works commissioned by specific communities. The commonality between these works was the desire to create events that would be ‘meaningful’ to the community participating and in attendance, and thus the design process was necessarily a highly consultative one.

Similarly to Turner and Grimes, Cameron strongly supports the theory that rituals, celebrations and ceremonies have within them liminal states and zones that “move individuals and communities from one state to another.”

The experience of this liminal state enables the individual to gain insight or obtain a special state of mind. In contrast to Grimes’ categories of ritual sensibilities, Cameron delves into the psychological effects of ritual proposing that they are “alignment processes” that one enters into and his interest in symbol and mythology form much of the basis for his argument.

Similarly to Grimes he claims that elements of these different processes can coexist and occur in a single ritual.

In naming them “alignment processes” Cameron draws upon Arthur Koestler’s theories in *The Act of Creation*. Koestler proposes that an individual’s thought and perception matrices are capable of recalibration in new alignments that create new understandings or insights. Cameron proposes that rituals are housings for these fixed codes of behaviour and perception, and when fundamentally challenged or dislocated can be realigned into new configurations. The potential to literally transform habitual matrices of thought in the enactment of ceremonies is vital information for the composition process, and may affect all design choices made.

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536 ibid. 49.
537 (Roger) Neil Cameron, “New Alignments in Ritual, Ceremony and Celebration” (Griffith University, 2004).
538 Refer Book Two, Chapter six: The Ritual-Artist’s lineages
539 Cameron. 15.
540 ibid. 23-27.
542 Cameron. 24.
Cameron’s first category of ritual process is “transformation.” Transformation rituals are designed to create radical and permanent change within the participant. Cameron argues that these rituals act on the psyche to create a permanent realignment of identity and of structures of ontology.\(^{543}\) “Reinforcement” as the second category describes the bringing into alignment of certain beliefs or feelings in a prescribed format in order to reinforce them. Cameron sees these rituals as acting temporarily and “activated when a community or an individual want to have a ‘special’ experience that reflects and strengthens the feelings and values that they find important.”\(^{544}\) However, I question this proposition of temporary change, as Cameron also suggests an ensuing “enrichment” as a result of the rite. Although reinforcement ceremonies may not engender dramatic transformations, they could be seen as achieving an augmented state of being, and thus even if small the change endures.

Thirdly Cameron suggests “transcendence” as a state of being which is temporarily engendered in order to rise above the mundane. Cameron sees this as a “formless structure” in which the ego is supplanted by the experience of profound feelings of group identity and belonging. It is simultaneously a highly reflexive state. Importantly, Cameron points out that of all his categorisations a transcendent alignment ritual is the type most open to abuse. Therefore it is important that the composer’s approach is a transparent and reflexive, with an awareness of the potential for misuse of ritual modes.\(^{545}\)

The fourth and final category is “catharsis.” This realignment is also seen as permanent as the experience of these rituals is most often linked to participants who have experienced crisis or trauma and in ritual enactment have achieved some breakthrough or relief from their distress. Catharsis rituals are not exclusive to these extremes, but they are intended to comfort and enrich the participants and to address whatever is preventing their well-being. Whilst the composer is not responsible for each individual’s personal experience of catharsis, nor for their inward state of receptivity, the ritual designed acts as crucible for this cathartic state. The power of this alignment state is therefore also open to abuse. In addition to Cameron’s observations I concur that any attempts at engendering catharsis, particularly in community settings, should be handled cautiously and with safeguards in place for any associated and unexpected trauma that may arise.\(^{546}\)

\(^{543}\) ibid. 32-53.
\(^{544}\) ibid. 54-88.
\(^{545}\) ibid. 89-111.
\(^{546}\) Cameron, 128.
The main contribution that Cameron's theoretical work has made to my own research has been his conception of rituals as “alignment processes.” Of lesser import is his delineation of them into just four categories. Cameron's description of the four alignment states indicates an agonistic basis for their manifestation as much of his theory is grounded in Turner’s theories of communitas and liminality.  

Just as Grimes critiqued Turner for his overt emphasis of transformation, my critique of Cameron is that his alignment states are restrictive in being limited to only four states. Affect has many guises. In composing a ritual with an intent that is transformative, it’s opposite effect or indeed no affect at all may be made if that ritual ‘fails.’ I contend that a range of affective and emotional states might be intended and thus composed for.

If the starting point of ritual composition is not agonistic, but rather poetic, ritual alignment states may afford the individual experiences along a spectrum of affect from the grand communal notion of transcendence through to more intimate expressions that may: soothe/ strain, uplift/ deflate, restore/ erode, transport/ embed, etc. The list is without fathom.

Rituals' Structural Concerns
Similarly to Van Gennep’s observations that rites are nested within rites within ceremonies, Frits Staal in his study of Vedic rituals describes a similar observation. He contends that an inherent quality of rituals is that they are made up of smaller units (rites) that continue to branch off and divide to reveal more embedded rites within the meta-ritual form. In this description, we can conceive of their resemblance to fractal-like structures of repeating form: of rites within rites, within rites. Staal notes that this process of “embedding” is part of the structure of ritual; embedded micro-rites within a rite, and of those rites within a ritual. In support of his contention on the ‘meaninglessness of ritual,’ Staal notes that van Gennep recognised that it was the relational quality between individual rites that engendered their meaning, so that when considered out of context, as individual entities, rites were without meaning. Grimes offers a nuanced reading of Staal’s position on the meaninglessness of rituals by noting that although rituals are not inherently meaningful, they are containers for meaning making.

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547 Cameron. 45.
548 Staal. 15-19.
549 Ibid. 15-23.
550 Staal. 11.
Importantly to this research, in addition to their inherently relational and embedded structural qualities, Staal notes that rites have a flexible capacity to transform according to need. Concerned with fomenting a “theory of ritual,” Staal suggests that both the embedding of rites and their modification are both key structural capacities of rituals, a phenomena he describes as “ritual syntax.” Staal’s contention that syntactical rules determine ritual structure, which are inclusive of an inherent capacity for modification due to their relational imperative, is an important observation towards a theory for Contemporary Ceremony composition. It also is reminiscent of Rosati’s view that rituals form the “deep grammar of society.”

Contemporary Ceremony: Theorizing and re-inventing ritual

Contemporary Ceremony and Ritual Studies

Whilst many ritual studies scholars have undertaken significant analysis of the structural and social determinants of ritual practice, their emphasis has been on the study of extant rituals rather than accounting for the composing of new ones. Taxonomies of ritual forms, structuralist analyses, the social significance and functionality of ritual processes, notions of ritual efficacy and ritual meaninglessness, as well as the cognitive functioning of rites and rituals have all been rigorously explored by eminent scholars in the field. However, to date few scholarly texts offer insights into possible praxial processes; the creative dynamics and lived experience of ritual composition.

Ceremony in Indigenous Australia

Importantly, the term ‘Ceremony’ has a significant resonance in an Indigenous Australian context. In Indigenous Australian usage, it is both noun and verb – much like the term ‘ritual’ in the West. One ‘does’ ceremony as much as one attends a ceremony (contextually dependent on your role within it). ‘Doing ceremony’ is an activity that is considered a vital part of Indigenous culture: a deep expression feeding the spirit and self in fundamental ways. Greves notes: “Aboriginal Spirituality provides a philosophical baseline for Indigenous knowledges development in Australia. It is Aboriginal knowledges that build the capacity to enhance the social and emotional wellbeing for Aboriginal people now living within a colonial regime.”

‘Doing ceremony’ refers to ritual ‘business’ that takes place. In traditional and in contemporary Indigenous culture one ‘does’ ceremony for many aspects of daily life: “Ceremony … incorporates

552 Staal. 19-21
553 Rosati. 8.
554 Grimes Grimes, Beginnings in Ritual Studies. xxii.
stories, music, song and dance, by which the characters and events of eternity or everywhen are brought into the sacred space of the everyday.\textsuperscript{556} Professor Judy Atkinson has written at length on the centrality of ceremony to life for Australia’s First Peoples.\textsuperscript{557} She notes: “Order was maintained in relationship with the natural world by the rituals and ceremonies conducted to increase and the healing of country, which were essential for survival. In turn it was known that, if people met their ceremonial obligations to the land, the land would nurture them.”\textsuperscript{558}

Melissa Lucashencko phrases it similarly:

> In Aboriginal cosmology, we belong ‘on country’ by virtue of the spirit which enters us from the repository of the earth at conception and which returns to the earth when we die. We belong on country by virtue of the circular relationship between us, the land and all other being that live on land and in the air and waters, As humans we are components of a landscape, physically and spiritually. Our relationships to land, fauna, flora and waterways are deep, long-lived, explicit and celebrated in ceremony.\textsuperscript{559}

Contemporary Ceremonies could be seen as interventions enacted to re-assign political and moral recognition of Indigenous Peoples in more than symbolic form — although paradoxically symbolically enacted. The intention is to image and imagine an alternative paradigm within the formal and ‘reinforcing’ etiquette of ceremony. One example of such clandestine “practices of inventive intervention”\textsuperscript{560} can be found in the Dreamtime at the G 2012 case study. The mass of dancers each held a clenched fist salute at the end of their performance to the popular anthem ‘Solid Rock’\textsuperscript{561} which could be variously interpreted as a ‘rock ‘n’ roll’ gesture or the black power salute. This was a conscious compositional choice, made with the awareness that the performance would be screened on National television to many millions of viewers, and that as such it might act as ‘subliminal’ declaration of a sovereignty never officially ceded, and a symbolic enactment of identity, solidarity and resistance.

These observations contribute to the description of Contemporary Ceremony, however as both Grimes and Cameron stress, most rituals do not fall neatly into singular categories, but rather are

\textsuperscript{556} ibid. 20.
\textsuperscript{557} Atkinson. 20-50.
\textsuperscript{560} Shane Howard, Solid Rock, 1982. Goanna Band.
often a blend of modalities and/or alignment processes. Therefore, given the complexity of a genre potentially distinguished by its ‘bleeding boundaries,’ and its exacting temporal, cultural and spatial concerns, for clarity, this thesis considers compositional dynamics from my perspective as they evolved in dialogical relationship with the communities in which they were composed. This thesis embraces Grimes’ definition of ceremony, without limiting it to this, as many Contemporary Ceremonies have been performed as very formal occasions whilst simultaneously being ‘inventive interventions.’\textsuperscript{562}

**Zeitgeist: “Regimens of value” and “affective fields of power”**

Although, as Grimes notes, rituals can be seen to define borders, borders are capable of being breeched – they bleed. What is seen as ‘traditional’ rituals to some is simply a continuation of cultural practice for others. Citing Hobsbawm,\textsuperscript{563} Grimes cautions us that we can “…no longer maintain an overdrawn polarisation between tradition and creativity.”\textsuperscript{564} He notes: “…rituals do not preserve themselves, maintenance is required…rituals are rendered traditional by constant micro-changes …a ritual tradition is not transmitted hand over hand like an old heirloom. Rather it is re-created each time it is performed.”\textsuperscript{565}

Contemporary Ceremonies hover in their own liminoid\textsuperscript{566} definitional space between taxonomies of ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’; ‘art’ and ‘ritual’; performance and participatory event. In occupying this tenuous space, it is worth heeding Grimes warning that emerging ritual forms are often ignored or dismissed by scholars because they are often viewed as temporary, and “new, self-conscious, disestablished.”\textsuperscript{567} However, Grimes challenges an appraisal that denies “the inventability of ritual,” by championing the idea of “ritual invention” as analogous to changes in language and culture, particularly when viewed over time.\textsuperscript{568}

As such, Grimes declares that, “ritual is a fully historical, fully cultural process,” and that it is necessarily “constructed and on occasion, constructive.”\textsuperscript{569} To situate ritual process as “fully historical” situates its practice in time, whilst simultaneously being a “fully cultural process” situates

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\textsuperscript{562} Refer Appendix Five: Other Ceremonial Works 2006 – 2017
\textsuperscript{563} Grimes, The Craft of Ritual Studies. 314.
\textsuperscript{564} Ibid. 315.
\textsuperscript{565} Ibid. 313-314.
\textsuperscript{566} Turner, "Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality." Turner uses this term to differentiate between tribal, early agrarian and religious rituals and newer forms that may not have the antistructure and communitas associated with older forms of ritual practice: "Liminoid phenomena, unlike liminal, do not so much invert as subvert quotidian and prestigious structures and symbols.", 465-499.
\textsuperscript{568} Ibid. 23-24.
\textsuperscript{569} "Reinventing Ritual." 24.
ritual practice culturally and thus arguably geographically, in space. This reframing of ritual as a spatially and temporally constructed cultural process points to important compositional concerns for Contemporary Ceremony, and suggests ‘site specific’ considerations for its creation and enactment in Australia. Prominent among these considerations is the use of traditional and contemporary forms of cultural expression.

Anthropologist Fred Myers in *Unsettling Business: Acrylic Painting, Tradition, and Indigenous Being,* suggests the need to rethink the perceived polemical divide between notions of ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’ culture. He notes that cultures (and their expression) come in to being in affective “fields of power;” influenced contextually and temporally, rather than as reified “authentic” continuities. However, in Myers reading, considerations of culture are not restricted to the geographical or temporal spaces in which these tropes come into being. Culture and its processes of being made includes the meanings and values of the (contemporary) culture maker, who, as shown in Myer’s example of Western Desert artists, straddle a hybrid trans-cultural space belonging to and living in both Indigenous and ‘Western’ cultures simultaneously. Myers urges caution however, as any claims on tradition and its definition can be fraught for a people who experience the ongoing dislocating ravages of colonisation. He notes that debates on tradition – its ‘ownership’, fixity and mutability – have been:

… used as a vehicle for dividing Aboriginal people as well as empowering some. The claim of its possession, too, is a claim of survival, persistence, and connection to a past. It is, in fact, because such a seemingly innocuous concept can have such serious real world consequences for indigenous people that it is worth thinking our way through it once again.

In his ‘rethinking’ Myers, suggests that traditional meanings and practices (such as ritual performance, design, and mythical narrative) should not be considered the “absolute determinants” for the composition of cultural practices and forms, harkening rather to a ‘field’ or ‘zeitgeist’ that influences their production. Myers therefore urges a composite conception of cultural production that draws on ancient as well as current forms and concerns, he states: “The point is rather to insist

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571 Ibid. 249-254


577 Myers. 249.
on interpretive struggle, ambiguity, as regimes of value are constantly brought into new relationships."

A recent example of “regimes of value” having been “brought into new relationships” can be glimpsed in the fusion of ‘traditional dance’ with hip-hop choreography by the Elcho Islander ‘Djuki Mala Dancers’ as, ‘painted up,’ they reinterpret Greek/ Yolngu dance to the title theme music from the movie Zorba the Greek. Here ‘traditional’ Indigenous Yolngu dance patterns, and their contexts, collide with contemporary influences and distant cultural references, evolving the very idea of Indigenous dance and glocal belonging. The Djuki Mala Dancers’ performances describe a poignant and comedic expression of, and comment upon, Yolngu life in a world of rapidly accreting globalization. Their performances hover between formal and temporal definitions, neither quite traditional nor exclusively contemporary. The Djuki Mala Dancers’ fusion of forms in their interpretation of ‘Zorba’ could be viewed as both artistic and ritualised expressions of celebration, which do not calcify, but remain in flux. As cultural forms evolve and change over time, ritual modes deemed appropriate in the past necessarily change to reflect current concerns.

The ‘Call to Ceremony’ (below) which Woiwurrung senior elder Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy, and artists Tania Bosak, Gamilaraay, Kooma woman Maurial Rose Spearim and I created in 2008 for the work Longing, Belonging, Land is another example of this hybridity. The inspiration for creating the call came from experiences of the Karanga, the formal Maori calls of welcome to the Marae. Whilst we had no intention of mimicking or appropriating the form in content, style or tone, there

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574 Ibid. 252-253
575 Formerly known as the ‘Chooky Dancers’ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O–MucVW0–Pw
576 More recent works include Ngurru–milmarminw (Wrong Skin) 2010 http://www.djukimala.com
577 Call to Ceremony: https://vimeo.com/162218830
578 Gamilaraay and Kooma are both First Peoples nations of Australia.
579 These formal calls, karanga, are an important Maori protocol of welcome which herald the commencement of ceremonial activities at the Marae, which is a house like structure used for community gatherings and sacred ceremonies. http://www.korero.maori.nz/forlearners/protocols/marae.html
was an intention to introduce the ‘call’ as a ritual process: to gather and focus attention for the start of our Contemporary Ceremony. Written in Woiwurrung language, this call has now been used on many formal occasions. It has also been nationally televised as the start of each Opening Ceremony for *Dreamtime at the G* (2010 – 2014). The *Call to Ceremony* has been adopted in many of Aunty Joy’s own *Welcome to Country* ceremonies and I have used this idea as a compositional component – the ‘call to ritual’ in Contemporary Ceremonies with other Indigenous communities, and in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The many “regimes of value” forged into new relationships and other hybrid dimensions of Contemporary Ceremony will be further investigated in the case studies of this thesis, as the dynamics of Contemporary Ceremonies’ emplaced composition in post-Apology Australia (and post-apartheid South Africa) and their relationship to ritual theory are further delineated.

**Conclusion to Book One**

In Book One, I have outlined this research project and the thesis structure based on van Gennep’s rites of passage. In this book, I have introduced the space of CC as the conceived realm in which representations of the ‘space of CC’ are mapped in literature, primarily in ritual studies and Indigenous studies.

The conceptual spaces of CC’s have been identified given their compositional emplacement in Australia. A necessary understanding of this ‘space’ for its histories and complex political, ritual and social relationships has been offered. I have also outlined ontological and philosophical perspectives of Sloterdijk and Latour that are in concert with the Indigenist oriented research paradigm – from a western epistemological perspective.

As noted earlier, Contemporary Ceremonies explore the reflexive and reconciliatory potential of ritual forms. In taking part, participants co-create narratives of belonging, recognition, and

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580 Refer Glossary
connection whilst ‘imaging and imagining’ their micro-communities and their concerns. In the process of divining these multimedia events, it is useful to reconsider Grimes contention that: “Ritual is the predication of identities and differences (metaphors) so profoundly enacted that they suffuse the bone and blood, thereby generating a cosmos (an oriented habitat). In rites we enact a momentary cosmos of metaphor.”

As such, it is important to note that in ‘imaging and imagining’ the ritual project, appearance, affect, and atmosphere as found within the bounds of the ceremonial space come under the composer’s purview. From the ‘theatricality’ of ritual structure, to the ‘heart of the matter’ of conceptual and philosophical constructs; from the coordination of bodies as abstract idea, to the phenomena of embodiment and emplacement in participation; composing Contemporary Ceremonies is a complex trans-disciplinary endeavour. Perceptual matters of compositional concern, those that govern affect and atmosphere, the ‘know what’ and ‘know that’ of praxis, are addressed in Book Two.

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Chapter Four: The Perceived Realm – Ritual Theory, ‘Know That’ and ‘Know What’

Introduction

Book Two marks the second stage of the ritual process: ‘Transition.’ The ‘matters of concern’ at this stage draw closer to the ‘Heart of the Matter’ in the combined realms of propositional knowledge of the dynamics, divination and design of ritual from the field of ritual studies, and the intuitive/experiential knowledge of the artist. Having discussed the conceived realms of composition underpinning this research in Book One, it now remains to outline the ways in which ritual is perceived, to articulate the ‘Practice as Research’ (PaR) methodology, and to give an account of each of the case studies. This Book is intended as relational offering particularly intended for ‘artists-as-researchers’ who may wish to explore this PaR approach and gain insight into the ‘know that’ and ‘know what’ of CC composition.

A re-clarification of what this research intends

Knowledge of art, community practice, and ritual coalesces over time, and is embodied in the composer of Contemporary Ceremony. Therefore, a personal and reflexive analysis of research findings includes a focus on ephemera, sensibilities, intuitions and insights in addition to theory. This body of research seeks to consider the practice of Contemporary Ceremony for commonalities

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582 Refer Book Three, Chapter Eight: Inside the Matrix: The Heart of the Matter
583 Refer Book Two, Chapter Five: Practice as Research (PaR) and research-creation
584 Refer Grimes: “Ritualising is a mode of knowing … in which knower and known conjoin.” Grimes, Beginnings in Ritual Studies. 63.
in composition, and to construct a praxial technique for their composition. In addressing this quest, three intersecting ‘matters of concern’ are considered. These are:

1. The conceiving aspect of composition (know that, ways of knowing, knowing): This sphere considers the ‘space’ or ‘cosmos’ of contemporary ceremony. It considers how ritual has been represented in ritual studies theory, CC’s relationship to Australia and the ethical and relational concerns that underpin praxis, and the intent in composing CCs. CC’s is conceived as a cultural and artistic ‘domain’ and its ontological framing alongside ethical and procedural concerns that underpin praxis, determines the “momentary cosmos” composed.

2. The perceiving aspect of composition (know what, ways of doing, felt) Community and Context: This epistemological sphere of analysis considers the community with whom one is composing, their matters of concern, and how the ‘felt world’ and ‘atmosphere’ of ceremony is composed in consideration of its intended ‘affect’ on participants. Relationships within and between community and space /emplacement are vital considerations in this sphere.

3. The doing/living aspect of composition: (ways of being) Process and event — how the process of composition unfurls in divination, design and enactment of Contemporary Ceremonies. The matters of concern include simultaneous activities of ceremony composition and lived event as process.

Beyond ‘artists-as-researchers,’ it is intended that this research will contribute to the work of other practitioners in similar fields, and serve as a resource for those who may wish to engage in creating ceremonies, both in Australia and beyond. Importantly it is also considered an offering to those communities with whom I have collaborated, as a reciprocal and relationally accountable act of gratitude for the friendships made and works created together.

**Naming Contemporary Ceremony: The Communities’ Preference**

As noted in Book One, Grimes charts ‘ceremony’ as one of six modes in the spectrum of ritual sensibilities.\(^{585}\) His use of the terms ‘mode’ and ‘sensibility’ in this analysis exhibits an underlying experiential understanding of rituals as embodied, nuanced: sensed and felt activities.\(^{586}\) ‘Mode’ suggests a way of doing whilst ‘sensibility’ points to a combination of sensate, cognitive and discerning perceptions. As such the ‘whole self,’ as Turner pointed out, is actively, knowingly, and sensitively engaged in the ritual process.\(^{587}\)

Grimes defines ceremonies as inherently political interactions, “manifestly competitive,” which serve to commemorate or celebrate moments of importance, whilst concurrently cognitively reinforcing, through symbolic display, respect for the offices and power bases of society. According to Grimes,

\(^{585}\) ibid. 35.


ceremonies are of “legal, tribal, or racial import” and often distinguished by their being performed as “large-group political interaction.” 588 Whilst of relevance to this study, Grimes’ definition requires further scrutiny for its application in an Australian context; being mindful of Contemporary Ceremony as a “fully historical and fully cultural process.” 589

It is important to note that the naming of this ritual-art form emerged from the research findings. The experiences of participants were analysed for their perceptions of affect (sensual, philosophical, spiritual and ontological) though the collection of random and de-identified responses to online questionnaires, and from anecdotal evidence. 590 Participant surveys, carried out as part of this research project, volunteered responses indicating that Contemporary Ceremony was undeniably the community-members’ preferred term. Recently, ‘contemporary ceremony’ has been adopted as the name for similar practices carried out by associated artists practicing in similar fields. 591 For clarity, use of the term in this thesis specifically describes my current and ongoing ritual-art practice that is both current and ceremonial in nature and has been capitalised to make the distinction clear.

**Imagined Destinies: an Anti– Colonial Intent**

In creating work that is anti-colonial in intent — reflecting on how we might ‘imagine communities” 592 — my practice has focused on creating spaces of reflexivity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This is ‘divined’ through the development of temporal and spatial dialogues between Entities, as long-past expressions, symbols, and sites of ceremony converge with the immediacy of contemporary enactment; informing the work and highlighting an awareness of the many implications of ancestry, place and ritual in our selves. 593

**Ritual as Art**

Religious studies philosopher in his introduction to *Thinking Through Rituals: Philosophical Perspectives* Kevin Schilbrack compares the practice and complexity of ritual enactments to opera. 594 The musical analogy is a helpful one for those contemplating the composition of ritual, for the ephemerality of an inherently performative art is captured only partially within the ‘liturgical’ structure of musical score and libretto. When performed live, however, both ritual and opera can be transformative. Both forms rely on the cross-disciplinary technical, poetic, and performative talents

588 Grimes, Beginnings in Ritual Studies. 41-42  
589 *“Reinventing Ritual.”* 24.  
590 Refer Appendix Six: Surveys  
591 Refer Appendix Seven: Australian Contemporaries  
593 Refer Book Two, Chapter six: Dreamtime at the G (2010 – 2013)  
of the opera/ceremony company (lighting and set designers, costumiers, repetiteurs, production managers, producers, box office staff, promoters, soloists, conductors, musicians, chorale, etc.) and the reciprocal attendance of 'audiences,' without whom both would be futile. Ritual, like opera, when at its most affective can offer cast, crew and audience glimpses of the sublime.

Ritualizing as or within 'art practice' has a long history in a broad spectrum of performative and visual arts, including dance, music, visual art, and film. In the performing arts 'Ritual Performance' describes a canon that, although related to Contemporary Ceremony, is most strongly associated with lineages of theatrical performance than the process of ritual making as community-oriented art practice. The difference, I suggest, lies in the former's primary concern with actor training and the process of workshopping reflexive states within the rehearsal process to create powerful art, as found in the works of Grotowski and Brook, et al. The latter’s prime focus is the ceremony’s intent and transmits this intent through ritual-art. As such relational, temporal, and processual concerns (and constraints) affect all artistic (and pedestrian) choices seconded to its creation. I will discuss the relationship between Contemporary Ceremony and Performance, and the field of performance studies shortly, however, the notion of ritual as an art form requires further scrutiny.

According to writer and journalist Nicholas Rothwell, the capacity for both art and ceremonies to create 'new alignments' in self is well understood by Indigenous ceremony makers in Australia. Noting the difference between Indigenous understanding of the role of art and ceremony and the dominant cultural perspective he states:

These notions are not familiar to Western thought, with its view of art as a form of worked, elaborated response to the patterns and the shape of life. But the indigenous tradition goes down a sharply different path. The ceremony is meant to interrupt life, to make the dancer transcend himself, and in that instant reach an evaluation of who he is, what life means.596

There is considerable opportunity for contemporary cultural practitioners to harness these potent performative modes, and to manipulate forms to serve any manner of content. Rituals are ubiquitous, and enjoy an endless flow of definitions dependent on disciplinary gaze. WHATSOEVER your intellectual bias, rituals, as Cameron suggests, can serve as “alignment processes”597 construed to facilitate and transport us into different states of receptivity, awareness, knowing, social hierarchy, spiritual and social connection.

595 Refer Book Two, Chapter Four: Performance and Enactment – theatre and ritual
597 Cameron. 54.
Further, ritual composition is a democratic modality. Anyone can design a ritual. However, its efficacy, arguably, depends on two major elements: the artfulness of its design (including the attention we bring to design of liturgy, symbol, elemental forms and anticipated sensorial enactments), and our level of commitment in the ritual's embodiment, or simply put: how much we 'care.' Both art and ritual are inherently reflexive processes wherein, whether intentionally or not; we express who we are to each other and to ourselves as well.

Ritual is a form by which culture presents itself to itself. In ritual, not only are particular messages delivered, but ritual also creates a world in which culture can appear. Further, ritual creates a setting in which persons can appear, by appearing in their culture, by devising a reality in which they may stand as part. In their rituals, we see persons dramatizing self and culture at once, each made by the other.598

We enact our cultures ritually whether in the confines of a proscenium arch or upon a simple circle of sand in the desert, in a coffee shop, or in a cathedral. In greetings, in mourning, in our celebrations, when undertaking rituals (and when we care about their success), we strive for art and artfulness: the 'affect' of experience only possible through sensual engagement. So, as ritual makers, how do we achieve this artfulness, this ‘ritual efficacy’ in design? Grimes urges: “Circumspection and allusion are of the essence to this model. Yes you want results, but you know that too conscious a fixation on them will get you the opposite – some contrived, self-conscious piece of bad poetry."599

Grimes questions whether ritual studies is an ‘art’ or a ‘craft.’ He argues that the practice of studying ritual is a craft, which might be defined as: “art’s practical-minded, hands-on, manual-labourer cousin,"600 Here he rekindles an old debate regarding the ‘un-teach-ability’ of art due to the ‘issue of genius,’ opting for a definition that captures something of utilitarian functionality both in the act of studying ritual and potentially of rituals themselves. Grimes declares that it is not appropriate to ask if an artwork ‘works,’ however in practice many artists find this to be an essential question. The artist constantly questions and assesses the affect and communicability of their creative choices and creations whilst in process, and in surveying their ‘end result.’ It is common practice to assess the creations of other artists with the critique: ‘does it work?’

Grimes contends the study of ritual be considered a craft which requires the astute application of methodological frameworks to examine structure, forms, and influences. Whilst Grimes’ point may

599 Grimes, Deeply into the Bone: Reinventing Rites of Passage. 12-13.
600 The Craft of Ritual Studies. 4.
be a disciplinary one, the *composing* of ritual I determine is an art: one that may be learned and honed through practice and developed through technique. It is beyond the scope and intent of this paper to enter the debate regarding the ‘teach-ability’ of art forms. However, one might equally argue that it is through honing one’s craft according to techniques, passed down from generations of past practitioners, and in practicing in ‘the field’ that one achieves some form of mastery.

**Ritualizing**

The term ‘ritualising’ has been used by Grimes to describe the making process, but any interrogation of what this might entail – in detail (or that there may even be an ‘art’ to it) – remains largely under-explored. A tension tugs at this dilemma as scholars and “ritualists” debate the very possibility of the “inventability of ritual.” Grimes points out:

_Ritualizing’ is the act of cultivating or inventing rites. I use it synonymously with ‘ritual construction’ and ‘ritual making.’ The ‘–izing’ ending is a deliberate attempt to suggest a process, a quality of nascence or emergence. Ritualizing is not often socially supported. Rather it happens in the margins, on the thresholds; therefore it is alternatively stigmatized and eulogized._

Experientially, the praxis and process of composing Contemporary Ceremony has similarly occurred in the margins and has required artistic acts of cultivation, often in markedly unsupportive environments, for its emergence. It is an example of an ‘art of community’ practice occurring in the margins, nascent in its evolution.

**Intent, form and content: How do rituals do what they ‘do’?**

Many rituals demarcate transitions in being or changes of status, offering definition to life passages. Rituals can facilitate both intimate, individual changes in self as well as collective transformations within and/or between communities. As such they can be efficacious processes for defining and concurrently establishing a new way of being. The process, if engaging, engages our whole being. Stressing the importance of formal considerations in creating affect, performance theorist Richard Schechner, proposes that rituals:

_…Short circuit thinking, providing ready-made answers to deal with crisis. Individual and collective anxieties are relieved by rituals whose qualities of repetition, rhythmicity,
exaggeration, condensation and simplification stimulate the brain into releasing endorphins into the bloodstream. … yielding a relief from pain, a surfeit of pleasure.\textsuperscript{605}

He goes on to note that the: “Oceanic feeling of belonging, ecstasy and total participation that many experience when ritualising works by means of repetitive rhythms, sounds and tones effectively tune to each other the left and right hemispheres of the cerebral cortex.”\textsuperscript{606} The misconception of binary division of mind and body dissolve and are inseparable in the ritual process. Affect and efficacy is in part reliant on form: the choice of ritual objects, ritual activities, ritual roles and ritual modes assembled together. However, the form of ritual expression aside, the ‘content’ – and ‘intent’ – of ritual is similarly multi-modal.

The ‘content’ of rituals can be regarded as operating on a number of levels. The basic narrative of a ritual, its ‘theme,’ is an important and arguably necessary anchoring device (e.g. wedding, funeral etc.). As part of the process of creating and enacting ‘content’ different rites may be embedded further confirming the ritual’s ‘theme’ – e.g. exchanging vows in Western wedding ceremonies. However, there are further levels of intent to consider in the ritual process. Intent, put simply, is what the ritual intends to ‘do,’ ‘affect’ and the ‘alignment’ it intends to instil within the participant/s. Funerals are not simply ways of disposing of the dead, they smooth the transition for the living who must face the “abysmal separation of loss.”\textsuperscript{607} Emphasis in enactment, as part of the ‘design’ (or how skilfully form and content have been assembled,) will convey the ritual ‘intent.’ Here, Catherine Bell’s simple musical analogy for the process rings true: “a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege.” However, I suggest a modification. Instead of a ‘way of acting’ interpreting the verb form ‘ritualizing’ I suggest use of the noun ‘ritual:’ as an ‘enactment’ that is “designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege.”\textsuperscript{608}

When creating a ceremony or ritual, particularly if one aims to integrate an audience and move them physically, emotionally and spiritually, it is vital for the designer to have a deep comprehension and – if possible – a personal commitment towards the focus of the event. A felt and committed genesis when creating ritual can dispel the very real risk of creating tokenistic results. Keeping firm to the one central idea – the ‘Heart of the Matter’\textsuperscript{609} – assists in avoiding superfluous, extraneous (and thus confusing) symbolic images and gestures.

\textsuperscript{606} Ibid. 19-20.
\textsuperscript{608} Bell. 74.
\textsuperscript{609} Refer Book Three, Chapter Eight: Inside the Matrix: The Heart of the Matter
Creating a ritual or ceremony without a focus or objective (intent) in mind is (to my mind) a pointless endeavour and certainly one, which by virtue of its lack of content, would struggle to engage. The imbricated relationship between ‘form’ and ’content’ become fused and inseparable in the ritual process; facilitating the ritual intent.

In his summary to the Introduction of The Future of Ritual, Schechner clarifies this point commenting: “To reuse, recycle, archive and recall… to seek roots, explore and maybe even plunder religious experiences, expressions, practices, and liturgies to make art… is to ritualise; not just in terms of subject matter and theme, but also structurally, as form.”610 There is a similar bricolage active in the process of composing Contemporary Ceremony. However, CC's are created in ‘attunement’ with other forms, alert to harmful ‘plundering’ of cultural materials that are not ‘ones’ own.’

I have previously noted the significance of Van Gennep’s trifold schema, the embedded, fractal and modifiable qualities of ritual, and referred to Grimes’ and Cameron’s theories of modes and alignment processes in Book One. I will not repeat them here, but remind you of their import in orchestrating intent skilfully.

Divination – knowing what611

The central aim of this research intends an analysis of the generative aspects of ritual composition, viewing the process of composing as one of divination. Divination can be a very personal business, a subtle art, and is central to the process of each Contemporary Ceremony’s design. Grimes captures an essence of the ‘nomadic’ and instinctive processes of divination as he alludes to the alertness and lightness of touch required, whilst simultaneously being aware of tone and applicability. He notes:

Circumspection and allusion are of the essence to this model. Yes you want results, but you know that too conscious a fixation on them will get you the opposite – some contrived, self-conscious piece of bad poetry. So you wait, attend, contemplate, watch, and see what emerges. You follow impulses like a scout sniffing the wind. You watch for a raised eyebrow, a hesitation, a sneeze that has the ring of a song. Attuned, you snatch it deftly and edit it minimally. Your aim is to find, to ‘divine’ the right tone ...612

611 Refer Appendix Eight: My introduction to ‘dowsing.’
612 Grimes, Deeply into the Bone: Reinventing Rites of Passage. 12-13.
Divinatory traditions were once ubiquitous in the West prior to the Enlightenment, and indeed many forms remain so today. Whilst commonly gazed upon as occultist, divination in the form of tarot readings, throwing runes, and consulting psychics is still very much practiced and even a burgeoning online industry. Divination is a ritualized form familiar to us, even if we are sceptical about its value or capacity to inform. A deeper analysis of divination, its use and intentionality, must be undertaken to understand its poetic and utilitarian function in composing Contemporary Ceremony: as a source of ‘knowing what’ in its own right.

Carl Jung in his 1949 foreword to the *I Ching* noted that in order to use the divinatory tool one must “cast off certain prejudices of the Western mind,” noting the limits of the Western paradigm wherein “causality is considered an axiomatic truth.” A post-colonial gaze finds the dismissal of cultural and spiritual practices no longer acceptable. To discard other wisdoms, methodologies, and ontologies, would limit epistemological research; reducing possibilities of learning more about ourselves individually, and of our communities and their networks of associations.

Intercultural Philosopher Wim van Binsbergen, in noting these prejudices suggests that:

One of the tasks of Intercultural Philosophy is then to explode such hegemonic projection from the North Atlantic. Intercultural philosophy can do so by taking seriously the human thought processes elsewhere, by approaching in their own right the belief systems based upon them, and particularly by exposing the geopolitical, class, gender, racial and other collective interests that have imposed the violence of boundaries between subsets of humankind in the first place.

He goes on to note:

… sensorialist rationality has so restricted the sources of knowledge which are recognized as admissible in the North Atlantic and global contexts, that [the study of] other cultural orientations’ familiarity with other sources of knowledge, and with the procedures – the mental technologies – of tapping these sources, will add immensely to humanity’s knowledge about the world and about itself.

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615 Ibid. 1.
616 Ibid. 2.
Whilst van Binsbergen’s study is in the specific field of *sangomahood* 617 peculiar to the Southern African tradition, his findings about the function and practice of divination might have widespread application.

According to researcher Barbara Tedlock, “Divination…is a way of exploring the unknown and intentionally effective action,” which utilizes “inductive, intuitive and interpretive techniques and ways of knowing.” 618 She goes on to describe diviners as:

… specialists who use the idea of moving from a boundless to a bounded realm of existence in their practice… diviners excel in insight, imagination, fluency in language and knowledge of cultural traditions. During a divination, they construct usable knowledge from oracular messages. To do so, they link diverse domains of representational information and symbolism with emotional and presentational experience. 619

It is the conjoining of empirical knowledge with intention, emotion and inspiration that gives potency to the divinatory process, and yet most importantly these ‘oracular messages’ require translation, embodiment, and sensate representation to be understood. This construction and their rendering is the ritual maker’s challenge.

In his analysis of Senegalese and Gambian divinatory praxis, Knut Graw remarks that: “Divination should not be seen as an abstract search for knowledge but as a performative praxis constituting an intentional and empowering cultural space that allows the subject to engage actively with his current situation.” 620 To rely on one’s instinctive animal-self as mode of analysis and enquiry, adopting a “performative praxis” unencumbered by reason, can empower and bring new insights to the questions at hand, and allows for unexpected possibilities to emerge.

Western philosophical and scientific traditions have, until recently, been epitomised in Descartes famous declaration ‘I think, therefore I am’ (*Cogito ergo sum*). But there are multitudes of ways of knowing, and many non-Western cultural paradigms do not bias the intellect or causality. By way of example, during a question and answer session I attended after a performance by the *Pitjantjatjara Choir* (formerly known as the Ernabella Mission choir) 621 the choir leader, Rev. Dr. Bill Edwards was asked why ‘traditional music’ was not played with the translated Hymn text. He responded that in

617 *Sangoma* – the name for a traditional healer in many Southern African countries.
619 Ibid. 191.
Indigenous art forms, because of their ritual significance, form and content are inseparable. If extant traditional music were played, images would be evoked in the minds of the Indigenous congregation that had nothing to do with Christian dogma, and much to do with land and dreamtime imagery. The Christian content (the hymn text), he stressed, only has context in the Western Harmonic form. Fluent in Pitjantjatjara language, Edwards went on to suggest that an Indigenous ontology might be estimated in reframing Descartes axiom by transposing the verb ‘to think’ with the verb ‘to sing’: Canto ergo sum: I sing therefore I am. These ideas suggest that the very bedrock of Indigenous Australian culture lies in the central importance of song – interpreting the world through sound making with breath and voice – as “ways of knowing, being, and doing.”

Steven Friedson acknowledges a similar reinterpretation of Descartes’ phrase in his observation of West African cultures. Here, however, he replaces the verb ‘to sing’ with the verb ‘to dance.’ He goes further to suggest that “I dance, therefore I am” recharts Descartes’ philosophy as an ontology of the body: “A danced ontology moves us out of an interiority that projects a vision of certainty into a world that calls the body to recognise itself in the contours of musical experience.”

The diviner, aware and alert to these differing contours of perception, moves into an alchemical realm of the senses and intuition, and yet must do so with the guiding, tethering principle of intention. Being able to discern, distil and interpret “the client’s intention, longing and desire (nganiyo)” is the first step in a divinatory consultation: “To locate this intention is the diviner’s first task.”

Swancutt, mirroring what Jung suggests in his forward to the I Ching, argues that:

... divination actually forces people to adopt strategies that lead to innovation .... wherein repeated questioning leads to combinatory thought which imposes novel combinations on people, who perceive the need for innovation, access an innovation and finally recursively posit that innovation’s conceptual origins.

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622 ibid.
624 (citing Martin’s notion) Refer Book One, Chapter One: Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing
626 Ibid. 109.
627 Ibid
As an artist, innovation and reframing is an ongoing aesthetic and conceptual quest. As a ritual-maker the capacity to “adopt strategies that lead to innovation” and to divine rituals capable of such paradigmatic shifts requires committed aspiration.

**Boundaries**

As articulated in Book One, Rituals serve to introduce and exaggerate boundaries. An exploration of funerals or initiation rites, for example, will indicate psychological and physical states which the primary subject of the ritual – and sometimes all in attendance – must confront as part of the ritual’s enactment. The living must make final and permanent separation from the dead, and the child must surrender childhood and make way for the adolescent self to grow to adulthood. The function of these rituals is to provide a communal, observed and safe means of tracing a way through life both in space, place and time; marking boundaries and assigning significance.

When people first meet, whatsoever their cultural background, invariably etiquettes of greeting and meeting take place. Whether it be palms joined in Namaste, a nod ‘Salaam Alaikum,’ or a back slap ‘G’day’ greetings are rituals that acknowledge someone who a moment ago was ‘the other’ and is now, through this simple ritual, a part of your world. It is as simple as if saying and meaning: ‘I see you.’

Whenever cultures meet formally, there are always ceremonies of exchange, a “dramatizing of self and culture.” These rituals extend beyond the personal sphere to encompass and symbolically represent the self in the collective, to the other, in order for relationships to take place. Whether personal, public or political, official greetings declare ‘this is me and my people, and we recognize you and yours.’ They are sites of cross-cultural connectivity, which although ephemerally enacted, are transformational.

Once greeted you cannot be ‘un-met.’ Certainly your status and relationship might be unfavourable: you might not be accepted as ‘friend,’ you might be ritually ‘othered’ by banishment, be embargoed or have war declared upon you. But when meeting for the first time, whether in formal or more intimate settings, there is a basic level of reciprocity as individuals and cultures present themselves to each other and are acknowledged. Greetings are a condensed reflexive experience.

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629 Kuper, 155.
630 In Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, Turner states: “arousing consciousness of ourselves as we see ourselves...we are made self-aware, conscious of our own consciousness.”, 75.
Ritual and Risk

However, all rituals, even a simple greeting or apology, involve risk and often loss, be it a symbolic or actual loss, or something mysteriously 'in between.' A conundrum exists in the essence of ritual as in the moment of enactment the symbolic transforms to become, in fact, the very thing it was symbolising. The object or gesture transcends its own symbolic substitution and the metaphorical becomes the actual: the communion wine, through ritual enactment, is transubstantiated into what Catholic Christians believe to be the 'Blood of Christ.'

Professor Myriam Watthee–Delamotte during the ‘Performing Rituals’ conference at Aberystwyth University in 2012, suggested in her plenary address that this element of risk is unsurprisingly often problematic. A wager or an offering is made and understood to be a symbol, and in a sense ‘protected’ or ‘sacred’ because of this understanding. However, when a dog bares its throat in submission to the alpha dog or an army waves a white flag in surrender to the victor, the symbol can either be accepted or – in both cases – lethally rejected.

Performance and Enactment – theatre and ritual

It is important to reiterate that a commonality that all rituals share is their requirement of embodiment, as ‘happenings’ we enact, captured equally in the stillness of individual meditation or communal celebrations.

In adopting a PaR methodology, it may seem that performance studies would be a key theoretical arena upon which to focus this research. However, as Grimes notes there has been a long history of: “Nervousness about too closely associating ritual with theatre.” Grimes notes this had abated by the mid 20th Century, however, I am returned to this state of ‘nervousness’ as trajectories taken by some of ritual studies’ “vital sources and tributaries” has revealed some profound “category mistakes” that I propose can no longer be ignored.

Turner in his collaborations with Schechner, explored what he calls “ethnodramatics” – ‘acting out’ rituals that he witnessed in his fieldwork observations of Ndembu culture. Whilst Turner warns that this process requires scrutiny – asking himself whether he can possibly “understand or take into full analytical account” another culture – identifying that it is difficult to “separate aesthetic and performative problems from anthropological interpretations,” he did not curtail these activities.

631 Considered from a Western Catholic perspective.
635 Ibid. 98-100.
Instead he championed an approach, which to his thinking opened up to Western understanding “…other modes hitherto locked away from its cognitive chauvinism or cultural snobbery,” yet he remains completely unaware of his own cultural imperialism in doing so.

I have outlined issues and impacts of cultural appropriation in more detail in Book One, so will not continue this line of critique. However, I offer a brief recap of the main concerns I have with the over “dramatization” of ritual, in point form:

- Frazer, Durkheim, and Turner all describe rituals in other cultures as ‘dramatic’ enactments or performances. Enlightenment-era positivist stance considered human evolution to be reflected in “primitive” or “archaic” rites, which thus ‘rationalised’ Western European civilisations’ ‘supremacy.’ Turner – although of a different era – did not break from this categorising of ritual forms, nor question its basis.

- Turner’s model of ‘social drama’ evolved from a colonial anthropological gaze – misunderstanding and misrepresenting Ndembu rituals and culture, thus his conclusions deserve revision (as discussed in Book One).

- Turner’s agonistic model – similar to Aristotle’s schema for Tragedy – is an unacceptable basis for the composition of Contemporary Ceremony, although it may be the basis of other types of ritual. Rather than a ‘tragic’ basis, Contemporary Ceremony chooses a ‘poetic’ basis, adopting Van Gennep’s trifold schema and his definitions of the liminal.

- I found that contemplating Contemporary Ceremonies from the gaze of performance studies added little to my understanding of the phenomena and composition dynamics. I decided to ‘turn the tables’ and interrogate CCs as ritual-art-works for their resonances in the fields of ritual studies and Indigenous studies. I do continue to use occasional theatrical comparisons where useful in conveying similarities, but stress that I conceive them to have different ontological bases. CCs do not subscribe to Turner’s model of rituals based on ‘social dramas.’

Performance scholar Schechner asserts that performance is a “showings of doings” created primarily for entertainment, whilst rituals might be considered “doings of showings” which emphasises their intended efficacy. Grimes questions this stance, and it is a criticism that I share. The idea that rituals are ‘doings of showings’ suggests that there is an intention to ‘show’ in the doing. Rather I find that the intent is to do, and that being shown – or simply witnessed – is a by-

product of the enactment rather than a necessary or desired element. As Grimes rightly points out, some rituals are intensely private and kept sequestered within the groups that practice them.637 Grimes stresses that ‘performance’ is not a nuanced enough descriptor to distinguish between the peculiarities of ritual action and theatrical action. He urges for the use of different verbs to signify different approaches — rituals he suggests are “enacted” whereas actors “perform” plays.638 He uses both terms to signify the emphasis he wishes to place on intent and function. My preference where possible is to use the verb ‘enact,’ as this represents the focus and intent of CCs, however the occasional use of ‘perform,’ may be required to relieve textual monotony. I use it similarly to the way in which one might describe ‘performing duties,’ rather than as specifically dramatic performance.

Liturgical Design

I have also chosen to use the term ‘liturgical design’ to describe what might be understood as the ‘narrative arc’ or script of a Contemporary Ceremony. ‘Liturgical design’ includes actions as well as words and music, and also implies the presumed responses (physical or cognitive) that the ritual intends to affect. The term is not intended to infer religious connotations, but rather is an attempt to substitute the use of dramatic descriptors for ‘ritual specific’ ones. To me the term more accurately conveys a sense of the ‘momentary cosmos’ ways of being, doing, and thinking.

The Currency of Ritual

Of importance to this research, is the significance that many scholars have attributed to ritual as a mode we also observe occurring outside of our human selves, uniting us with the animal kingdom. Ethology describes particular animal etiquettes of courtship, territory marking and hierarchy disputes, as ritualizing behaviours, recognizing in animal rituals patterns of behaviour that in many ways mirror our own.

The significance of this recognition for CCs is the ‘network of associations between entities’ and ‘acts of translation’ — that rituals create and share between cultures and creatures. In the “West” we dance out rituals with our pets and our gardens mostly unknowingly.

In ‘Rite out of Place’ Grimes suggests that if we were to reflect upon the ‘currency’ of ritual it would doubtlessly be ‘performance,’ (or perhaps given his more recent writings, ‘enactment.’) The production, consumption and transfer of the ‘wealth’ of a ritual makes demands of both those giving and those receiving the intended rite, which results in the enacted state in which both are physically

637 ibid.
638 ibid. 228.
implicit. Grimes elaborates further suggesting the economic unit of ritual is that of the ‘gift’ which: “… assumes the necessity of loss, even of deliberate and celebrated loss, of sacrifice of giving up what you would rather keep … what creatures have to lose in the gift economy is their lives. What the people have to lose is their false sense of themselves as superior.”

Grimes’ appreciation of ritual as a ‘gift economy’ aligns with Indigenous ontologies in which respect and reciprocity are values that are (ritually) performed in relationships. An example of the ‘gift economy’ in modern day Australian Indigenous ceremony can be found in the ‘Welcome to Country’ and ‘Acknowledgement of Elders and Traditional Owners’ that frequently preface official meetings and gatherings in Australia. These rituals are, to my mind, of supreme contemporary importance. Unfortunately, the latter variety, as with any ritual, if not attended to with sincerity, due commitment and contextual understanding runs the risk of becoming tokenistic and eventually hollow and meaningless.

I have been fortunate in having experienced many traditional Welcome Ceremonies and in every case, I am time and again struck by the magnitude, sincerity and generosity of the ritual. Safe passage across country, including all that it offers in sustenance, in enjoyment of ‘everything from the tips of the trees to the roots in the earth’ is offered time and again. I hear I am always ‘welcome to come back,’ that I ‘belong’ here, that I am ‘part of this place now too,’ that I should ‘care for it and carry it in my heart when I travel away, and feel welcome to return to enjoy the land once more.’ If, with an understanding of the protocol of reciprocity, I am asked simply to “respect the land, and the children of the land,” then it is vital that I honour such a gift with respect and obedience.

Generosity is an entrenched cultural more’ and as a ritual value central to Indigenous culture it teaches us how we are to behave here on this country, not just for felicity between people, but importantly for survival in our attitudes towards other entities and in caring for the land.

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639 Grimes, Rite out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts. 154.
640 Fred Myers describes the ritual significance of art making: “… the painters conceived of their activities as “giving” or “making visible” their indigenous forms of value to Canberra — expecting recognition of their identity and a return in value … Exceeding (obviously) the standard rendering of the “gift” as a moment of reciprocity, this kind of “giving” is a temporary production of one’s identity for an Other.”
641 Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy has mentioned anecdotally that she was the first Indigenous Australian to offer a formal ‘Welcome to Country,’ as is now practiced similarly nationwide, over 20 years ago. Refer Glossary
642 Refer Glossary
643 Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy embeds this offer frequently as part of her ‘Welcomes’.
644 Aunty Carolyn Briggs uses this term when telling her version of the story of the Creation of Port Philip Bay.
645 Refer Book One, Chapter Two: Indigenous peoples and climate change
Eco-cosmos

This mindset of generosity is challenging in our increasingly urbanised and technologically framed existence, but it is central to acknowledgement in these Welcome ceremonies. The idea that the world around you is alive and receptive, is of prime concern. You are reminded that you are in relationship with it, and you are welcome to be ‘friend’ if you behave in a friendly manner, not just to people around you, but to the land you walk upon and the animals you encounter as well. Rituals and protocols serve as deep reminders.

To quote Grimes once more:

If we do not birth and die ritually, we will do so technologically, inscribing technocratic values in our very bones. Technology without ritual (or worse, technology as ritual) easily degenerates into knowledge without respect. And knowledge without respect is a formula for planetary annihilation. It matters greatly not only that we birth and die, but how we birth and die.646

Grimes’ emotive language here is not simply rhetoric but real warning. “Planetary annihilation” is indeed of paramount concern as the debate over the effects of global warming gains ever increasing momentum. The importance of ritual to ground and embody our aspirations, to serve as sites and catalysts for shifts in consciousness, and to mark and honour the changing shapes and ages of our humanity, is part of on an ancient practice linking us to each other, and to other species across time and space. Ritual reminds us of our animal selves. From the specific and local to the oceanic and ‘global,’ in rituals we glimpse ourselves as a part of the continuum of life.647

Loss of ritual means loss of these wisdoms, loss of our collective grip on reality, on each other and perspective of where we sit in relation. Loss of ritual is loss of specific bodily means of knowing and puts us in peril when the unexpected occurs. Although ritual is often enacted in the subjunctive, imagined plane, it is concurrently a very real alignment process; its intentions and consequences are far from imaginary. Without ritual to anchor us, to tether us and confirm our place in the order of things, we risk spiralling into fantasy. In times of crisis, if rituals fail to anchor us – we find ourselves at risk.

An exploration of funeral or initiation rites, for example, will indicate psychological and physical states which the primary subject of the ritual – and sometimes all in attendance – must confront as part of the structure of the ritual’s enactment. The living must make final and permanent separation

646 Grimes, Deeply into the Bone: Reinventing Rites of Passage. 13.
647 Refer Book One, Chapter Three: The Eternal Return – metaphysical realms
from the dead, and the child must surrender childhood and make way for the adolescent self to grow to adulthood, if not fantasy becomes a very real option.

In Australia today, the ‘gap’ requiring closure is no fantasy. Indeed it is very much a two-way reality as non-Indigenous Australians have significant gaps in knowledge and appreciation of First Peoples’ profound knowledge on all manner of ‘matters of concern’ for survival on and stewardship of the driest continent on the planet. The gap in equity between Indigenous Australians and the rest of the community, at bare minimum, requires significant and urgent improvements in health, wealth, education and opportunity.

**Being ‘rendered sensitive’ by ritual**

In Book One, I outlined Latour’s theories on ‘modes of existence’ and his and Sloterdijk’s interlocking ontological metaphors of networks and spheres. I will not repeat them here, but note that their relational theories concern what they perceive as the looming threat to all modes of existence: climate change. Latour asks us to consider: “what might render us sensitive to the new climactic regime?” And in ‘part-answering’ his-own question, he notes that the ‘sensitive register’ of the arts is a modality in which we might find the inspiration to become responsive and responsible.

Similarly, the question might be asked: ‘How might we be rendered sensitive by ceremony?’ The desire to compose a ‘common ceremonial language’ in developing the praxial technique requires an understanding of the ‘architectural building blocks’ (to use a spatial metaphor,) of CC composition. From this basis, dynamics and elements within the ritual might be explored for ‘efficacy of affect’ in rendering us sensitive.

Grimes’ use of the term ritual ‘dynamics’ indicates how volatile and mutable rituals can be. Considered as a musical analogy it suggests expressive intensities and tonal variations that drive affect; I intend both readings of the term.

The spectrum of possibilities found in the differing combinations of modes of ritual sensibility and modes of enactment enable the ritual-artist to combine aesthetics of theatre, dance, visual art and music – among other art forms – within the one idiom. It is a cross art-form practice that sits within current cultural and artistic landscapes, and inhabits the public domain in enactment.

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645 Refer Glossary  
649 Refer Book One, Chapter One: The Australian Zeitgeist: some social, political, and intellectual spaces  
650 Refer Book One, Chapter Two: Modes of Existence  
651 Refer book One, Chapter Two: Networks and Spheres: Onto-epistemological concerns of Contemporary Ceremonies  
Both art and ritual are sensuous and embodied practices – they require a ‘felnness’ of experience where language (description) is no real substitute for the lived experience. Grimes notes:

Ritual is a sensuous activity. It is not merely a decoration, a kind of illustration of what we know by other means. Rather, ritual is a means of knowing, a way of learning, remembering and imagining. What one constructs with it is a world — felt, sensed, thought.653

In this passage, Grimes points to ritual activity as not just a representational process that appeals to the mind alone, but one in which sensate experience, in enactment, enables knowing and knowledge transfer triggering both memory and imagination in the act of doing. Grimes’ description suggests that as a constructed modality, ritual’s process, its’ coming into being, might be construed as a space that is simultaneously conceived, perceived, and undeniably lived.

When composing a ritual, the complete form needs to be designed – from the working processes of performance creation, through to visual style, sensory experiences, individual and group trajectories, and the final enactment. The vital concern is that whoever is taking part is invited, through the efficacy and accuracy of design, to become involved to such an extent that everyday concerns disappear – that thinking is indeed ‘short circuited’ – and that some sense of an enacted response to the ritual emerges as apparent.

**Design, Praxis, and Composition**

I have outlined the divinatory alignment that is part of the composition process, now I shall explain my uses of the terms design, praxis and composition. It is notable that they are interrelated but I have used the ‘meta’ term of ‘composition’ to embrace the full spectrum of activities that fall into the creation of CCs.

**Design**

Grimes describes rituals as “designed assemblages,” indicating that in his analysis they are constructed from elements and dynamics that, when “skilfully designed” are “well attuned.”654 If not well designed, they are mere assemblages of disparate elements that may effect the efficacy of the ritual’s intent. Grimes also suggests that form and dynamic “follow one another.” From my observations in determining compositional dynamics for CCs, as I have noted, the relationship between form and content is a difficult one to disentangle – it is a ‘chicken and egg’ conundrum as

653 Grimes, Notes for Rites of Passage Workshop with Welfare State International.
both are rapidly imbricated in the compositional process. There is a fusing or “braiding” between form and content that takes place in enactment, where form intends content and visa-versa. If we take the idea that design suggests the look and functioning of an object/event then when designing a piece of ritual-art, the ‘look’ and ‘function’ must needs be intertwined. Form is twofold – both the space created for ritual enactment (site) and the ritual modes and elements of ceremony that inhabit this space – concurrently they are imprinted with the theme and intent of the ceremony or else are superfluous.

Latour argues that design is “the antidote to founding, colonizing, establishing, or breaking with the past. It is an antidote to hubris and the search for absolute certainty, absolute beginnings, and radical departures.” Latour reminds us of the recycling and relations that are at the heart of design, he notes: “…is never a process that begins from scratch: to design is always to redesign.”

I use the term to embrace the process of pulling together the overall ‘look and feel’ of the ceremony: from ‘liturgical’ structure though to choreographed activities, visual objects and site design.

However, this design process is fed by other ritual dynamics, clarified in Book Three.

**Praxis**

‘Praxis’ described by Nelson as “theory imbricated with practice” is understood here to include my reflexive analysis of the work, my place in it, and how it might be perceived from the standpoint of ‘an other’ – understood to be equally valid and essential; where “validity is grounded in inter-subjectivity and mutual understanding.”

As Crouch explains:

> I would argue that the creative process demands reflexive action. When the creative practitioner adopts praxis, it encourages the act of reflecting upon, and reconstructing the constructed world. Adopting praxis assumes a process of meaning making, and that meaning and its processes are contingent upon a cultural and social environment. Because praxis is about acting together with others, is about negotiation, and is not about acting upon others. It forces the practitioner to consider more than the predicaments of making. It encourages a move away from the pitfalls of introspective narcissism and

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657 Ibid.

658 Nelson. 5.

towards an analytical engagement with human interaction, and emphasises the necessity to clarify the inter-subjective circumstances of the communicative act.\textsuperscript{660}

**Composition**

In concert with Latour’s concern to ‘compose a common world’ the quest to ‘compose a common ceremonial language’ necessitates an understanding of what is encompassed by and intended in the verb ‘to compose.’ Latour points us to its multiple resonances, from: disparate things that require assembling (“while retaining their heterogeneity”), to gaining one’s ‘composure,’ to having ‘roots’ in the arts as creative processes, to its close relationship to the term ‘compromise’ … “retaining a certain diplomatic and prudential flavor” and finally to its being distinctly closely aligned to the ‘ecologically correct’ smell of “compost,” itself due to the active “de-composition of many invisible agents.”\textsuperscript{661}

With all these resonances in mind it is understood that without (and sometime in spite of) the careful articulation of these disparate parts, assembly can fail. Latour urges that an appreciation of failure being inherent requires reflexivity in the act, a focusing on the doing – the composing – rather than product – the composition. He notes: “It thus draws attention away from the irrelevant difference between what is constructed and what is not constructed, toward the crucial difference between what is well or badly constructed, well or badly composed. What is to be composed may, at any point, be de-composed.”\textsuperscript{662} This process, of composing a common ceremonial language may fail, or it may succeed. Just as composing Contemporary Ceremonies may fail or succeed. However, in embracing Latour’s definition of composition, in building from “utterly heterogeneous parts” the expectation is not to create a “whole” but what he suggests is “at best fragile, revisable and diverse composite material.”\textsuperscript{663} He comments:

> I have come to use the word “composition” to regroup in one term those many bubbles, spheres, networks and snippets of arts and science… it allows us to move from spheres to networks with enough of a common vocabulary, but without a settled hierarchy. It is my solution to the modern/postmodern divide. Composition may become a plausible alternative to modernization. What can no longer be modernized, what has been postmodernized to bits and pieces, can still be composed.\textsuperscript{664}

\textsuperscript{660} Ibid. 5.
\textsuperscript{662} ibid
\textsuperscript{663} ibid
\textsuperscript{664} Latour, ”Some Experiments in Art and Politics.”, 6.
As noted the notion of contemplation or attendance is of importance along with a reflexive gaze. As with any work of art, ritual cannot be hurried in praxis – in the designing, divining or composition.\textsuperscript{665} Ritual emerges in its own time to the composer, and it is necessary to wait in attendance for that imaging and imagining which further prevents tokenism: "… So you wait, attend, contemplate, watch, and see what emerges."\textsuperscript{666}

**Dynamics and elements of ritual**

Noting that acts of creation require a synthesis of analysed components, Grimes lists eight ritual dynamics and seven elements from which rituals can be comprised.\textsuperscript{667} He notes the smallest constituent of ritual, in his terminology, is an ‘element’ or ‘part’ which ‘… like body and bike parts, are interconnected … not always easy to tell where one ends and the other begins.’\textsuperscript{668}

I have placed Grimes’ dynamics and elements into two charts (found in the appendices)\textsuperscript{669} and have added my own terminology to his to explain these terms from my perspective as a composer in contrast with Grimes’ scholarly observer role. My findings and these terms are also explained in more detail in Book Three. However, by way of example, I offer some examples of dynamics and elements that I have repositioned. In the next few pages, I consider some visual and temporal concerns that cause ‘affect’ and render one sensitive in service of intent.

I use the terms designer, diviner, and composer interchangeably throughout this Book, to spare monotony of repetition, and also to highlight the different aspects of the role of composer that I wish to accentuate. Again, I make note that my use of dramatic comparisons is not to suggest similarity of intent or function, but rather to serve as analogy for their similarity as embodied and designed communicative activities.

**Ritual Objects: Design**

When designing theatre productions every object chosen to include in a ‘set’ will bring with it its own associations. A brown leather lounge chair will evoke different moods; emotions, memories, thoughts and sensations compared with a floral upholstered one. Similarly when composing the physical and symbolic landscapes of ritual, objects will be chosen for their ability to communicate and invoke ‘states of being.’ Often these objects are potent symbols.

\textsuperscript{665} Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone: Reinventing Rites of Passage*. 13.
\textsuperscript{666} Ibid. 12.
\textsuperscript{668} Ibid. 234.
\textsuperscript{669} Refer Appendix Nine: Dynamics and elements of ritual
Although objects can be symbolic so can gestures, actions, qualities, spaces, positions, words, roles, other entities, and times. For example, a participant investigating the 'ritual moment' with movement, gesture, and spatial proximity (a visually 'designed' communication), becomes as much a 'ritual object' or part of the visual design of the work as the more 'sedentary' elements.\(^{670}\)

**Symbols**

In order to create communally reflexive experiences an understanding of symbols and their meanings is necessary. Symbols appeal to more than just our intellect. They are sensory, dynamic, and iconic, laden with layers of resonance and evoke meanings that are different for each individual. Theorists such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes have each explored and defined the field in detail, however Turner’s notion of ‘comparative symbology’ is useful in the context of ritual design. He defined this field as being ‘narrower’ than that of semiology and “wider than (the field) of symbolic anthropology.”\(^{671}\)

Although wary of Turner’s classifications (as outlined in Book One) I find Turner’s annexed grouping here helpful, as he is not so concerned with linguistics as with the effects and experience of “the non-verbal symbols in ritual and art.”\(^{672}\) Comparative symbology examines symbols in isolation and their relationships in juxtaposition, their cultural context, the concepts and values that they represent and the feelings and aspirations associated with them by the cultures using them.\(^{673}\)

Importantly, Turner notes that symbols come into being having been drawn from “cultural genres and sub-systems of expressive culture” he goes on to add: “symbols are essentially involved in social processes (and I would now add psychological ones too).”\(^{674}\) The very stuff of symbols is that they resonate in us in a way which is culturally specific, drawing on both verbal and non-verbal, forms within that culture in order to create or provoke a set of desired feelings, understandings or states of being in the viewer. However, as Anthony Cohen observes the meaning of symbols “… are not shared in the same way. Each is mediated by the idiosyncratic experience of the individual.”\(^{675}\)

Grimes reminds us that: “… we humans are symbol-driven animals, acting not only on the basis of what things are or do, but by what they mean. Symbols are tools with which we discover, construct


\(^{671}\) Ibid. 21.

\(^{672}\) Ibid.

\(^{673}\) Ibid.

\(^{674}\) Ibid.

and communicate meaning."\(^{676}\) As we hanker to create meaning and attach narratives to ourselves and to the people, places, beings and things which construct our world, then it follows that when ritualising — an activity assigning significance — we use symbols to communicate.

Of further note is the fact that symbols and signs shift and change over time. Past cultural narratives and symbols may no longer be understood or interpreted as they were originally intended, or they may have accrued a multiplicity of meanings. An awareness of this conundrum will enable the composer to create new assemblages if done with care and consideration. As Cameron suggests: “… the problem for designers is not so much a loss of symbolic material but a loss of the textual frameworks to carry that material.”\(^{677}\) As Cohen observes:

Symbolism owes its versatility to the fact that it does not carry meaning inherently. A corollary of this is that it can be highly responsive to change … symbolic form has only a loose relation to its content. Therefore, the form can persist while the content undergoes significant transformation. Frequently, the appearance of continuity is so compelling that it obscures people’s recognition that the form itself has changed.\(^{678}\)

The challenge is therefore to navigate the sea of symbols and to divine what might be appropriate for a given context: as cultures shift and evolve in time so too do their symbols. It is also incumbent upon any designer/diviner of Contemporary Ceremony to take with them an awareness of the possible pitfalls of cultural misappropriation. This is so not simply for the offence and disrespect that it may cause, but importantly for the flaws it will undoubtedly create in the resulting ritual. If rituals are designed to bring us into states of mind and being that are powerfully transformative, then the correct triggers for this re-alignment must be sensitively chosen. It is evident that both composing and enacting rituals contain elements of risk.

In describing the use of symbols within his work Cameron suggests: “These forms do not try to replicate the coherent, integrated past narratives from which the symbolic elements come, rather they carry new expressions of still familiar symbols and representations in new formations, or assemblages, that are able to speak to the communities for whom the event is designed.”\(^{679}\)

With the absorption of once sacred symbols into popular culture, symbols can take on new significance (e.g. Madonna – as pop singer). In composing Contemporary Ceremony one cannot assume the significance of symbols with any reliance on past contexts or previous ‘cultural

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676 Grimes, Deeply into the Bone: Reinventing Rites of Passage. 71.
677 Cameron. 18.
678 Cohen. 91.
679 Cameron.18.
narratives,’ Cameron warns: ‘The challenge in the contemporary context is how to produce such a metalanguage of myth, symbol and representation when the extent of shared cultural meaning seems to be so much less than it was, yet when the abundance of cultural symbolism and representations is so overwhelming.’

Careful and considered selection of imagery, objects, gestures and symbols is therefore necessary in order to prevent — quite literally — mixed metaphors. My symbolic impulses have often required appraisal by Indigenous advisors as part of adherence to appropriate protocols and permissions. This process ensured that imagery was communicating the same set of associations to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants and therefore enabled us to enter the realm of ceremony, the ceremonial event, together.

Of further interest are Eliade’s ideas surrounding the choice of objects and gestures for their function in ritual behaviour. Objects, he suggests, are seen to be of no ‘intrinsic’ symbolic or spiritual value, but rather are infused with meaning in the ritualising process because of their usage. Objects are receptacles of meaning and gestures acquire meaning only insofar as they are repetitions of a primordial act. He states: “The crude product of nature, the object fashioned by the industry of man, acquire their reality, their identity, only to the extent of their participation in a transcendent reality. The gesture acquires meaning, reality, solely to the extent to which it repeats a primordial act.”

Whether we agree that these are repetitions of “primordial acts” or not, Eliade describes what Sloterdijk calls “autoplastic procedures” in which objects and gestures constitute the symbolic, embodied nature of ritual. For example if we consider a ‘sacred feast,’ the chosen food, its presentation, stylised ingestion or ‘offering’ appeals to our senses as much as our intellect. The ‘food’ itself may be perceived to have no inherent property, and is significant only so far as significance is bestowed upon it.

The power of the sensate, nonetheless, bears great significance in choosing the symbolic item — it is an intuitive ‘felt moment’ in which a certain ‘receptiveness of being’ is required in order to discern what item is ‘just right’. For example, when one attends a funeral it would be rare to choose just any flower to lay on a loved one’s grave. One may remember that they liked a certain type of flower, or that something about a particular flower captures a quality sympathetic with one’s feelings towards the deceased. The quality of a particular flower, apprehended by sight or smell perhaps as...

680 Ibid. 18.
681 Eliade, 5.
682 Refer Book One, Chapter Three: The Eternal Return – metaphysical realms
683 Sloterdijk, You Must Change Your Life : On Anthropotechnics. 3.
much as ‘cultural appropriateness,’ signifies it as meaningful and symbolic. In the context of the enactment of a ritual or rite, one not only views the ordinary object (the food, the flower etc.) transformed into the sacred, but one also behaves differently towards it.

While to a certain degree it is true to say that objects acquire their meaning because of their usage, I am not convinced that this is a complete explanation of the significance of ritual objects and symbols. I suggest that the role of sense and sensibility in the choice or divination of ritual objects, the absolute often–unconscious primary gesture before the use of the object, is a complex and varied process of discernment. Although it is true to say that the ‘symbolic’ qualities of an object are not inherent, and that sometimes literally any object will ‘do’, I do believe that there is a counter argument to acknowledge that, in some instances, no other object will do.

**Enactment and Embodiment**

Ritual is optional. You can choose not to engage in it at all, to simply dabble or ‘go through the motions,’ or to participate wholeheartedly. If one does chose to engage, whether by conscious choice or simply by being swept up in the moment, regardless of your degree of conviction it is inevitable that ritual will demand a physical commitment of you. Particular to the enactment of ritual there is a quality that both Turner and Grimes use: “attending.” If your degree of commitment is strong then you will perform the ritual with focused attendance. One of Turner’s definitions of ritual includes this sensibility: “Men and women, of a given group or culture, wholly attending, in privileged moments, to their own existential situation.”

Importantly, where you sit or find yourself placed, what your sightlines are or what you choose to focus upon will inevitably create physical sensations which will in turn effect your experience of a ritual and your ability to enter into that state of attendance. Grimes’ observation of these phenomena is useful for the designer of ritual to bear in mind; he notes that:

> My body does not always follow the tracks laid by my theories, and since the study of performative modes such as ritual and drama involves bodily presence, I could not merely ignore my own physical responses.

> … all the senses, not just seeing, must be developed for studying ritual.

Hence, in designing a ritual one must account for how it is likely to be experienced by the senses, along with all the other design criteria previously discussed, whilst allowing the ritual to have an

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686 Ibid. 14.
inbuilt ambiguity and freedom which will allow for individual experiences and assignations of meaning. Cameron notes: “If structure is too insistent then the spontaneous nature of transcendence is gone and if there is too little structure then chaos and confusion can emerge.”

**Gestures**

Gestures, like roles, are also imbued with strong iconographic resonance in rituals, and should not necessarily be viewed as simply aesthetic or choreographic expressions. Gesture can contribute to be part of the design criteria, even when it is an improvised and unrehearsed movement. The participant inhabits and embodies ritual activities with gestures that are, on many levels, visually 'designed' communications.

As human beings we are sensitive to the body language of others, and in ritual this becomes a heightened awareness although very often an unconscious one. A moment’s hesitation, by a graveside when about to place flowers on a coffin could be seen as a profound communication. This gestural response serves to signify to the ‘performer’ who is enacting, as much as to those watching or inertly participating, and with the shared experience of this 'moment' a certain unity is created. Thus the ‘performer,’ embodying the ritual moment with movement, gesture and spatial proximity, could be perceived as much a 'ritual object' or part of the visual design of the work as inanimate elements. In entering this state of receptivity participants bypass the “normal logic of everyday life and allow change to occur either on a temporary or permanent level, without necessarily engaging the intellect in any way.” The body and self is absorbed and focused on the “stimulus carried through the senses” which Cameron suggests is critical to “cognitive alignment.”

Gesture operates within a physical score of informed and sensitised improvisatory enquiry – and cannot be viewed as simply aesthetic expression. Grimes stresses the role of the imagination and spontaneity in creating ritual seeing them as “…choreographic actions; they exist in the moments of their enactment and then disappear.” To enact a ritual one must inhabit and embody the action with gestures that are, on many levels, a visually 'designed' communication. This awareness serves to signify to the ‘performer’ who is enacting as much as to the ‘audience’ perceiving. With the shared experience of this 'moment' there is a unity created with those participating and those witnessing.

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687 Cameron. 107.
688 Cameron. 27-28
689 Ibid. 28.
690 Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone: Reinventing Rites of Passage*. 7.
Designation

Ritual, similarly to theatre, contains ‘performatve’ roles – or what I call designations. Designations are immediately evident in religious ceremonies; however, they are also a necessity within secular designs. The composer performs the function of ‘ceremonial guide’ in plotting and assigning ritual tasks to those who will take on a ceremonial role and will assist them in clarifying their communicative activities. Importantly, it is vital not to carry these roles into the realm of everyday life and assert authority where it does not belong. The ritual practitioner must remember that these roles are purely ceremonial and part of the fiction that surrounds the ‘subjunctive’ mode of ritual. Grimes expresses this observation: “However serious our stride and tone, however fundamental our rhythms and ultimate meanings, we are pretenders to our office; our work is dramatic and therefore fictional.”

Time

When composing ceremonies the appropriateness of timing is a powerful and at times paradoxical element with an illusive energy. There is a qualitative aspect to time that can be utilized to great effect. Whether timing takes cognisance of the season, the date, diurnal rhythms or is simply an awareness of appropriateness of the minutiae of timing of gesture, in an improvisational sense, there is a deeply understood sense of there being a ‘right time.’ The paradox lies in the fact that the moment cannot be pre-empted, nor does it fit within the formal constraints of ‘timing’ so frequently alluded to in theatre. Our experience of time is acted upon by ritual, “rituals concentrate, and thereby consecrate, time.”

This ‘right moment’ has infinite manifestations and might be ‘repeated’ — yet only at the ‘right time’. The ‘right time’ I describe as one occurring when an internal alignment takes place, and the intensity of the moment enables a transcending of the ego-self and quotidian time, to be in a liminal ‘betwixt and between’ timeless time. When the bride and groom exchange vows there is sometimes a fumbling over words, and perhaps even a mispronunciation of their own names, as the gravity of these oaths are shared. This is the moment when the solemnity and seriousness of the rite comes to the point of a major threshold crossing. It is the moment where one leaves behind one’s single identity and submits to union with the other. It is a moment of sacrifice and ‘gift’ – often the moment too when there is not a dry eye in the house.
Of significance is that the qualitative aspect of timing can create a sense of being in a ‘real’ moment for both performer and audience. It is a witnessing of something that has not been rehearsed. To rehearse suggests an inherent understanding of attaining a state of ‘perfection’ – ‘real’ moments are utterly unrehearsed. The sensibility this focus creates contributes to the perception of being in a shared and uncontrived moment.

One of the most crucial aspects to the composition of Contemporary Ceremony is that there is ‘space’ designed within it to allow for ambiguity and therefore for individuals to process their own meaning from the assemblages presented. Symbols because of their multi-sociative possibilities tend not to tie meaning to one inviolable truth. However, this need for ambiguity also exists not only in representative terms of symbol and visual design, but also in the handling of time. Cameron observes:

In the context of transcendence celebrations, however, the artist must produce a structure that allows ambiguity; must encourage a flexibility of sign and activity without descent into anarchy and damage or, on the other hand, “killing” the true moments of transcendence with too much control.693

Lineages of Contemporary Ceremony

Due to the breadth of community art forms and their specific cultural and contextual applications across the planet, it is not within the scope of this thesis to offer a comprehensive analysis, but rather to acknowledge some of the lineages that have contributed to the development of Contemporary Ceremony.

The roots of Western theatrical performance have been widely, but not without contestation,694 attributed to ritual practices found in antiquity. Similarly, the ‘mystery plays’ and ‘passion plays’ performed on holy days and during religious festivals across Europe from the middle ages onwards form part of this continuum. The practice of performing on makeshift stages evolved over the centuries as groups of ‘mummers’ and commedia dell’arte troupes performed in the open air in public spaces of Europe from the early and late Renaissance onward.695 These performances appealed to nobility and common folk alike as entertainment, ranging from pious and religious

693 Cameron, 109.
695 Ibid. 10.
content to comedic and bawdy subject matter frequently including political and satirical content. Religious establishments were usually less receptive to these bands of ‘vagabonds.’

Some centuries later in the late 1960s in the UK, a “diverse group of artists, musicians and eventmongers” came together and formed ‘Welfare State’ (later in 1979 to become Welfare State International or WSI) in order to take their art “into the street” to reach an audience they deemed unlikely to have access to “elitist theatres and galleries.” Their ethic was strongly socialist, steeped in the ideologies of Marx and Marcuse, “recognising participatory socialism, where art would be as available and accessible as free dentures, spectacles and coffins.” Over its impressive 38 year history, WSI was to become a world leader in spectacle and large-scale community pageants. Their 1972 manifesto declared:

We make images, invent rituals, devise ceremonies, objectify the unpredictable and enhance atmospheres for particular places, times, situations and people. We are artists concerned with the survival and character of the imagination and the individual within a technologically advanced society.

During this time, they developed site-specific theatre in a variety of landscapes, large-scale lantern and puppet processions, and spectacular fire-shows at community carnivals and festivals across the UK. These ‘one-off, hand-crafted’ performance and indicates their strong carnivalesque, iconoclastic and socialist leanings. Their manifesto and practice developed over time, but WSI kept the idea of imagination and individuality as central to their mission.

Across the Atlantic, similar activities were afoot in the USA. Three companies in particular are most well known for their politically ‘left leaning,’ participatory, large scale pageants and puppetry performances; The San Francisco Mime Troupe, Bread and Puppet, and The Heart of the Beast.

**Australian Contemporaries**

I have listed some of Contemporary Ceremonies’ most notable Australian counterparts, to situate the practice in a lineage of artworks, however, critique of these practices is not relevant in discerning compositional dynamics and elucidating the praxial technique. Refer Appendix Seven.

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696 Ibid. 10.
697 John Fox, Eyes on Stalks, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009), 20.
698 Ibid. 3.
699 Ibid.
700 Ibid. 20.
702 Ibid. 213.
703 Refer Appendix Seven: Australian Contemporaries
What and who is Community?

The term ‘community’ is often described in research as an illusive and difficult concept to define. Communities can be described structurally as ones based on: identity (gender, social class, culture, family etc.), location (locale, neighbourhood, geographical region, local government area, etc.) on interest (social groups, clubs, religious groups, etc.) and practice (profession, vocation, mission, etc.). Frequently, however, a member of one community belongs to a number of communities at the same time; community participants and interests often overlap.

Boundaries between community groups are therefore permeable; they can converge in certain locations, and frequently ‘status’ as a ‘community’ is not fixed but mutable, being as Moje notes: “…products of their history and current situation.” This observation includes temporal and spatial concerns as being contingent upon definitions of communities as relational and in flux. The comprehension of one’s place in a community is so illusive, that they are often ‘imagined,’ as Benedict Anderson proposed, with members never meeting except within the imagination of each other.

Mary Louise Pratt’s notion of the “contact zone” as: “…social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths,” is one such place where these boundaries bleed. CCs could be described as operating within such a zone, but also, they concurrently operate within what Moje describes as “circles of kinship and friendship.”

During the process and enactment of CCs, individuals and community groups and the ‘circles of kinship and friendship’ to which they belong became temporary ‘micro-communities.’ When using the term ‘micro-communities’ I intend awareness of its mutability and that it is symbolically perceived and not reducible to a single definition. Of further note is the use of the term ‘community’ within First Peoples circles, which is often used without a definite article, and immediately signals Indigenous circles of kinship and friendship through that one word.

‘Art of Community’

Society and the social

704 Cohen. 7.
Some interrogation of the term ‘social’ must be considered before addressing the ‘genre’ of art making that CCs fall into. I have noted a preference for calling Contemporary Ceremonies ‘ritual-arts;’ one modality in the spectrum of ‘art of community’ practices. However, currently the term ‘socially engaged art’ (SEA) has increased in use as artists and theorists seek to distance themselves from the troublesome term ‘community.’

Aside from concurring with Adorno’s observation – ‘what artist isn’t socially engaged?’709 For me the term is problematic on several levels. Latour makes the astute observation in Reassembling the Social, that: “The social seems to be diluted everywhere and yet nowhere in particular.”710 The term ‘social’ is, in his opinion, over used and under investigated. It is also less than inclusive despite its seeming inherent inclusivity. He notes: “Because of this constant shrinking of meaning (social contract, social question, social workers), we tend to limit the social to humans and modern societies, forgetting that the domain of the social is much more extensive than that.”711 Noting that rather than a contextual frame, the social, like community is “glued together by many other types of connectors.” For Latour, the “‘social’ is not some glue that could fix everything including what the other glues cannot fix” thus he urges us to reconsider “…the convenient shorthand of the social,” and instead “…substitute the painful and costly longhand of its associations.”712

As noted above recently, art and performance studies scholars have substituted the terms ‘community art’ or ‘community theatre’ to describe hybrid, contemporary community practices, with the slick tag; ‘Socially Engaged Art,’ (SEA). SEA suggests that socio-political critiques and aesthetics are considered, by those that use the term, as central to discussions of what is considered ‘artistically worthy,’ ‘matters of concern’ for contemporary society. The shifting definitions reveal it is a privileged discussion, largely about what is considered ‘worthy’ as ‘art;’ whilst removing focus from the object itself – to an abstraction. SEA in its very naming has erased some important elements – the concerns of individuals and communities in all their diversity and transversality of ways of being, and gives us little appreciation of its processes: the ‘know-how’ of the composing.

Pablo Helguerra in his promisingly titled Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook discusses some of the pivotal concerns in this field of contemporary art

711 Ibid. 6.
712 Ibid. 5.
making. Importantly he notes that the terminology ‘socially engaged art’ is a ‘porous,’ ‘working construct’ that emerged in the 1970s. Helguerra offers what he considers a ‘provisional’ definition: ‘a hybrid, multi-disciplinary activity that exists somewhere between art and non-art, and its state may be permanently unresolved.’ Given the impermanence and liminality of this classification, it is not surprising that a multitude of terms have coalesced around the practice of an ‘art based on social interaction.’ Commonly used terms include ‘community art,’ ‘collaborative art,’ and ‘dialogic art,’ and this ongoing recalibration of terms, Helguerra suggests, indicates an ‘urge to draw lines between generations and unload historical baggage.’

In unpacking this ‘baggage,’ Helguerra proposes that the genealogy of SEA, might be found in a hybrid assortment of traditions ranging from conceptual art, the avant garde, and post-minimalism, and that its emergence as a discipline was deeply influenced by the social movements of the 1960s. More recent descriptors like ‘social practice’ Helguerra ascribes to Bourriard’s influential notion of ‘relational aesthetics’ (in which the author/artist acts as conduit rather than locus of artistic expression and meaning), and the intention to democratise art practice and its appreciation from its historical (Modernist and Romantic) stigmata. However, he notes that without naming and claiming the disciplinary field of art, the term ‘social practice’ risks abolishing the practice of art altogether in favour of activities with arguably more direct social impact.

‘Participatory art’ and ‘public art’ are designations that avoid this conundrum and suggest some of the social interaction that lies at the core of these artistic practices. However, participatory art and public art are both currently dominated by theorists, who gauge these works’ social involvement primarily on the artist’s political motivations for effecting societal change, and critique is often measured against perceived efficacy in transformation of social concerns, rather than the artwork’s core compositional and aesthetic affects.

Claire Bishop, in Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship, clarifies this situation well. Bishop affirms: “… without finding a more nuanced language to address the artistic status of this work, we risk discussing these practices solely in positivist terms, that is by focusing...
on demonstrable impact.” She notes that in the current “ethically charged environment” that is “based on an ethics of authorial renunciation” and perceived merit of co-authorship that both participatory art and socially engaged art are “largely exempt from art criticism,” as “… emphasis is continually shifted away from the disruptive specificity of a given practice and onto a generalised set of ethical precepts.”

Helguerra notes that SEA sits “uncomfortably between and across these disciplines” thus underlining an unresolvable yet necessary tension that SEA, as collaborative projects with democratic ideals, possess. He goes on to describe most SEA as politically and socially motivated works that seek to create “… a kind of collective art that affects the public sphere in a deep and meaningful way, not in creating a representation … of a social issue.” Helguerra notes the vagaries as to “what constitutes a meaningful interaction or social engagement,” yet without further attention to this quandary goes on to stress that socially engaged art is characterised by its “dependence on social intercourse as a factor of its existence.” The very term raises Adorno’s important question re-framed: what art isn’t socially engaged? Art’s ontological status is arguably enmeshed in its audiences’ ‘consumption’ (whether implicitly and passively or explicitly and actively) as it engages the social sphere(s) in aesthetic experiences motivated by a multiplicity of concerns that range from the political, to the philosophical, phenomenological, and existential dimensions of life.

Much current scholarly critique of socially engaged art, participatory art, and public art focuses almost entirely on the political implications and intentions of such work, and all but ignores other equally valid areas of concern that, together with the political, co-constitute the ‘social sphere’ (religion, philosophy, spirituality, interest and sporting clubs, social activities and spaces, trade, etc.).

Adding further scrutiny to the notion of the ‘social’ in Socially Engaged Art, Bruno Latour in Reassembling the Social points to a redundancy in use of the term ‘social’ at all, as its ontological basis is rooted in the positivistic notions of pre-relativist science, rather than the reflexive compositional science of relativity. Latour contends that instead of meta-categories, quanta and minutiae are important. He suggests a relationally attuned way of thinking, forgoing the idea of the

721 Ibid. 23.
722 Helguerra. 4-5.
723 Ibid. 7.
724 Ibid. 2.
725 Latour, Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory. 237.
‘social’ in order to articulate multiple “actants” (objects, other entities and humans) who impact on each other (mediators which transform) in “networks of association” with which they assemble new groupings/structures/entities/events.726

Heeding this regard for minutiae, and regardless of the ‘artistic discipline’ chosen, or whether making works of consensus or ‘dissensus,’ the building of a relational, community-oriented art practice is the ‘art of community’s’ primary concern. There are differing ideas of what this may require, or of how a practice is built, and what constitutes ethical interactions. However, what an ‘art of community’ practice invariably does require of the artist, is the capacity to undertake relational negotiations with a group or groups of people and other entities in a certain time and place. The chosen lens or artform becomes a relational tool for individual and group expression. In the ‘art of community’ practice of Contemporary Ceremony, ‘ritual-art’ is the expressive mode that negotiates and tempers these networks of relations between entities.

Why ‘Contemporary’ Ceremony?
Contemporary Ceremony, as an artistic practice, seeks to reframe ritual forms in new assemblages: capturing and reinterpreting their potency. As previously noted, ‘traditional’ ceremonies are often viewed by the mainstream as anachronistic and dismissed as cultural practices with little application to the present day, whilst contemporary ones are often viewed with suspicion and dismissed for their apparent lack of heritage and custom.727 However most rituals, like cultures, reverberate along a continuum and over time evolve to wed age-old practices and symbols with current influences.

The term ‘Contemporary’ does not suggest that extant rituals are unimportant or redundant, for where appropriate these forms may be incorporated. Rather, it delineates a current practice in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous ceremony makers collaborate to create what Grimes calls “emerging rituals.” Grimes notes that ‘emerging ritual’ is an hybrid form – merging older forms with current concerns and forms – and that it is often temporary and “new, self-conscious, disestablished.”728 Use of the term ‘contemporary’ to describe Contemporary Ceremonies asserts that 21st century “matters of concern”729 constitute the affective “fields of power”730 in which their trans-cultural and relational “regimes of value” are being continually renegotiated.

726  Ibid. 107-108
729  Refer Book One, Chapter Two: Matters of Fact and Matters of Concern
730  Myers. 251.
As Claire Bishop astutely suggests, in the art-world “the ‘contemporary’ as an institutional category is a moving target par excellence,”731 motile by definition it is open to a wide scope of interpretations. Contemporary art practices, seen to be speaking to “the time of the now”732 are thus deeply aware of “…the contradictions of existing in a world fraught with numerous co-existing, competing, and unequal modernities.” 733

Artist Ping Chong suggests that of all art-forms striving to be a reflection of their times, that “… time-based live-art forms, which only truly exist at the moment performed for an audience, an interaction that changes the viewer and the work itself …”734 are essentially and especially ‘contemporary.’ Indeed, many scholars see “temporal rupture”735 as foundational to the notion of ‘contemporary’ as its definition cannot be tethered to its art-historical context, being, as Agamben suggests: “chronologically indeterminate.” Thus, the contemporary artist in:

… dividing and interpolating time, is capable of transforming it and putting it in relation with other times. He is able to read history in unforeseen ways, to “cite it”…. It is as if this invisible light that is the darkness of the present cast its shadow on the past, so that the past, touched by this shadow, acquired the ability to respond to the darkness of the now.736

Babette Mangolte notes a further conundrum that arises in the continual (and increasingly rapid) shift in conditions of ‘the now’. As one’s life and society shifts and changes from the moment of a work’s inception to when it is actually presented and perceived by others, there is a gap; a breach in time and potentially of relevance. She declares:

… must I negate my own history and only embody that which is currently contemporary? The vagueness and avoidance of a specific historical reference, suddenly replaced by the “now,” reflects the sense of impermanence and rapidly increasing obsolescence occasioned by technology …737

According to some scholars the temporally influenced ‘matters of concern’ of ‘the now’ (which one might abbreviate as ‘zeitgeist’) provide the content and context that is key to a contemporary work of art.738 Morgan Jenness, suggests that to be truly contemporary requires the ability “to be of and in the moment,” in which an examination of the past is triangulated through reflection on the present

733 Ibid. 44.
734 Ibid. 56.
735 Ibid. 46.
737 Mangolte et al. 44.
738 Ibid. 43-59.
and a “courageous” imagination of potential futures. Revealing his aspirational intent Jenness suggests, an “exploration of deeper causes underneath current events and attitudes”, might lead to the “… fully representational embrace of the full range of human identity and the value of various cultural threads …” strengthening “the fabric of our global humanity.”

Similarly, but from a differently nuanced perspective, artist Ping Chong notes that in being “an artist of the world-wide diaspora” his influences are global rather than Eurocentric, and that for him his idea of the contemporary is “… worldwide, encompassing global realities, perspectives, aesthetics, and modalities.”

Reinforcing this viewpoint, from what might be construed as a post-colonial perspective Bishop concludes: “… if the contemporary as a term is to have any traction today beyond being a marketing category … it needs to engage with antinomies and paradox: the imbrication of, and inequities between, specific contexts and histories.”

In light of these propositions from both ritual studies and practicing artists and art theorists, the term ‘contemporary’ used to describe my practice is considered fitting. The zeitgeist - which I loosely define as ‘matters of concern that arise in the moment of ‘the now’” drive the divinatory pulse of CCs. It now remains to discuss the PaR Methodology for analysing Contemporary Ceremonies.

739 ibid. 56.
740 ibid. 57.
741 ibid. 47.
Chapter Five: Methodology

Introduction

This project’s central enquiry concentrates on the compositional concerns of Contemporary Ceremony. It considers how CC’s come into being, how they begin, how their processes follow identified compositional dynamics, and how, when, (and if,) they end. In analysing this complex microcosm and its micro-communities, it has been necessary to navigate a nomadic\textsuperscript{742} and \textit{bricoleuresque}\textsuperscript{743} approach, alert to shifting attitudes and terminologies, and to gather and analyse data in a way that reflects the spirit in which the ceremonies were composed. “Research-creation”\textsuperscript{744} in this instance could be described as a process of ‘divination’\textsuperscript{745} in order to capture the trans-disciplinary and cross-cultural ‘matters of concern’ in making these events. In order to illuminate the research methodology developed for this project, an understanding of some of the intellectual, cultural, and aesthetic landscapes that have necessarily been navigated is necessary. In order to do so, a clarification of key terms is necessary.

A Praxial Technique

As has been noted, this research interrogates the possibility of a ‘praxial technique’ and seeks to detail the philosophical, theoretical, and major technological aspects of ceremony composition. It considers how contemporary ceremonies might be conceived of and divined, how they could be designed and constructed, and what a model for their composition might be.

I use the term ‘praxial’ in concert with the definition commonly found in the discipline of music studies. Professor Alperson clarifies this term noting: “The praxial view of art resists the suggestion that art can best be understood on the basis of some universal or absolute feature or set of features

\footnote{742} Rosa Braidotti uses ‘nomadic’ to describe a relational, trans-disciplinary and ‘mobile’ approach to research: “This includes extensive rhizomatic alliances; a concrete practice of cross-disciplinary discussions needs to be adopted, with transposable notions moving about...a nomadic style of thinking which is open to encounters with others.” Rosi Braidotti, \textit{Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory}, Gender and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). 138-139.

\footnote{743} According to Braidotti: “A nomadic methodology posits active processes of becoming: we need flows of empowering desire that mobilize the subject and activate him/her out of the gravitational pull of envy, rivalry and ego indexed claims to recognition. What gets reasserted in this effort is the need to work towards social sustainability and social horizons of hope. Hope aims at change and transformations and it longs for mobility and becomings – that is to say, for sustainable changes.” “Nomadism: Against Methodological Nationalism,” \textit{Policy Futures in Education} 8, no. 3 & 4 (2010). 412

\footnote{744} Refer Book Two Chapter Five: Research-creation

\footnote{745} Refer Book Two, Chapter Four: Divination – knowing what
The attempt is made rather to understand art in terms of the variety of meaning and values evidenced in actual practice in particular cultures . . .”

Alperson describes the praxial view as comprising “… the nature and significance of the skills and productive human activity that bring musical works into being …” For as he suggests: “… the results of human action cannot be adequately understood apart from the motives, intentions, and productive considerations of the agents who bring them into being.”

I describe the process of Ceremony Composition as a ‘technique’ as compared to a ‘method’ cognisant that both are commonly used to describe artistic methodologies. In this thesis, I have taken ‘technique’ to delineate an approach to knowledge of practice (know how) that is capable of remaining open to change and individual interpretation, whereas ‘method’ I consider prescriptive and inflexible in its modelling.

**Practice as Research (PaR) and research-creation**

In his recent publication *Practice as Research in the Arts,* Robin Nelson neatly articulates what he sees as three major epistemological bases for PaR as: “know that,” “know how,” and “know what” of artistic knowledge production. Nelson explains the “know that” basis for knowledge production as belonging to the conceptual realm of: “…traditional ‘academic knowledge’ articulated in words and numbers (propositional discourse) drawn from reading of all kinds…”

“Know how” in contrast, Nelson notes, is found in the perceptual realm of “procedural knowledge.” It describes a tacit knowing of one’s artform that has been consciously developed over time from experiences gained through both reflective and reflexive engagement with practice. Nelson notes

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746 Alperson. 233.
747 ibid. 235-236.
748 Nelson. 45.
749 Ibid.
that a key method for inquiry in which ‘knowing-doing” is inherent and suggests that the rigor of PaR projects can “require more labour and a broader range of skills to engage in a multi-mode research inquiry than more traditional research processes.”

Nelson suggests that rather than settling on a “discursive form” that attempts to make the tacit process of art-making explicit, he “looks for a resonance between complementary writing and the praxis itself,” suggesting that “elaboration and documentation afford additional ways of articulating and evidencing the research enquiry.”

The “know what” of PaR Nelson describes as a highly reflexive state and a “rigorous and iterative process,” informed by both the in-the-moment processes of praxis and by insights born of stepping back to consider. “Know what” could be described simply as the artist’s ‘knowing of what works.’

This type of knowledge concerns a process of critical reflection on ‘the knowing of making’ by the maker, the informed thinking whilst making, and the act of reflecting on the making, from an objectivated gaze. This is the realm of the ritual-artist’s lived experience as ceremony maker, and embraces both poetic and pedestrian processes and choices.

As further elucidation of this artistic process Nelson cites Schon’s “…seminal idea of ‘knowledge in action,” which supposes that praxis involves an intrinsically intelligent “dialogue with the situation.” This dialogue, I suggest includes both the ‘material thinking’ and ‘embodied cognition’ that arise from internal reflexive dialogues between selves (e.g. the researcher-self and the artist-self) in process. Paul Carter in Material Thinking: The Theory and Practice of Creative Research notes that material thinking “… happens when the artist dares to ask the simple but far reaching questions: what matters? What is the material of thought?” Carter goes on to explain that “… the tools of thinking, signs, are materialised in the process of creative collaboration, the techniques of thinking are similarly transformed …” through “… a reformulation of materiality that acknowledges its plastic intelligence, its gifts for recombination.”

Whilst Carter names this process of thinking-doing “material thinking,” Tim Ingold rethinks this epistemological process as the “textility of making” in which the maker is “… not so much imposing
form on matter as bringing together diverse materials and combining or redirecting their flow in the anticipation of what might emerge.”\textsuperscript{757} Both Carter and Ingold draw upon Schon’s earlier declaration that design could be described as a “conversation” with materials,\textsuperscript{758} however this description, although dialogic, is ultimately sedentary. This thesis suggests that composition, rather than being conceived as merely conversational, has a much more compelling relationality which is vital and dynamic and could be conceived of as a ‘dance’ between diverse materials. The animated qualities of sentient and seemingly inert entities exert a relational engagement upon each other – the “network of relations amongst Entities” that Martin describes – as resonant, “vibrant matter.”\textsuperscript{759}

Research-creation

New Materialist Philosophers Manning and Massumi posit research-creation as a “mutual interpenetration of processes rather than a communication of products.”\textsuperscript{760} They champion research-creation as an unfolding and ongoing process, which in dialogue with the current neoliberalisation of research, is at “work in the thick of the tensions” where it “… seeks to energize new modes of activity, already in germ, that seem to offer a potential to escape or over-spill ready-made channellings into the dominant value system.”\textsuperscript{761}

In process, Manning and Massumi suggest that the research (and the researcher) adopt a ‘speculatively pragmatic’ orientation, which anticipates future manifestation through the rigor of the artist’s ‘technicity.’\textsuperscript{762} They state:

The idea of research-creation as embodying techniques of emergence takes it seriously that a creative art or design practice launches concepts-in-the-making. These concepts-in-the-making are mobile at the level of techniques they continue to invent. This movement is as speculative (future-event oriented) as it is pragmatic (technique-based practice).\textsuperscript{763}

In keeping with their concern over the “economization of creative activity” and the increasing subsumption of notions of ‘society’ by those of ‘economy,’\textsuperscript{764} Manning and Massumi champion an immanent critique which “engages with new processes more than products” whilst straddling, problematizing, and inhabiting one’s own complicity in the dominant system. The starting point in

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{758} Nelson. 83.
\textsuperscript{760} Manning and Massumi. 89.
\textsuperscript{761} Ibid. 84-87.
\textsuperscript{763} Manning and Massumi. 89.
\textsuperscript{764} Manning and Massumi. 84.
\end{flushleft}
their process of research-creation being to: “practice immanent critique,”\textsuperscript{765} a reflexive, objectivated awareness of one’s ecosystem. An understanding of art and its practices are central to this:

If art is understood as a way, it is not yet about an object, a form, or a content … Take seriously that generating new forms of knowledge implies generating new forms of experience, for which there are no pre-given methodologies, for which there is no pre-determined value. What research-creation can do is propose concrete assemblages for rethinking the very question of what is at stake in pedagogy, in practice and in collective experimentation.\textsuperscript{766}

Manning and Massumi’s supposition that research-creation is emergent and generative in nature, and “rethinking of the very question of what is at stake,” is complimentary with the concerns for developing a grounded theory for Contemporary Ceremony composition.

An Indigenist Oriented Research Paradigm

In order to achieve the research goal, this research has travelled full circle\textsuperscript{767} to embrace and be guided by the principles of what I have termed an ‘Indigenist oriented research paradigm’ (IORP.) I use the term to respectfully distinguish that the research ethic adopted is strongly aligned with the Indigenous Research Paradigm proposed by Cree scholar Shawn Wilson, in his aptly named book, \textit{Research is Ceremony}.\textsuperscript{768}

Mindful of Wilson’s admonition to ‘check in’ with one’s integrity, the adopted research paradigm guides conceptual and perceptual analysis, alongside tacit, lived experience with reflexive critique; aware of the many implications of accountability that are required. Key to the application of this paradigm is grasping an understanding of Indigenous “Ways of Being, Ways of Doing, and Ways of Knowing,”\textsuperscript{769} and honouring these in all aspects of research. Wilson describes the complexity of this understanding with the following analogy:

Every individual thing that you see around you is really just a huge knot – a point where thousands and millions of relationships come together. These relationships come to you from the past, from the present and from your future. This is what surrounds us, and what forms our world, our cosmos, our reality, and us. We could not be without being in

\textsuperscript{765} Manning and Massumi. 86.
\textsuperscript{766} Manning. 53.
\textsuperscript{767} Shawn Wilson notes that this paradigm is conceived as cyclical in construction, diverging from a Western linear construction of logic, and that it is driven by an iterative dynamic of relationality and relational accountability. There is a confluence with the research process having circled back to reconsider Western relational ontologies, but from a perspective that is in concert with an Indigenist worldview. Wilson. 70.
\textsuperscript{768} ibid.
\textsuperscript{769} Martin.
relationship with everything that surrounds us and is within us. Our reality, our ontology is the relationships.\textsuperscript{770}

An IORP unequivocally honours the First Peoples of Australia and in doing so, relationships are held sacrosanct. In keeping with the central tenets of Wilson’s schema, I have focused my findings on the relational accountability I hold with participants who have been involved in the co-creation of CCs. Thus, many conversations between myself and “knowledge keepers”\textsuperscript{771} have been kept private and not included in this research. As part of my relational accountability, to self and to others, and in following the paradigm outlined by Wilson, I have chosen to research and tell the story of ceremony composition from my own perspective.

Aware of the burden and discomfort that First People have endured in many research processes, and recognizing that this research project had been at my own instigation, I felt a responsibility to respond to the gift of collaboration, without asking for further lengthy time commitments from collaborators. I continued to ‘check-in’ with Elders and community members regarding the direction of my research, but it became clear that although there was support for my studies, there was a limit to how much individuals could reasonably commit. As Clare Land, citing a Canadian-based white activist, points out in Decolonizing Solidarity: “There is a middle ground in taking the lead and waiting to be told what to do. It’s a balance – taking responsibility and not burdening already stressed-out, overworked indigenous leadership, but also taking guidance from them.”\textsuperscript{772}

The conundrum I faced was how this project could serve as ‘reciprocal gift’ – benefiting not just myself in the role of fledgling researcher, but as sincere offering to the communities and individuals I had worked alongside. These ceremonies were composed as forums for reimaging and reimagining relationships between First Peoples and non-Indigenous communities. Their intent was in part reconciliatory and in part an opportunity for participants to engage and share in embodied experiences of reflexivity. In sharing ceremony together, no matter the level of participation afforded – whether part of the creative process or as an ‘on the night’ witness/ participant – there was an opportunity extended to enact solidarity, to experience (even if fleetingly) a sense of communitas, and an intention to ignite respect for First Peoples.

As a result of this conundrum, I chose to take Wilson’s admonition to ‘tell one’s own story’ quite literally. I decided that the most respectful and reciprocal approach was to interrogate my own

\textsuperscript{770} Ibid. 73.
\textsuperscript{771} Refer Glossary
\textsuperscript{772} Land. 177.
processes and epistemological lineages of ceremony composition. In doing so I sought theories and philosophies from my own cultural heritage that I found to be harmonious with the concerns outlined in the IORP.

This approach has enabled me as an artist, a white woman, and a researcher to respectfully engage with the plurality of lives, entities, and stories that cross my path while composing Contemporary Ceremonies without appropriating cultural matters that are not my own. It also enables me to translate my understanding of composition in a way that is intended to be accessible for each of the communities involved. One of the intentions of this research was to offer an accessible praxial technique for whomsoever might find its theories and philosophies of ceremony construction useful and applicable.

Protocols, Permission and Ethical Research

In practical terms, creating work alongside Indigenous communities necessitates an understanding of and adherence to Indigenous protocols.⁷⁷³ As part of the process of “research-creation”⁷⁷⁴ certain permissions must be sought and protocols adhered to before research commences. There is frequently an element of risk in ritual; the rituals of research are no exception. In essence protocols are the practical rules that enable relational accountability to become embodied and practiced. Experience has shown how very fragile these protocols are, and how widely abused and misunderstood by many non-Indigenous Australians.

The most basic level of protocol entails the ability to listen to what is said, with more than words, as well as a commitment to seek advice and approval along the way. This is a vital ethical pursuit in cross-cultural practices and is central to both the practice, and the theoretical framing, of Contemporary Ceremony.

Whenever any cultural property, be it intellectual, spiritual, or artistic, is to be used outside of its habitual cultural context, permission to do so must be sought. Indigenous cultural property often contains layers of understanding and significance that remain occluded to the outsider, making its usage impossible and inappropriate. Permission is a cultural currency that is considered of high

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Manning and Massumi offer the term ‘research-creation.’ They suggest that the hyphenation of these two terms gives a sense of continuum and suggests an emergent quality both in the act of research, and in research design. This simple but powerful observation can pertain to PaR in any of its manifestations, whether the artistic researcher is concerned with research in the making of (art) product, or in research scrutinizing (art) process, or indeed the combination of them both. Manning and Massumi, 162.
importance in Indigenous Australia, and as such must be respected in all aspects of process and
“research-creation.”

The values understood to be widely consistent in Indigenous Australian protocols775 include three
foundational concepts that underpin the practice and creation of Contemporary Ceremony:

- **Respect:** affording dignity and agency, and an awareness of the diversity and distinctiveness of
  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Respect of Elders is tacitly understood.
- **Responsibility:** acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples’ prior sovereignty
  (reiterated at public gatherings and civic events), as well as maintaining relational accountability
  in caring for family, community, land, and animals.
- **Reciprocity:** a “mutual obligation to achieve an equitable distribution of resources, responsibility
  and capacity to achieve social cohesion and survival. Reciprocity extends to land, animals and
  other aspects of the natural world.”776

In order to build good working relationships, it is vital that the non-Indigenous researcher
understands a community’s values and philosophical frameworks, and engages in culturally ethical
and accountable paradigms.777 As Crouch elucidates: “…praxis forces individual engagement with
institutional values, for as Friere observes, praxis takes place in the real world.”778

Building on Karen Martin’s observation that Indigenist Research can only ever be a blend of
Western and Indigenous methods, and taking the profundity of levels of trust as very real, the IORP
embraces the concept of ‘two-way enquiry learning’779 as is encouraged by many Indigenous
individuals and institutions.780 Hooley in his 2002 discussion paper offers a definition of ‘two-way
enquiry learning’, which outlines the epistemological rigour and the centrality of a community social
praxis that is emplaced, reflexive and egalitarian. He notes that:

… two-way enquiry learning are advanced as a means of reconciling Indigenous and
western knowing within the confines and rigidities of formal non-Indigenous education
systems. They are respectful of both paradigms of learning and attempt to embody the
areas of overlap. There is no suggestion that one cultural style of learning is superior to
another, although the dimensions are strongly based on a philosophical view that learning
in all societies begins with community social practice and that new knowledge requires a

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775 Commonwealth of Australia, “Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait
776 Ibid.
777 Australia. 8-19. Refer Appendix Eleven: Ethics and Values
Knowing,” in Discussion Paper (Melbourne, Australia: Victoria University, 2002). 42-43.
780 In 2010, the Yothu Yindi Foundation (YHF) announced their intentions to establish the Garma Institute at that year’s
Garma Festival Key Forum. Instrumental to this endeavor is the concept of ‘two-way learning’ establishing strong
foundations in both Western and traditional ways of knowing, rather than preferring one type of cultural education
systematic process of reflection on significant experience. Learning environmentally has a central position. Practice is dignified as an essential component of learning, but theory and practice are considered as a unity at all times, with the theory that guides practice and the practice that informs theory being subject to continuous investigation.\textsuperscript{781}

The philosophical view that “...learning in all societies begins with community social practice and that new knowledge requires a systematic process of reflection on significant experience,” lies at the heart of much ‘Practice as Research’ that is increasingly being undertaken by artists in the academy; particularly by those who consider their art-form to be ‘socially engaged.’

**My non–Aboriginal self**

The IORP offers a relational guiding paradigm that is in concert with this research project as a cross-cultural, PaR space; created with an emplaced awareness of myself as the ‘object’ of research. Wilson notes:

… it is important for storytellers to impart their own life and experience into the telling. They also recognize that listeners will filter the story being told through their own experience and thus adapt the information to make it relevant and specific to their life. When listeners know where the storyteller is coming from and how the story fits into the storyteller’s life, it makes the absorption of the knowledge that much easier.\textsuperscript{782}

Grimes offers a similar perspective, going so far as to advise a particular tone in using story-telling modes in field work. Grimes cautions the rejection of a methodologically imperative tone for a methodologically declarative one,\textsuperscript{783} distinguishing between prescribing and narrating. His distinction hinges on his contention that methodological narratives suggest how not to go about doing things in the field as ‘a covert advice’, a humble and advisory style, as opposed to declarative pronouncements of ‘objective’ fact.

A reflexive gaze, aware of the self in relationship amongst the “network of relations amongst Entities,”\textsuperscript{784} is a concept echoed in the writings of Judith Butler as she considers the ethical nature of accountability from a Western tradition, she notes: “I find that the only way to know myself is precisely through a mediation that takes place outside of me, exterior to me, in a convention or a norm that I did not make, in which I cannot discern myself as an author or an agent of its making.”\textsuperscript{785}

\textsuperscript{781} Hooley. 42-43.
\textsuperscript{782} Wilson. 32.
\textsuperscript{784} Martin. 10.
\textsuperscript{785} Butler. 23.
In research which involves communities and interrogates societal attitudes, it is immediately important, if one is to be ‘transparent,’ to situate ‘the self.’ This is particularly so when scrutinizing one’s own praxis. A reflexive and reciprocal awareness of self in relation to ‘the other’ includes an awareness of ‘the other’ as it is found in: individuals, communities, and cultures (including other species and ecologies). It also includes an awareness of how those who are involved in the research might conceive differently (or not) of historical perspectives, political viewpoints, personal and collective experiences, perceptions of body, mind, and spirit. Claire Land emphasizes this necessity noting that to “… understand one’s social locatedness and to centre Indigenous conceptions of identity and difference are key to the project of decolonizing solidarity.”

Coming to an appreciation of an ontology that may be different from one’s own is not a linear or straightforward process. Mistakes along that I have made along that path have been, and continue to be, many; it can be a perilous endeavour. In the ceremony of research, and in the manifesting of CCs, there is a circular spiralling journey of ‘being-becoming,’ which requires commitment, attention and awareness of one’s own prejudices, privileges and orientations whilst remaining open to new ways of being, perceiving, thinking, knowing and doing.

As such, the place of the self within the research requires an awareness of place and space in a very literal sense. An awareness of self in relation to cultural, geographical, historical and political readings, alongside one’s own sensate, kinaesthetic experience is, I posit, vital to the efficacy of the ceremonial process. It is also an inherent relational aspect of an Indigenist oriented research paradigm in which one’s own story is told (rather than the telling of another’s), divulging an awareness of the multiple readings of place and of one’s relationships within it.

Ethnographer, Sarah Pink urges that “a focus on embodiment is insufficient to understand the complex arrangements of persons and things composing any one performance” but that rather “… they are contingent on a complex ecology of social, material, affective and sensory environmental processes.” An ‘emplaced knowing’ enables us to think “… of places as intensities of activity and presence, as experienced by embodied human subjects, from specific subjectivities. In this sense place is also an ‘event.’”

Auto-ethnographic modes of story-telling which reflect embodied and emplaced knowing have assisted in distilling vital elements of my research, and exhibit a personal awareness of the

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786 Land. 111.
788 ibid. 349.
complexities of ‘place’ and belonging, and ceremony composition within that matrix. In interpreting an event as subject to the “intensities of activity and presence,” alert to being in an emplaced and never fully preordained process, an important understanding to bring to this research is of the “networks of association between Entities” and the charged “space between things.”

In orienting myself to an Indigenist research paradigm, I intend to signal that a relational and emplaced gaze, which embraces ‘non-dominant’ epistemologies and holistic ontologies most rigorously, reflects this research project and its concerns. As such, an IORP provides an ideal frame through which to conduct this research and analyse its findings, but it is not a straightforward process.

**Knots of complexity**

Wilson outlines some of the inherent complexities that arise in an Indigenous ontological paradigm, using a knot analogy to clarify that this way of being, knowing, and doing belongs as much to the realm of ideas and perceptions as to the physical realm of concrete relations:

> As we relate this world into being, many other knots and connections are formed that do not take on a physical form. After all, my physical body can be defined as a boundary – generally speaking, my skin – that separates what is me from what is not. We all know though that our emotional and mental boundaries do not necessarily coincide with the physical.

In drawing boundaries around definitions of ritual, Grimes urges for a ‘soft definition,’ one that “typically congeals around nascent phenomena and calls attention to the bounding process itself or to the spaces between boundaries.” Grimes notes: “In field research on ritual, boundary debates are inevitable, because rituals inhabit physical and social environments that can be bewildering in their complexity.”

The term ‘trans-disciplinary’ is used as distinct from inter-disciplinary. Manning and Massumi clarify trans disciplinary practices are a “thinking-with” and “-across” as opposed to an “‘inter-disciplinary’ tendency.” Interdisciplinary research, they note, often “…really means that disciplines continue to work in their own institutional corners… meeting only at the level of research results.” As the central tropes of the research are made up of multiple concerns, diverse materials and networks of relations, there is a necessary trans-disciplinary gaze that this thesis intends to chart – a

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789 Wilson, 87.
790 ibid. 76.
792 The Craft of Ritual Studies. 40.
793 Manning and Massumi. 88.
consideration of influential key thinkers and practitioners who have impacted directly on the development of the proposed technique.

**Contemporary Ceremony and Practice as Research: the perceived realm**

According to Grimes ritual and research have a dialectical and distinctly dialogic complimentary relationship in which: “ritualizing is the act of stepping in to be, whereas researching is the act of stepping back to know.”\textsuperscript{794} It is in enacting ritual – in unfettered attendance – that one embodies, imagines and materialises the ritual space in feeling, sense and thought. Only in stepping back to scrutinize this ‘cosmos’ can it be analysed for its compositional dynamics.

Similarly, in considering the creative research space, Robin Nelson’s approach to Practice as Research\textsuperscript{795} reflects the necessary combination of conceptually based ‘know that,’ perceptually embodied ‘know how,’ and reflexive ‘know what.’

From an aligned perspective, Noonuccal scholar Karen Martin similarly enjoins a trifold dynamic in her description of Indigenous Australian ontological paradigms. She notes: “Our Ways of Doing are a synthesis and an articulation of our Ways of Knowing and Ways of Being.”\textsuperscript{796} Martin’s paradigm describes perceptual, conceptual, and lived knowledge of being in place, ‘on country.’\textsuperscript{797}

Correlations between the epistemological “matters of concern” from the spheres of PaR, Martin’s onto-epistemological concerns from Indigenous studies, and Grimes’ observations of ‘ritual affect’ from ritual studies, suggests there is a \textit{complicité} of gaze between their schemas – blending theoretical and sensory with experiential and relational knowledges.

Although there is a growing healthy tradition of creative research\textsuperscript{798} in universities worldwide, this paradigm sits more comfortably within some arts practices (and arts practitioners) than others. One of the constraints of Practice as Research as it is commonly articulated as part thesis/part practical component, is that it benefits research undertaken in discreet artistic disciplines and struggles to accommodate less conventional, trans-disciplinary practices that do not emphasise product.

Further, having strong alignments within ‘traditional’ disciplines can establish a known theoretical landscape against which a researcher may tether their practice in an otherwise fluid and free-ranging micro-cosmos of PaR. For example, choreographers wishing to undertake PaR, will

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\textsuperscript{794} Grimes, \textit{The Craft of Ritual Studies}. 23.
\textsuperscript{795} Nelson. 3.
\textsuperscript{796} Martin. 11.
\textsuperscript{797} Refer Glossary
\textsuperscript{798} Frequently described as either ‘Practice Led Research’ or ‘Practice based Research.’
commonly delineate their standpoint on contemporary dance practice and situate themselves within a tradition – aesthetically, conceptually, formally and so on.

Researchers with art practices that enjoy more defined disciplinary boundaries than those of the ‘art of community’ practitioner are frequently said to find PaR a challenging endeavour. A further complication arises for researchers hoping to articulate a ‘community oriented’ aesthetic: a practice of art in relationships. The ‘art of community,’ has had little definitional boundary marking due to its nascent form. Further confounding is the noted surfeit of ‘descriptors’ that have coalesced around the phenomena, for as Helguerra notes they may: “have nearly nothing in common.”

Therefore, to temper these tensions a relational paradigm (IORP), which guides the methodological process of “research-creation” has been employed. The IORP orients the research within an ethical matrix that is both appropriate to the land upon which it has been conducted, and capable of accounting for the relational imperative at the heart of the ‘art of community’ practice of Contemporary Ceremony.

The ‘artist-as-researcher’: Producing the relational research space of Contemporary Ceremony

In reviewing the spectrum of literature and diversity of the case studies I was juggling, it became clear that boundary drawing was necessary. In order to bound the praxial, relational, and textual influences, the nature of ‘how, why and where’ the case studies resonated with each other needed clear articulation.

And so, I began to draw…

I drew iterations of the relationships I had noted between dynamics and elements in the case studies, but ended up with increasingly confused mappings, and needed a further tool for analysis. I mused over Lefebvre’s triadic dialectic from his seminal *The Production of Space*, which offers a relational consideration of how ‘spaces’ are conceived and considered, how they are perceived and their affect felt, and how they are used and operate in the ongoing process of living. The possibility of an analysis of producing the ‘space’ of Contemporary Ceremony offered an approach that I found to be in resonance with both Martin and Nelson’s trifold schemas, and complimentary to Grimes contention that ritual is a ‘momentary cosmos’ that is “sensed, felt and thought.” It was a conceptual starting point for bounding and classifying data.

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799 Nelson, Bolt, Mafe and Haseman, et al
800 Helguerra. 3-9.
Lefebvre and the Production of Ceremonial Space

Christian Schmid’s analysis of Lefebvre’s ‘three-dimensional dialectic’ has been of central inspiration to this research. Contemporary Ceremonies can be considered temporal spaces, designed spaces, and psycho-spiritually conceived ones. They are innately symbolic, social sites of representation and signification, and are frequently sites of multiple and overlapping spatial practices. As spatially enacted phenomena, ceremonies can be mapped and planned, documented and represented across many forms. When scrutinized through a ‘Lefebvrean’ lens, as ‘produced,’ dynamic, and inter-subjective spaces CCs can be analysed for how they have been conceived, perceived, and ‘lived.’ Contemporary Ceremonies inherently concern representations of space, spaces of representation, and spatial practices.

According to Schmid, Lefebvre’s dialectical figure could be considered as fundamentally concerned with the contradictions that exist between social thoughts and social acts, “supplemented by the third factor of the creative, poetic act.” Schmidt observes that rather than an independent entity existing ‘in itself,’ “(social) space is a (social) product.” For Lefebvre, space is ultimately bound up in social realities – in order to exist it is produced through relationships that occur in space and time. Schmid notes that, for Lefebvre: “Space stands for simultaneity, the synchronic order of social reality; time, on the other hand, denotes the diachronic order and thus the historic process of social production.”

Central to Lefebvre’s understanding of how ‘space’ comes into being, is the understanding that ‘society’ is not simply a spatial-temporal combination of matter (bodies in space) and their activities (practices in time), but is also constituted by: “… human beings in their corporeality and sensuousness, with their sensitivity and imagination, their thinking and their ideologies; human beings who enter into relationships with each other through their activity and practice.”


A Socratic interpretation of ‘dialectic’ describes a discourse between two contradictory points of view on a particular issue or topic, that intends through rational consideration of the differing perspectives, to progress an understanding of the topic at hand. The evolution of differing branches of dialectics over past centuries has changed the nature of this straightforward approach and the dialectics of Marx, Nietzsche and Hegel, in particular have had considerable influence on Lefebvre’s thinking.

802 According to Schmid, Hegel’s threefold dialectic, in which any entity or term always implies its opposite in dialogical relationship, also considers the sublation of these two – as a third referent, which “both negates and embodies the other two” at once. This conceptual movement in meanings has been described by the following system of: “affirmation, negation, negation-of-the-negation.” One of Lefebvre’s criticisms of Hegel was that his dialectic belonged only to the world of concepts and of thought, and did nothing to explain the contradictions inherent in phenomena or the lived experience. Marx’ materialist dialectics which gave precedence to the material processes of production rather than to ideas, however, countered the supremacy of thought over perceptions which provided Lefebvre with some part of a solution. Lefebvre other criticism of Hegel’s dialectic was that he saw it as a closed and dominating system of abstraction, a reductive exercise in semiotics. Ibid. 33.

803 Ibid. 29.

804 Ibid.
Neither space nor time exists without the triangulation of their inter-relationship with human beings.

As Schmid clarifies:

Accordingly, space and time do not exist universally. As they are socially produced, they can only be understood in the context of a specific society. In this sense, space and time are not only relational but also fundamentally historical. This calls for an analysis that would include the social constellations, power relations, and conflicts relevant in each situation.\footnote{805 ibid.}

In further honing his theory, Lefebvre considers this process ‘formants’ or moments of spatial production, “…divided into three dialectically interconnected dimensions or processes” which are “doubly determined” and “doubly designated.”\footnote{806 ibid.} On the one hand, they refer to the triad of “spatial practice,” “representations of space,” and “spaces of representation.” On the other, they refer to “perceived,” “conceived,” and “lived” space. This parallel series points to a twofold approach to space: one phenomenological and the other linguistic or semiotic.

Adopting a Lefebvrean analysis, I drew further mappings of dynamics and elements, but this time contained my notations in three different, but often overlapping spheres of concern. These were the ‘conceived,’ ‘perceived,’ and ‘lived experience’ spaces of ceremony composition. Soon data was starting to flow into each of these categories, and whilst some matters of concern remained in–between boundaries, the data began to reveal a pattern of compositional concern that could be described as foundational ‘starting’ points for CC composition. The three foundational bases were far from exceptional, but in their simplicity, are sometimes overlooked. The image below indicates their imbricated relationship. The three spheres, which contain the matters of concern for Contemporary Ceremony composition, are:

1. ‘The Cosmos/ Space’ – the conceived sphere of theories, representational concerns and ontologies,
2. ‘The Community’ – the perceived sphere of participants’ worldviews, affects, and ritual intent,
3. ‘The Artist’s self’ – the sphere of lived experience, wherein the artist’s skills, experience and poetics are essential to the divination and designing process of composition.
The Research Design

In her recent publication entitled *Ten Propositions for Research-Creation*, Manning added as subheading to *Proposition Five: Be Speculatively Pragmatic*, the reminder to – “enjoy the process.” She suggests an inquisitive but grounded playfulness during research-creation in which:

A speculative pragmatism takes as its starting point a rigour of experimentation beyond method. It is interested in the anarchy at the heart of all processes and is engaged with the techniques that tune the anarchical into new modes of knowledge. It is also interested in what escapes the order, and especially in what this excess can do. And it implicitly recognises that knowledge is invented in the escape; in the excess.807

In adopting a Practice as Research methodology, mindful of the “rigor” and “… techniques that tune the anarchical into new modes of knowledge,” further articulation of methods and the research ‘design’ is necessary. ‘Data’ collected during the research-creation phase included: auto-ethnographic accounts of case studies, working drawings and designs, reflections on ritual pedagogical practices, video and photographic documentation, tacit and anecdotal accounts, and de-identified surveys from Contemporary Ceremony collaborators and participants.808

I have dealt with most of the theoretical matters of concern found in primary and secondary sources in Book One and in the first chapter of this book, so it is now necessary to further outline how practical and processual concerns have been captured and analysed.

An Abbreviated Grounded Theory

I have already outlined the use of Lefebvre’s triadic dialectic to analyse my data, and note that on commencing this research it was not my intention to posit a theory. However, as the process of research-creation gathered momentum, patterns, conceptual codings, and ‘categories of meaning,’

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808 Refer Appendix Six: Surveys
began to appear in the data collected and analysed. It became clear that I was applying qualitative measures in my fractal drawings and groupings that could be described as an abbreviated\textsuperscript{809} and constructivist grounded theory method. Similar to Manning and Massumi’s idea of ‘research-creation,’ grounded theory’s intent according to one of its progenitors, is to:

\[ \ldots \text{trust to emergence and by constant comparison, conceptualise the latent patterns} \ldots \]
\[ \text{The goal of GT is to discover it conceptually not describe it} \ldots \]
\[ \text{The worldview of GT is to allow the researcher the freedom to discover and generate conceptual theory about ‘whatever’ and not preconceive it nature. Its limits are the researcher’s self and resources} \ldots \text{.} \textsuperscript{810} \]

Making constant comparisons and observing latent patterns (whilst holding no preconceptions as to theoretical outcomes) appeared to be exactly what I was doing. Kathy Charmaz notes this “constructivist” approach places emphasis on the phenomena studied rather than on methods of doing so, which necessitates reflexivity “… on modes of knowing and representing studied life,” while being aware of “locating oneself in these realities.”\textsuperscript{811}

Charmaz advises that the activity of grounded theories do not occur “in a social vacuum.” Capturing the myriad of relational networks that one encounters, she notes a relational and active agency in data analysis stating: “…we bring past interaction and current interests into our research, and we interact with our empirical materials and emerging ideas as well as, perhaps, granting agencies, institutional review boards, and community agencies and groups…”\textsuperscript{812} Charmaz stresses that it is not the method chosen, but the research agenda and “the researcher’s unfolding interests” which direct and inform content, and thus resulting theorizing will reflect the researcher’s relational concerns.\textsuperscript{813} As Latour notes: “Contrary to what is so often said, relativism is a way to float on data, not drown in them.”\textsuperscript{814} I shall tell the story of this research process’ unfolding and the emergence of the praxial technique in the final Book, but first it is important to present the case studies. Before giving an account of them, some final notes on this choice of thesis form must be made.

\textsuperscript{809} Carla Willig notes: "The abbreviated version of grounded theory... works with the original data only. Here, interview transcripts or other documents are analyzed following the principles of grounded theory... The researcher does not have the opportunity to leave the confines of the original data set to broaden and refine the analysis." Willig, 73.


\textsuperscript{812} Ibid. 510.

\textsuperscript{813} Ibid. 511.

\textsuperscript{814} Latour, Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory. 23.
Why this thesis is in (largely) written form

The reason I have excluded an experiential ‘product’ but offered a ‘performative’ theoretical text hinges on a number of issues including scale, time, and process that were incommensurable with the constraints of examination. I have listed these reasons below:

1. Complexity, scale and fragility: There is high degree of complexity working with different groups of large numbers of people on site-specific events. Many responsibilities (relational, ritual and ethical) inherent in this process are required of the ritual-artist. Managing different stakeholders and their interfaces with the many ‘selves’ participating, makes for a complex and fragile eco-system. To layer an examinable component on the already fragile eco-system of CC I considered an unhelpful dynamic, and one that would invariably skew the ‘Heart of the Matter’ of the ceremonial intent, and my research findings. Relational accountability required that I put the concerns of my ‘cast and crew’ before my agenda, and not subject them to additional strain.

2. The nature of process, time and resources: Noting the “anarchy” that truly is at the “heart” of enactments of Contemporary Ceremony, to participate solely on the day of enactment would be a vastly different experience to being part of the microcosm and micro-community of the ritualizing process, from initiation and divination to completion. The process and ‘know how’ of composing Contemporary Ceremony cannot be captured or demonstrated in a single event.

3. A third consideration lies in a contemporary concern to reconsider artworks as practices and processes rather than consumable ‘products.’ Manning and Massumi observe:

   Experimental practice embodies technique toward catalysing an event of emergence whose exact lineaments cannot be foreseen…technique… includes the idea of the conditions through which a work or practice comes to definite technical expression. Technique is therefore processual: it reinvents itself in the evolution of a practice.815

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815 Manning and Massumi. 89.
Chapter Six: The Sphere of Lived Experience – ‘Know How’ and ‘Know What’

Contemporary Ceremony and lived experience

Whilst many scholars have undertaken significant analysis of the structural, social, and affective determinants of ritual practices, their emphasis has been on the study of extant rituals rather than the composing of new ones. To date, few scholarly texts offer detailed insights into praxial processes and the creative and methexical dynamics in the lived experience of ritual composition.

Contemporary Ceremony as a mode of ritual enactment draws on the field of ritual studies for both definitional and compositional concerns, whilst Contemporary Ceremony as an art praxis, requires that the artist’s ‘know how,’ ‘know what’ and creative lineages must also be scrutinized. From a community oriented art-making perspective, Contemporary Ceremonies are events wherein the practice forges connections and a sense, even if fleetingly, of community.\(^{817}\) On occasion, Contemporary Ceremonies have catalysed experiences of ‘spontaneous communitas,’\(^ {818}\) as the audience, invited into the very fabric of the ceremony, take part in their “wholeness.”\(^ {819}\) Here the ‘audience’ are subtly transformed from passive witness to active participant,\(^ {820}\) as scale permits.

In creating public, reflexive experiences, or as Hilda Kuper suggests, moments in which participants are: “dramatizing self and culture at once, each made by the other,”\(^ {821}\) a new space emerges in which reflexivity and receptivity emerge. Contemporary Ceremonies are complex in their intention. As new paradigms are enacted, they are made real, even if fleetingly. In practicing CCs, through telling stories, making music, and choreographing dances, a tacit understanding emerges between participants that the central issue is the doing together; enactment of the ritual publically, and in solidarity.

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816 Methexis has nuances of meaning including ‘participation’ and infers bringing something into being through enactment. In *The Lie of the Land*, Paul Carter observes: “Methexis was the ‘non-representative’ principle behind Celtic, and Aranda, art, whose spirals and mazes reproduced, by an act of concurrent actual production, a pattern danced on the ground.” Paul Carter, *The Lie of the Land* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), 84.

817 Refer Appendix Six: Surveys


819 An example of this can be witnessed in the footage the second case study – as audience members are invited to ‘paint up’ each other with ochre during *Longing, Belonging, Land*.

820 The nature of an individual’s transformation remains private in these public rituals. Composers should be mindful of the potential risk of abuse of ritual forms, and remain vigilant, alert to any signs of possible psychological distress.

821 Kuper. 155.
I shall now offer an overview of the lineages of ritual-art practice from which the praxis of Contemporary Ceremony has emerged before presenting the case studies.

**The Ritual-Artist’s lineages**

In order to situate my ‘ritual-making’ lineage, a brief overview of my practice will assist in an understanding of the development of Contemporary Ceremony.

Between 1991 and 2003, I was a core member of the ritual fire-event company *Neil Cameron Productions* (NCP) that created over 25 large-scale, community based celebrations at Festivals and in communities across Australia. Over this time, I took on the role of Assistant Director and eventually co-Artistic Director, having trained in all aspects of the company’s ritual making processes.

The company worked on an epic scale, owing its roots and much of its aesthetic to the British community art tradition of *Welfare State International (WSI)*. NCP created events designed to bring communities together in celebration, and similarly to WSI utilized lantern parades, community choirs and huge bonfires. As an Australian based company, NCP often made these events with prior consultation and permission of the traditional owners on whose land the event was held.

However, Indigenous participation was mostly limited to a ‘traditional’ and symbolic fire lighting ceremony at the very beginning of the event, with no collaboration with Indigenous peoples past this moment of acknowledgement. This had often been a troubling matter for me, and prompted closer work on ceremony making with Bundjalung woman Rhoda Roberts, artistic director of the Dreaming Festival (2005 – 10) and Garma Festival 2010.

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822 Welfare State International under the direction of Sue Gill and John Fox created large-scale lantern parades, constructed huge bonfires, employed pyrotechnic effects, masks and puppetry in their works over 38 years. [http://www.welfare-state.org/](http://www.welfare-state.org/)

823 Refer Appendix Five: Other Ceremonial Works 2006 – 2017
Frequently Neil and I wrestled with the term ‘ritual theatre’ to describe NCP ceremonies, as neither of us were convinced of the accuracy of it – often ascribed to the theatre of Brook and Grotowsk\textsuperscript{824} – so we settled on generic and less prescriptive term: ‘fire event’.

![Figure 12: The Pillars of Wisdom 2002 and the Woodford Folk Festival Audience (photo: Graeme Batterbury)](image)

Fire events often involved hundreds of performers, audiences of many thousands, and always culminated in the burning of a large bonfire\textsuperscript{825} rigged with celebratory fireworks. The fire warmed the faces of the audience and was the *liminal* climax to the ceremony. Performed as a New Year ritual at the Woodford Folk Festival, the fire signalled the moment of letting go of ‘old business,’ literally of the old year, and of celebrating the future together.

After the 2003 fire event at Woodford, we made the decision to disband the company. The impact of accrued exhaustion from working on an epic scale over many years had left the company ‘burnt out.’ Further, an issue of increasing personal importance was that I craved the opportunity to develop my solo art practice and explore other forms and ritual expressions independently of my former mentor and colleague.

My work since has developed along more intimate lines of enquiry. I have sought further levels of public participation, deeper specificity in content matter, and a commitment to elegance of design and artistry in each of the ritual works, including the musical, ‘liturgical,’ visual, and performative elements.

In 2006, on commencing my Masters studies in Theatre Design, I attempted to create a more refined, and delicate ritual event than had seemed possible in the epic scale. Nonetheless, I hoped

\textsuperscript{824} Artaud, Brook and Grotowski were all proponents of ritual theatre in the 20th Century. All three shared a similar desire to revitalize theatre with works that were emotionally engaging through use of the body and an integrity in delivery to create shift with, and between, audience and performer. However, both Brook and Grotowski focus on actor training in their ritual–theatre performances, in which the process in the workshop is often valued more highly than the performance of the work. A very different intent and approach to both Contemporary Ceremony composition and fire events.

\textsuperscript{825} Woodford Folk Festival, QLD Australia: from 1991 – 2003 Fire events formed the highlight of the festival as all activities across the site ceased for this large–scale public ritual. Audiences ranged from 10 – 16,000. Neil Cameron Productions created these events during this period.
it would be capable of harnessing the affective resonances that the larger fire events had achieved.

The resulting research was an exploration of the formal design elements of Contemporary Ceremony. My aim was to create dialogues between the audience, the performers and the space in which the event took place. This research culminated in ‘Song of Ourselves – a meditation on reconciliation,’ a season of indoor ritual performances held over a week, in which the audience was embedded from the outset: visually, ‘liturgically’ and experientially.

My research examined how design elements impacted on the reflexive experience of the audience. As the audience shifted into deeper levels of participation, their emotional, sensory, psychological and intellectual worlds were increasingly engaged. It was my hope to instil collective, receptive and compassionate states in the group assembled each night. Of central import was the moment of ‘apology’ at the climax of the ceremony in which a fire drawing of the word ‘Sorry’ was ceremonially burned. It is important here to note that this ceremony took place seven months before the National Apology, and was thus arguably harnessing a strongly held, if occluded, desire in the national zeitgeist.

**Inspiration**

As noted earlier, the 2008 *National Apology to the Stolen Generations (The Apology)* has been of central importance to the evolution and practice of Contemporary Ceremony.827 This event heralded a moment in time when Australia seemed poised to recognise Australia's First Peoples' prior sovereignty; extending beyond *The Apology*, to an acknowledgement of the dispossession and colonial burden of all Indigenous Australians. The spirit of the times suggested a growing awareness of, and receptivity towards, embracing First Peoples as being central to the national identity and deserving of status and recompense.

Building on the work of civil rights leaders and reconciliation networks, *The Apology* contained the potential to ignite commitment within mainstream Australia towards embracing recognition, respect, and reparative measures for all Indigenous Australians. Included in this potential was a hope that practical measures, formed in consultative and culturally appropriate processes, might be successfully undertaken to address long overdue issues of Indigenous disadvantage. However, now

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826 Song of Ourselves was a consciously referential title for this event. The name was chosen partly as homage to Walt Whitman’s *Song of Myself* – as discussed later under case studies.

827 Refer Book One, Chapter One: The National Apology
fast approaching a decade since *The Apology*, public debate on these important issues has made little progress.\textsuperscript{828}

It does not lie within the scope of this paper to debate the efficacy of *The Apology* towards practical reconciliation, or indeed the lack of it.\textsuperscript{829} Rather, it is of importance to reflect on the event for its symbolic resonances and the palpable, if limited, shift it reflected in the national gaze. *The Apology*, as a first step in healing and acknowledgement, enabled many Australians to re-imagine, with hope, the future direction of cross-cultural relations. As a national ritual of contrition, *The Apology* was a pivotal moment in the Australian consciousness, wherein the much-debated “indelible stain upon the national psyche”\textsuperscript{830} began to be acknowledged and ‘owned.’ As such *The Apology* was one of the many sources of inspiration for Contemporary Ceremony.

**Consultation**

It is important to remember that Contemporary Ceremony is composed from an anti-colonial\textsuperscript{831} perspective, with reflexive intent. As such, it is guided by an ethos of recognition and respect for First Peoples.\textsuperscript{832} When ceremonies are conducted on traditional lands of Indigenous people – wherever this may be on the planet – according to this ethos, consultation with traditional owners is seen as an imperative first step. A further element of this ethos is an active and affective communication of recognition and respect for First Peoples within the wider community. This concerns a respectful reframing, where appropriate and permissible, Indigenous cultural *morés*, cultural practices, and stories in close consultation and collaboration with Indigenous Elders and community members. Contemporary Ceremony in its artfulness, intends to ignite experiences of reflexivity and receptivity between participants, whatsoever their cultural background, through an embodied (re) cognition of the temporal, ethical and geographical relationships between place/space, community, and self.

In realising this intent, the process of composing Contemporary Ceremony necessitates the bringing together of individuals and groups from different community sectors in cross-cultural ensembles. Participants are invited to pursue a collaborative envisioning of the ceremony in undertaking the ritual as both process and event, with multiple points of entry for participation considered as integral

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\textsuperscript{828} Refer Glossary
\textsuperscript{829} Claire Land offers a concise appraisal of the failings of the Apology refer: Land. 13-14.
\textsuperscript{830} The use of Henry Reynolds’s term (specific to the genocidal origins of the nation state) is widespread in both academic and literary circles in Australia.
\textsuperscript{831} Much debate has recently arisen questioning whether white academics should use the term ‘decolonizing’ and Clare Land’s recent book, points to many of the tensions that exist in this dialogue. The researcher acknowledges that this is a contested term. Refer: Land. 162-169.
\textsuperscript{832} Refer Glossary
to the ceremony’s design. The process of Contemporary Ceremony, and the requirement of embodiment in its enactment, serves to align individual participants within a “micro-culture” — a temporary community. This “micro-community” reflects, whilst it co-creates, core aspirations of Contemporary Ceremony in realising shared and receptive space-time states of embodied reflexivity. As part of this process it is important to reiterate that Contemporary Ceremonies are created in collaboration and consultation with senior Elders of First Peoples, and that local protocols are strictly adhered to.833

Cosmos: space, place and the subtleties of consultation

In commencing an analysis of the compositional concerns of the case studies, it is important to first recount an influential meeting with a renowned Aboriginal elder during the early processes of divination and consultation for the first example, Song of Ourselves.

In September 2006, I was invited to participate in the ‘Navigators’ project, an art-project involving a group of 12 artists based at DAS Arts in the Netherlands and 12 postgraduate students from the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne. The project was inspired by the first documented European landing on Australian shores in 1606, when a small Dutch vessel, the ‘Duyfken’ (little dove), moored at what is now known as Pennyfather River just north of Weipa, in far northern Cape York.834

The journey to Cape York was profound and deeply affecting. For many, this was their first experience of visiting remote Aboriginal communities. There was much discussion with our International visitors – both in preparation before leaving Melbourne and also whilst on the road – about the cultural differences we would face, and the need to respect Aboriginal protocols. One source of enduring difficulty that arose between the two cohorts was the difference in perception of what it meant to ‘follow protocol.’ Meetings continued to get more frequent and heated as the tour progressed, with Indigenous team members feeling disrespected and attacked, and many of the non-Indigenous Australian cohort disheartened and confused.

Many of the European students seemed unable to grasp the subtlety of ‘appropriate behaviour’ in remote communities – down to simple respect for physical boundaries — at times at their own peril in crocodile country. Some of them despaired at what they considered to be the Australian cohort’s deprecating ways; and taking umbrage with what they saw somewhat simplistically as prohibition,

833 Refer Book Two, Chapter Five: Protocols, Permission and Ethical Research
834 Cape York Peninsula is situated in the far north of the state of Queensland, on the eastern seaboard of Australia.
considered boundaries to be inapplicable to them, and walked around areas that were formally pronounced by our Aboriginal hosts to be ‘out of bounds.’ I for one, recognizing the irony felt ‘colonized’ by their disregard for our customs. The lack of respect alone could not have been pure ignorance, for these were well-educated individuals who had been given hours of background information and advice. However, it occurred to me that, as they were not born in colonised countries, they had not experienced the ‘frontier complex’ and the confusion of tensions that colonial occupation of land creates: for both ‘the complex position of the settler’ and the incommensurate experience of the colonized.

During this time, I experienced a significant and influential meeting, which served to highlight my own shortcomings and lack of insight into the complexity of Indigenous peoples’ relationship to land. On the tidal shores of Bouchat, Albatross Bay, half an hour’s drive North of the bauxite mines of Weipa, I met the formidable and spirited Aboriginal leader Thanakoupie. ‘Than’ was the traditional owner of Bouchat, a renowned ceramicist and storyteller. She vehemently clung to her language and culture with a passion, and startling strength, in what was clearly a rapidly ailing body. Than’s connection to country was part of the fibre of her being. One sunset I watched her call to circling flocks of frigate birds, who as Entities - seemed to swoop in response to her reedy piercing voice as she lifted her arms towards them in song. Other times she sang to ancestors while walking across the land, calling out in a defiant and shrill tone the different languages that had all but fallen silent here, except for her last, lone voice. Once, in spite of her advanced years, she caught us fresh mud crab, mussels, and stingray, wrapped them in paperbark packages, and expertly cooked them up on hot coals by the beach for us to feast upon.

However early on in our stay, one Sunday morning, our fractious group was ‘Welcomed to Country,’ in the distinctly liminal space where the fresh-water stream opened out into a salt-water estuary of wide mudflats and clumps of leggy mangroves. We gathered and listened respectfully as we were sung hymns, both in English and in ‘language,’ by a group of elderly Aboriginal ladies. Then, in what might be described as a rite of purification and welcome, each of us was asked to bend forward to have cool river water poured over our heads from a small red plastic cup. An elderly hand was then placed gently upon each crown – perhaps in blessing or acceptance. It was an intense and moving ceremony; gentle yet disruptive. The whole group became humbled and ‘soft.’ Many wept openly,

835 Lindi Renier Todd, "Unsettling Settler Narratives of the Past," Transforming Cultures eJournal 3, no. 1 (2008). 414-416. Todd notes Elizabeth Furniss’ notion of a “particular historical consciousness” which she terms the “frontier complex” which according to Furniss’ research “reveal that the inability to speak, or silence (as deliberative, repressive or traumatic) need to be recognized for what they reveal about factors enabling narration and consequently the processes by which it can be destroyed and subsequently be rebuilt.”
as we were offered the bounty of the land and sea, and given the freedom to come and go upon it. This ritual was, in that moment – and only for that morning, transformative and unifying.

One day, whilst ‘on country’ with Than, a flag that she had designed appeared flying from a pole stuck into the foreshore sand. As I chatted to her about the significance of her design and its’ symbolism of land and reconciliation, I began, somewhat naively, to incubate notions about creating a work on reconciliation for my Master’s final ritual performance piece. After returning to Melbourne and deciding that this was the direction I wanted to take, the next step I knew was to follow protocol in seeking Than’s permission to use the themes and colours, if not the literal symbol, of the flag. I began to dream up a design and I wrote Thanakoupie a letter describing my ideas. Then after chatting with her over the phone, I received an in principle ‘yes’ — or so I thought.

![Image: Thanakoupie and her Flag at Bouchat (photo: Margie Mackay)](image)

Importantly, I point out that at this time I was also in consultation with Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy, who, aside from being a generous and respected friend, is also senior Elder of the Wurundjeri people and on whose traditional lands this contemporary ceremony was to take place. Experience had taught me that everything would need to be run past Aunty Joy for her approval, permission and judgment. Aunty Joy looked at my drawings for some time, and then described her emotional responses as she ‘journeyed’ through each stage of my design. I was amazed at the detail she offered as she imaged and imagined her way stepping through each phase of the ritual, both visualising and feeling her passage.

Of central importance was my inability to comprehend her meaning when she got to the section that most fully embraced Than’s flag. Here she said: ‘I don’t know this part, it’s not my country.’ I all but shrugged it off at the time, but the comment stayed in the back of my mind and was to return with huge resonance later in the compositional process.

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Refer Glossary
Some months later, I met with Than in Sydney and she listened as I talked about the Master’s project I had envisaged. Quite unexpectedly she then voiced what her growing concerns about using her flag in my design. After a few hours of talking, I came to a deeper understanding of what the flag represented for her. For Than the flag was a ritual object; a representation of her country that was at the same time both symbolic and in some sense utterly real.\footnote{Grimes points to the conundrum between real and ‘imaginary. Refer Grimes, Rite out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts. 153.} If I was to make representation of her country many thousands of kilometres away from it in actuality, then it was necessary to make sure that the spirit world of Bouchat would be agreeable too. Certain ceremonies and propitiatory gestures would need to take place in Melbourne, which could only be performed by Than and dancers from her community in Cape York, in order to placate spirits and ancestors and to keep her country safe.

At this time, the aluminium giant Alcoa was starting to open up and mine land directly adjacent to Bouchat, and there was a very real threat to her country’s survival. To bring Than and dancers down from Cape York would have had huge repercussions both on my budget and also on my autonomy in composing the piece, and although it could have been an extraordinary process and potentially a beautiful collaboration, I felt that it was not the project I wished to pursue for my Masters assessment. I was also aware that this was the gentlest way that Than could release me gracefully, and enable her to keep hold of what was clearly her cultural, intellectual, artistic and spiritual property.

Under the caveat of requirements that Than made, I went, quite literally, back to the drawing board. In the way of this type of work, I was unsurprised to find myself unsure of how and where to go forward. I noted that the immensity of reconciliation would never be something easily tackled, in real life let alone in ritual, and that there were significant lessons for me to learn along the way.

Mirroring the noted parallel passages found in spatial motifs around liminal moments in a rite, I have found time and again, that whatever it was that I ‘sang up’\footnote{Refer Glossary} as the Heart of the Matter, the process of divination would inevitably require of me as composer a complimentary element of sacrifice that was thematically synchronous. I ruefully reappraised Aunty Joy’s comment, ‘it’s not my country.’ This quite literally was true. A vital ingredient when making cross-cultural work is to have the ability to listen, to be flexible and willing to change, and to understand that one’s own cultural paradigms
and matrices will be challenged and should not in any way dominate the outcome or processes, in spite of best intentions. An important lesson had been delivered and received.

In her paper on Marrugeku's creative process, Rachael Swain describes their work as being born of an intercultural laboratory. In Marrugeku the central processes, values and understandings of the group stem from this formative time together: “processing paradox, pain and complexity through lived experience.”

She goes on to describe the challenges of such work:

… how differently we have to listen and look to make this work. I have to contemplate what I am being told and how I have to listen just as hard for what I am not being told. There is a constant sense of being blindfolded and having to find my way through an unknown terrain by my other senses.

Echoing my own thoughts and experiences she goes on to say: “… like reconciliation, Marrugeku intercultural work is a process and a goal, and like reconciliation, the only way forward is to go through the pain.”

Feeling bereft and stuck, I kept searching through literature on reconciliation and immersed myself in reading. Then one night I literally dreamt of a large spiral of red fabric unfolding like a labyrinth in space. It was a strange nocturnal visit — something that after much conscious thought and work the unconscious had released. For a few days, I wrestled with the idea of the spiral of red. Then I submitted, surrendered, and began to design around it at the centrepiece, the foundation stone of my compositional axis mundi.

Song of Ourselves – a meditation on reconciliation (SOO) was the resulting final performance piece for my Master of Theatre Design studies in 2007. It was created six months before the now historic Apology to the Stolen Generations, of February 13th, 2008. Hence, SOO was held during the final months of the ultra-conservative Howard government’s reign, at a time when an apology seemed an improbability.

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839 Refer Appendix Seven: Australian Contemporaries
841 Ibid. 31-32.
842 Ibid. 35.
843 Axis Mundi translates as ‘centre of the world’ – around which the cosmos is arranged. refer: Eliade. 12.
844 Refer Book One, Chapter One: The National Apology
Overview of the case studies

Four suites of Contemporary Ceremonies have been chosen for analysis. This in part because they have each been influential in the development of the proposed technique, and partly because their differing scales and institutional applications indicate the consistency of compositional concerns. The variables peculiar to each case study also serve to support the flexibility of the proposed technique, despite scale of the project, the communities engaged and the ceremony’s location. The case studies presented were all performed in very different public spaces. Three took place in Melbourne, Australia and one in Cape Town, South Africa.

In the next section of this thesis, auto-ethnographic accounts of the case studies will reveal the compositional dynamics and ‘matters of concerns’ in each case, towards the formation of the praxial technique. Each example will be reviewed from the concerns of how the ‘space’ of Contemporary Ceremony was conceived, perceived and ‘lived’.

Song of Ourselves – a Meditation on Reconciliation 2007

*Song of Ourselves* (SOO) was a Contemporary Ceremony held at the Victorian College of The Arts (VCA), one of Australia’s premier applied art schools. The event was the culmination of a Master’s of Theatre Design research project, which enquired into the relationships of affect between space, objects, and participants in a ceremonial, participatory event. Most of the event was conducted indoors, and the audience numbers were kept small (25 people) however, the event was repeated nightly over a ‘season’ of five days. Of all of the Contemporary Ceremonies described here, *Song of Ourselves – a Meditation on Reconciliation* is perhaps the most detailed. The smaller, more intimate scale, and the non-weather-affected indoor space, allowed for more detail and refinement to emerge. The emphasis in analysis of this ceremony is on the perceived nature of the event – as a spatial practice – for its’ sensate affects. Reflections are gathered from the researcher and from participants.

Longing, Belonging, Land 2008

A desire to keep the momentum of the reconciliatory potential that surfaced with the National Apology lead me to create *Longing Belonging Land* (LBL) for the 2008 Opening of the Melbourne International Arts Festival. LBL created was a ceremony of recognition, remembrance and solidarity; designed with the aspiration of achieving an experience of communal reflexivity and
receptivity. It took place on the banks of the City of Melbourne’s Yarra River – or Birrarung⁸⁴⁵ and involved over 60 cast and crew, and was performed to over 3000 festivalgoers. The focus of analysis of this work is primarily on the conceived nature of composition and the representations of space(s) that it portrayed.

Quiet Emergency 2010

Quiet Emergency (Q.E) was a Contemporary Ceremony held in Thibault Square, Cape Town, South Africa, as part of the annual Infecting the City, Public Art Festival produced by the Africa Centre. Quiet Emergency was held twice daily over the seven days of the festival and involved a cast of approximately 60 participants from a range of communities and performance groups from townships and suburbs of Cape Town. This ceremony was created under the festival’s theme of ‘Human Rites’ and was a collaboration between three lead artists: myself (Australia), Anthea Moys (South Africa), and Gilbert Douglas (Zimbabwe). The lens through which this ceremony will be analysed will be the ‘lived’ experience of its production and enactment, drawing on video footage and anecdotal accounts from my artistic journals.

Dreamtime at the ‘G’ 2010 – 2013 (inclusive)

This suite of four Contemporary Ceremonies took place on the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground, reputedly one of the largest sporting arenas in the Southern hemisphere. These spectacular events were performed on a ‘one-off’ occasion to an audience of approximately 80,000 people and televised nationally. The event celebrates the considerable contributions made by Indigenous Australian to the game of Australian Rules Football and is commissioned by the Australian Football League (a multi-million-dollar corporation) in partnership with the Essendon and Richmond football clubs, The Long Walk (an Indigenous reconciliation not-for-profit organization), and in consultation with local Traditional Owners and Senior Elders. The four Contemporary Ceremonies created as part of ‘Dreamtime at the G’ honoured traditional owners in what might be described as an extended Welcome to Country, and served as a platform for Elders and community members to exhibit community concerns, commemorations, and accomplishments on the National stage. The primary emphasis in the analysis of this ceremony will be on how the ceremony was conceived, and will reflect on the designer’s processes of divination and design.

⁸⁴⁵ Both Woiwurrung and Boonwurrung languages refer to the river as ‘Birrarung’ or ‘River of Mists’– the name ‘yarra’ is the shortened version of ‘yarra yarra’ which means waterfall. The name was erroneously given after colonial explorers mistook their Indigenous scouts’ description. Dean Stewart – Walkin’ Birrarung oral history walking tour.
Drawing on my personal commitment to unsettle our settler narratives, the resulting research project ‘Song of Ourselves – a meditation on reconciliation,’ took form in intimate indoor ceremonies held five times over a week, in which the audience was embedded from the outset: visually, “liturgically” and experientially.

As the audience shifted into deeper levels of participation, their emotional, sensory, psychological and intellectual beings were, in parallel passages, increasingly engaged. It was my hope to instil in the audience/participants a collective aspiration towards change in relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Apology was central to this. Thus, the climax of the ceremony occurred when a fiery drawing of the word ‘Sorry’ was ceremonially burned.

Central aims of the research project were the creation of a more refined, detailed and delicate event than had seemed possible in the epic scale of ‘fire events,’ but still capable of harnessing similar affects to those that they had achieved. Importantly, instead of leading a select group of performers through the process of a cathartic fire event, I wanted to physically engage the whole audience, participants, by implicating them in the design as an immersive experience that might hold meaning or resonance for them. I also hoped to examine the possibility of keeping the ‘ritual energy’ sustained by making the work spread over a season of several indoor performances.

The resulting research was an exploration of the affective design elements of ceremonial performance making, which unexpectedly and necessarily became an exercise in synthesizing aim, form and content, through a process of ascertaining the ‘why’, the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of ritual as medium. This realization and line of enquiry could be attributed to the ‘technicity’ of the embodied practitioner, who is faced with a trifold tension between intent, form, and content.

My aims clarified, I sought to utilize performative, spatial, and other scenographic dynamics to create dialogues between the audience, the performers, and the space, in order to consistently create an experience of reflexivity and potentially communitas. In order to engage the participants

847 Todd, 412.
848 It is important to note again that this ceremony took place seven months before the National Apology, and was thus arguably harnessing a strongly held, if contested, desire – part of the national zeitgeist.
849 Refer Book Two, Chapter Six: The Ritual-Artist’s lineages
and affect such outcomes, it was essential to consider the dynamics of ritual efficacy: what the ritual might hope to effect and its affect – within the logic of the ritual cosmos – and crucially how one might go about composing for them. It was in directing and designing SOO, that I realized the importance of identifying *The Heart of the Matter*, as formal concerns were increasingly revealed to be enmeshed and inseparable from the ritual’s aims and themes.

Figure 14: Blueprint design for Song of Ourselves (portal, labyrinth and spiral – Margie Mackay)

SOO was held over a weeklong season on the campus of the VCA (mostly inside Studio 45), with a cast of approximately 20 visual artists, performers and musicians. Studio 45 is a brick walled building of roughly 28 x 14 metres, with high warehouse gabled ceilings, and it has been the site of many experimental contemporary artistic events over the history of the VCA. The unexpected is anticipated (if not expected) here, but nonetheless the ‘unexpected’ by definition, retains its charge and the transformation of the space was conceived to be disorienting.

It was my research intention to examine how different elements of the design impacted on the reflexive experience of the audience, and how subtle transformations might be encouraged in each chamber, to illicit an echoing shift within the ‘self.’ The audience, at times unwittingly, entered into the process of becoming participants, as they were increasingly embedded into the ritual’s composition. As the participants shifted into these deeper stages of the work, their emotional, sensory, psychological as well as intellectual worlds were increasingly engaged.

In creating a ceremony in which I professed to integrate the audience to such a degree that they would be moved physically, emotionally, and spiritually, it was vital for myself as designer to have a deep comprehension and commitment towards the triggers that would create such responses throughout the event. The necessity for a collective focus as *The Heart of the Matter* was apparent very early on in the research process.
Over several laboratory sessions, in preparation for SOO, I had found that constructing rituals without a shared *Heart of the Matter* made for strange and uncertain performative acts, that were seemingly ritualistic in ‘form’ but lacked coherence or focus for participants, or impact for myself watching. The results of these laboratories pointed towards the realisation that in order to create more than just a sense of ritual that there must be a collective focus, something to ritualise, and that this must have some level of import to the participants. Otherwise, the results could be simply described as dance or movement theatre.

The lack of relationship between form and content in these research laboratory sessions further consolidated my reasoning that the two were inseparable, if the ritual’s efficacy as an alignment process was of import. It became clear that within a participatory, community context a purely abstract, formalist ritual would struggle to engage and affect the ritual’s intended alignment state, both for those participating and for myself as the designer. This content and intent is what I have come to call ‘The Heart of the Matter.’ *The Heart of the Matter* in one sense is the force that drives the whole ritual. It is a combination of the meta-narrative (intended alignment state,) the ‘theme’ of the ritual (which focuses and breathes life in to all other elements of the design and enactment process) all of which must be considered in relationship with the chosen site.

Therefore, in SOO the chosen *Heart of the Matter* – a ‘meditation on reconciliation’ – drew on my ongoing practice and commitment to work alongside Indigenous artists and community, and my firmly held personal resolve to improve public awareness of the great disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. In creating a meditation on reconciliation, it was my hope to instil a collective aspiration to reflect on transforming relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, whilst concurrently enacting an experience of it.

*Song of Ourselves* was a consciously referential title. The name was chosen partly as homage to Walt Whitman’s *Song of Myself* and partly because of the suggestive possibility of ‘singing up’ new and shared ways of being in Australia. ‘Singing up’ is a term common in First Peoples’ usage. Both an act of creation and invocation, to ‘sing up’ is a term often used to express the generative forces at work in the world, and in doing so one travels along ‘songlines.’ These are the physical and metaphysical trails one learns to walk and to sing in order to bring forth and maintain generative equilibrium. Concurrently describing and ‘singing into being’ routes of travel, ‘songlines’ are replete

with information necessary to navigate and survive in the Australian landscape; they are vocal and aural ontological mappings of place.\textsuperscript{852} This notion of ‘singing up business,’ and Grimes assertion that emergent rituals are "not 'made,' much less 'made up'” \textsuperscript{853} inspired further examination and definition of the divinatory process in making ceremonies, and contributed towards forming the praxial technique.

While designing SOO I found myself instinctively considering, and increasingly carefully assessing, physical and psychological states which the audience would need to pass through in order to reach the intent of participation and \textit{communitas}. At each stage, it was essential to consider the impact of sensory phenomena and potency of symbols chosen. Drawing on van Gennep’s idea of liminal phenomena within rituals having parallel passages in space, I constructed a physical event that was divided into seven different rooms or chambers – each with their own intended affective potential.

The primary desire was to create a very strong sense of place in each environment that the audience moved through. The design of the ‘ritual space,’ intended to entice and dislocate participants away from anticipating any part of the ritual, or of experiencing it as a ‘theatrical’ event.

The over-arching meta-structure for \textit{Song of Ourselves} reflected van Gennep’s trifold schema, however, as van Gennep himself noted of rites, there were many smaller ‘micro-rites’ embedded within this meta-structure. The order shifted and changed within each micro-event, as there were many thresholds of engagement to cross – both literally and metaphorically. For example, the sense of comfort and welcome distinctly established in the foyer (separation), was soon thrown into disarray as audience were drawn back out in to the cold July evening and found themselves immediately taking part in an outdoor procession through a flame lit installation, with an eerie and discordant looped sound track whispering an acknowledgement to country (separation by dislocation). As the audience moved further into the installation, a meditative atmosphere descended, assisted by a sensual awareness of the cosmos that they were being introduced to, and they gradually shifted from ‘ritual tourist’ to participant. In spite of the many liminal shifts within the event, the trifold liturgical order of separation/ transition/ incorporation was maintained as an overarching meta-structure for the ceremony as a whole.

As with any event that moves from theory to practice there were inevitably uncontrollable elements, which may have hampered or augmented the efficacy of this design. The foyer was one such area that became a looser adaptation of my original design. This was partly due to the last-minute

\textsuperscript{852} Koch, 374.
\textsuperscript{853} Grimes, \textit{Deeply into the Bone: Reinventing Rites of Passage}. 13.
absence of one performer, and also because of the influx of new energy in the final week of the event’s birth, as the crew of 20 first year production students came on board to facilitate the production side of things. It was important for me to encourage the students to feel an attachment and ownership of the piece – to become as much a ‘part of the family’ of SOO as the performers had. Their roles shifted boundaries during that week from crew to ritual stage managers, evidenced by the increasing attention and care in their preparations of the ritual space each evening; raking sand, laying out fresh candles and playing contemplative ‘pre-show’ music.

The Ceremony – an Auto-ethnographic Account

Chambers One and Two (rites of separation)
Performing what could be considered a regular ritual for theatregoers, the small audience of 25 people gathered expectantly in the Foyer to await the beginning of Song of Ourselves. Here they were served mint tea and given hot damp hand-towels with which to refresh themselves – an intimate, cleansing and stylized separation from the everyday. These foyer activities served to gently fracture what might be seen as conventional use of the foyer space, and served to affect an initial dislocation from the outside world, bringing the audience as participants to an embodied awareness of self and other – whether consciously or not. The 25 audience /participants, in the glare of the fluoro lit foyer space – a space often intimidating to even the most hardened thespian – became increasingly self-consciously aware of each other as they awkwardly wrung hands or wiped faces with damp towels and sipped the hot sweet tea. This initial offering was a welcoming gesture, which anticipated an embodied response from the ‘audience-becoming-participants,’ and in turn served to heighten the atmosphere of anticipation in the room.

Once all the ‘audience’ had arrived, a group of broom wielding, white-clad ‘performers’ silently encircled the waiting mob, and with gesture and focus ‘swept’ everyone towards the exit doors, out over the threshold again, to the street outside from whence they had come. This was another disruption to convention and again increased the growing atmosphere of anticipation. The world of foyer and interior theatre was left behind and the audience/participants became unwitting pilgrims, led by the gestures of the white sweepers who became their reference points and guides.

Out in the cold July evening, the white sweepers herded the audience/ participants along the street and up and into a small and dark nearby alley. Here they found a woman crouching with a large flaming fire torch, while two other women stood watching the mob’s approach. One of the women standing then began to sing in a husky lamenting voice that boomed against the alley walls. As she
sang, the glow of fire illumined the gathered company’s faces, and made shadows dance. This song, sung by Wiradjuri woman Fay Ball, functioned as a ‘call to ceremony’ and ended with the audience following the singer, the fire-torch bearer and their silent companion, through a gateway and into the darkness.

Here they all came upon a flame-lit path and an installation of fire illumined ‘shrines.’ An eerie audio track of discordant music and an unnerving whispered acknowledgement of country created an unsettling and mysterious atmosphere. Each shrine was created by a visual artist who made their artistic offering to the ceremony as small votive spaces which honoured Indigenous dates, persons, or concepts of significance, that were special to each maker.

A sudden and unexpected burst of light from a marine flare halted the group of audience-pilgrims in mid passage as a pair of dancers, silhouetted in the glare, formed a slow movement passage of fleeing and escape. This image intended to conjure up a nightmarish vision, in ‘dancerly’ form, of children fleeing from police raids during the height of the ‘stolen generations.’
The Portal to Chamber Three (rites of separation and rites of transition)

As the mysterious silhouettes disappeared and the flare guttered out, the sweepers nudged the participants towards a group of large lantern trees forming an archway. This was a portal, which everyone had to bend their bodies to pass beneath, in order to enter the cavernous studio 45.

Chamber Three (rites of transition)

On entering the space, the participants were plunged into darkness and again placed in a state of dislocation as they found themselves walking on a thick layer of sand, in a completely darkened indoor space. Heavy, black, floor to ceiling woollen curtains absorbed all available light. The middle of the space however, shimmered in a fiery cosmic pattern. Nine cubic metres of sand was spread 12 x 12m across the building, taking up almost half its length, upon which 1500 tea lights were placed in an intricate Minoan labyrinth pattern. With only candle light illuminating their path, and each other, the participants made their way further in to the space, like adventurers – discombobulated – unsure of convention and what might be expected of them. It was another world, another cosmos, in which only the sweepers were their guides.

The booming soundtrack in this third room was a specifically composed *musique concrete* of sounds from across many cultures, including almost discernable sounds of Tibetan monks chanting, Balinese *ketjak* choruses, and Islamic calls to prayer, as well as less identifiable and more secular sounds within a cyclical organ like drone. The participants were invited, by gesture, to walk slowly into the fiery labyrinth in single file. In doing so, they entered a reflexive state as the labyrinth turned them back and forth across their own paths, and each other’s.

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854 Although I was initially wary of the sampling of so many different cultures, the composer Angus MacMillan was sensitive to my concerns and made a track in which these sounds were masked by the chords and drones of the score but whose resonances could be ‘felt.’ As this was Gus’ gift to the ceremony we collectively decided that it was appropriate.
The experience of walking a labyrinth, an ancient meditational motif in many cultures, has a deeply centring and calming effect. When walking a labyrinth with a group, one is forced to space oneself in relationship to others, walking in single file along the narrow paths. In doing so, the participant can see a pattern emerge where you pass familiar faces on one turn, and then cross distantly at another. The whole group evolves and shifts within the complex geometric pattern and whilst walking the audience member becomes aware that they are creating the image for others just as others are creating this image for them. Walking in single file creates a sense of being at once alone and part of a continuum whilst the mesmerising beauty — and potential danger of the candles — ensures that attention is partly kept honed on the simple act of walking within the set path. The external self of the outside world is again chipped away as the participants surrender to a pattern that is bigger than self and made by each other. Through being physically involved the audience are transported into a physically meditative and reflexive state; tea lights, music and surrounding darkness amplifying this atmosphere.

At the centre of the labyrinth, each participant stopped, bent forward and peered to look into a large bowl of water, which had a single gum leaf floating on it. Projected onto the water were shifting video images of the moon, the stars, the earth, the universe. The participants found themselves at the centre of a twinkling cosmic pattern peering down onto other twinkling cosmic patterns, floating celestial bodies, and as if to anchor them in place a simple slender gum leaf; an Indigenous plant, floated on the surface, separating worlds. As the participants retreated from the labyrinth, a group of performers playing bronze singing bowls chimed and gestured for them to follow in to the fourth room.

![Figure 18: the white sweepers with singing bowls (photo: Paula van Beek)](image)
The fourth room consisted of a few different performative stations, and was bounded by floor to ceiling blood red curtains. These red curtains formed a wide funnel like neck, which gradually spiralled inwards to a central curtained chamber. However, before reaching this inner chamber, a shifting progression past the different stations saw the participants being drawn more by the space now, than the sweepers – who had by now disappeared from view. The audience/ participants were alone now, contemplating an earth altar where a solo artist performed a quiet ode to ‘earth matter’ to the gentle and serene pluck and thrum of cello and violin. A projected video then fell upon a body and a screen behind the participants, as earth altar’s light slowly winked out, the space seemed to more forcefully pull the participants focus through use of light and sound. The group turned to see another soloist perform a stylized dance, honouring elemental forces. The video projected across her body showed a montage of footage from across the breadth of the Australian continent; from wind swept beaches of Tasmania, cascades and forests of the Blue Mountains, to bauxite rich earth of far northern Cape York.

Another shift in music, in another direction, heralded the start of a very simple shadow puppet performance. Again, the participants shifted, following the puppet show as it travelled down into the funnel or red cloth, watching as animals, plants and simple footprints were finally overshadowed by the arrival of large shadow puppet ships – the first fleet. As the ships ‘dock to shore’, a cascade of shadow puppet figures started to fall down the red walls, at first in a trickle – then a flood of bodies – falling. As the participants approached the end of the funnel – just before stepping in to the next room of the circular chamber – they had to pick their way across and step over small newspaper cut outs of figures spread over the sand. At first, they did not realize they were stepping on figures, and then feet would lift in horror as they realized the transgression.
Chamber Five (Rites of Transition)
In the fifth, circular, red-draped, chamber 25 small black stools perched on the sand around the periphery awaiting the participants. Each stool had a white blindfold draped across it, and upon that rested a small white origami boat with an unlit candle inside. In the centre of the room there was a charred three metre-high dead tree, with two blindfolded women sitting silently underneath.

As soon as everyone was seated a performer entered carrying the newspaper figures from the pathway, cradled in her arms. She was followed by the singer from the laneway and her shadow partner who had magically reappeared; both playing clap–sticks. The small figures were gently and individually ‘buried’ in the sand beneath the dead tree as other white clad percussionists tapped on wooden blocks in an increasingly insistent pattern. A male singer began to cry out in lament, which escalated to a falsetto crescendo of wailing amidst the incessant tapping. The crashing of a mighty gong punctuated the commotion and as a final gong strike resounded, the booming crash of a thunderclap filled the space. The blindfolded women were released from their constraints and joined the musicians as three sections of the red walls began to slowly rise.

Chamber Six (rites of transition into rites of incorporation)
Immediately, as the walls appeared to magically lift, a soundtrack of rain and frogs, interwoven with an exquisite classical choral piece started to fill the air. Behind the rising curtains a man and a woman, he of Indigenous and she of Javanese descent, started to slowly sway holding pots of fire in each of their outstretched hands. Their movements became a slow and graceful dance, harmonizing with and mirroring the other, they appeared like fiery comets, circling in and around each other in broad movement arcs, trailing fire from the uplifted pots. Their embodied calmness and grace, curiously enhanced by the elemental risk potent in their fire pots, became hypnotic and soothed the atmosphere with a contagious kinaesthetic awareness of grace and balance.

Honouring the ancient connection between the Indonesian Macassan traders whose arrival and trading with First Peoples in the North of the country predate European arrival by many centuries.
As they came to stillness, the fire-torch bearer returned and slowly walked the circumference of the circle glancing into each participant’s eyes as she did so, as if to implicate each one of them in her next gesture. The sound track by this stage was simply the long drawl of crows calling intermittently. In local lore, this is the sound of ‘Waa’ – messenger and protector of the waterways.

With the circle complete, the fire torchbearer turned and approached a metal structure, which hovered over a pool of dark water, where the word ‘SORRY’ was written in red rope. She paused turned to glance at the participants once more, then turned and set the fire word alight. ‘Sorry’ blazed hotly for several minutes. The only sound was the sputter of flame and the occasional call of the crow. The participants all sat and watched silently for then next five or so minutes, as if in a meditative trance, as the fiery word blazed and warmed their faces.

Once ‘Sorry’ had burned down significantly, to an ashy remnant, an Aboriginal woman stood up and addressed the audience, honouring the traditional owners, members of the stolen generations and any indigenous people present. Importantly, these were the only words that had been spoken by a ‘performer’ in the whole event. Allowing for an Indigenous voice to be the first (the singer’s call to ceremony) and the last (the dedication) to be heard during the event. The woman then invited the participants to light the candles in their boats, and after considering the phrase written in gold at the bottom of the water trough (we are the ancestors of tomorrow), they were asked to launch their boats in dedication, with this thought in mind.

A small green sapling gum tree stood in a chapel like alcove behind the fire drawing and water tough, a symbol of re-generation, hope and the future.

**Chamber Seven (rites of incorporation)**

Finally, the audience were invited in to the final chamber, to talk with each other, eat some finger food, enjoy a warm drink, and if they were curious enough to read the information that was dotted
about this space – demystifying shrines and symbols. This final chamber allowed for a re-alignment within self as cast, participants and crew found themselves integrating back in to the present time – from the between time that they had been inhabiting. Participants were free at this point to walk back through the labyrinth chamber, where some chose to walk it again, or to simply exit back out into the world and the dark cold Melbourne night.

Findings

At the end of each performance of Song of Ourselves I distributed an anonymous questionnaire and asked some pivotal questions of the audience about their experience of the event: what it made them feel, think and sense. From a random poll of over one third of the total audience, results were remarkably similar in tone and response.

Affect

The responses often described the work as ‘moving,’ ‘spiritual,’ or ‘enlightening and empowering.’ Respondents made frequent allusion to very personal experiences, ranging from uncertainty to elevation: a shift from feelings of disquiet or being ‘un-nerved’ and ‘sad’ to being ‘soothed and empowered’ in the trajectory of the ceremony. Focus and awareness were often described as ‘feeling at one’ or of a ‘connection to spirit and land’ whilst concurrently experiencing a ‘sense of sharing’ with the other participants.

Most people expressed an importance of ritual in their lives, many of these stressing its role in giving meaning and structure to life events. Many described ritual as providing a ‘healing and comforting’ function: enabling a sense of belonging and connection, remembrance and acknowledgement. A good number of respondents remarked regretfully upon a perceived sense of the loss of ritual in contemporary society and in their personal lives.
Most of the questionnaires included messages of gratitude for the experience. This was a humbling response and served to further remind me of the responsibility incumbent upon the designer of contemporary ceremonies. Hearteningly, it pointed to the desire in many fellow Australians to enact a personally meaningful ritual acknowledging Indigenous peoples and apologising for the many injustices.

**My Compositional Conclusions**

**Cosmos, The Community and The Artist Self**

A focus on the schema of ‘Cosmos, The Community and The Artist Self’ in starting the process of divination enabled me to consider which matters of concern might need to be captured.

**Cosmos:** (how SOO might be conceived) an awareness of ritual theory, receptivity towards the Apology in the zeitgeist, embracing of plural ontologies, and the peculiarities of the site were matters of concern for this sphere. How I could bring these concerns within the constraints of **site** was the ultimate matter of concern.

**The Community:** (how SOO might be perceived) the matters of concern were:

- **Theme:** needed consideration for how it impacted on the ‘community’ I was working with, but also how it might be perceived within the wider Indigenous community – awareness of this community’s matters of concern, protocols and their version of colonial history and how this might be worked into a liturgical design.

- ‘Heart of the Matter’ and the Meta-Narrative: what alignment state (ritual intent) I wished to create, and the question as to how this might be composed: wedded within **Theme** and **Site** through affective **Design**.

- **Design:** Design included all sensory elements (sound, touch, taste, smell, look, atmosphere and the design choices in symbols and imagery) to embodied and enacted states in the liturgical design, to musical design, and scenographic design.

- **Designation:** the need to assign roles to all participants from audience to ‘ritual-actors,’ and ‘ritual-object makers.’

**The Artist’s Self:** I was aware that I was imprinting my own aesthetic choices in response to the above matters of concern, but in doing so needed to be aware of what these choices might mean for others. I had noticed that during the process I at times needed to remind myself to breathe, to find ‘inspiration’ and to ‘exhale’ only when the event was complete. I also noted I needed to **hold**
fast to my intentions, even if I needed to change directions in designs (viz. Thankoupie’s flag), and that the process of divination was one that could not be hurried.

Longing, Belonging, Land (2008)  
http://margiemackay.com/recent/Longing_Belonging_Land

Longing, Belonging, Land (LBL) was part of the 2008 Melbourne International Arts Festival, so the context, site specifics, and scale for this ceremony were very different to SOO. Significantly the Apology to the Stolen Generations had been offered 6 months before this event. Longing, Belonging, Land was an outdoor, one off, site-specific event on the Festival’s opening night.

I broached the idea of the ceremony via an unsolicited email to the 2008 Festival Director, Kristy Edmunds, arguing for the protocol of starting the festival with an Indigenous community event (at this time not embraced as a vital protocol). I urged her to consider the festival’s important role in focusing momentum of popular interest in reconciliatory, participatory gestures by an honouring of the Stolen Generations in this event. Edmunds agreed, and cast and crew went to work.

The colonization of greater Melbourne and Victoria, like many of the Southern states of Australia, was particularly brutal given the disastrous impacts of the British invasion on the local Indigenous population. As a direct result of colonization Indigenous peoples in this area were more than decimated in number, succumbing to foreign diseases and the destruction of traditional lands – through a potent combination of introduced species and inappropriate land management practices. Prohibitions on cultural practices and language, and the significant loss of knowledge keepers in the Indigenous population resulted in the loss of much (but by no means all) cultural knowledge.

Given the contested status of the land on which the event was to take place, I felt the need to follow protocols of recognition, by bringing both senior Elders of the Melbourne CBD together to participate in this event. I invited Aunty joy Wandin Murphy of the Wurundjeri Ballock of the Woiwurrung peoples and Aunty Carolyn Briggs of the Yallukit W willam of the Boowurrung to come together to collaborate and offer cultural ideas and permissions for the ceremony, thus anchoring the event in correct protocols.

LBL took place on the banks of Melbourne’s iconic Yarra River, and ‘Birrarung Mar’ is a large sandy area nestled by the river. Behind it, across a brightly lit concrete car park and a convergence of railway tracks, loomed the sky rise landscape of the city centre.

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856 Gary Presland, First People: The Eastern Kulin of Melbourne, Port Philip and Central Victoria (Melbourne: Museum Victoria Publishing, 2010). Presland notes that in the three decades since settlement in 1835, by Federation 1901, the Indigenous population of the entire state had dwindled from 15,000 (approx.) to 650 individuals. 87-91.
There were around 60 ritual-performers of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous background who were involved. The central image was a five-metre-high fire-sculpture of a gum tree, the *Njarra Jarra* tree of healing. Hundreds of red cotton *clooties* were hung and bound to the red fire rope, which wrapped the structure. *Njarra Jarra* is a term for healing in Woiwurrung language, whilst *clootie* is a Scottish term for ‘cloth.’ The ceremonial use of *clootie* was a reference to my own Scots Heritage and also evoked the pre-Christian practice of tying *clooties* at wells and springs – found dotted over the United Kingdom. Over 350 of the red clooties had hand written pledges of solidarity and apology to the Stolen Generation written on them: gathered from workshops held in local primary schools and from the audience members before the start of the event.

This Contemporary Ceremony commenced as the audience came in a samba beat procession (from another music event up in the heart of the city) down to where the cast and crew awaited them at ‘Birrarung Mar. The cast stood on rocky outcrops and watched them arriving. A torchbearer illuminated the way for the audience with a fire-torch, and then signalled for the cast to take up places as the audiences’ ‘invasion’ ruptured the space.

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857 In places across Britain – like the Black Isle near Inverness – these devotional ritual spaces can still be found (and are still used). Strips of cloth have been ritualistically tied onto overhanging branches as votive offering to the healing entities of the water spring for hundreds of years.
On stage a drummer picked up the samba beat – then transformed it to a slow heart beat and finally stopped. The audience by this time settled in a wide semicircle in quiet anticipation. Then a solo voice of Gamileroy woman Maurial Rose Spearim called out in to the darkness in *Woiwurrung* language – a call to ceremony. The audience crooned and whooped in delight. Maurial held her composure but wept as she sang. It was a powerful start.

An eerie musical shift and an explosion of bright flare light back– lit a silhouetted group of performers who made their way across the set – similarly to SOO echoing children fleeing from police. Then ten visual artists carrying personal shrines (about what ‘land and belonging’ meant to them) walked in slow procession around the audience perimeter. Three straw broom-wielding sweepers swept the space in front of them – cleansing – making way for these images of devotion. Concurrently a group of five performers wearing red blindfolds and entangled in a red rope started to disentangle themselves an lurched across the space in a butoh-inspired procession. Their movement score ranged over their passage from images of pride, domination, and arrogance to self-recognition, realization, mortification and humility. The red rope untangled in front of them, they sat beneath the Ngarra Jarra tree.
As the moment of humility was reached they released their blindfolds and stretched a hand down to touch the earth. This gesture is understood in Buddhist circles as the earth touching mudra – the moment of the Buddha’s enlightenment. Shattering the stillness, a gum leaf whistle rang out and the two aunties from fresh water peoples – the Woiwurrung, and salt water peoples – the Boonwurrung entered the space, clad in possum skins. Each Elder, led by a fire-torch bearer, walked slowly and solemnly carrying vials of water with them, from either river or sea.

On greeting the Elders poured their waters in to one larger tub – mixing fresh water with salt. Then they embraced and gently coated each other’s cheeks with white ochre paint, mixed from the water they had poured. Once they had anointed each other, they painted up nearby cast members. Then cast members reciprocated, painting each other, then they went with small silver bowls of ochre out to the audience line and painted up audience members. They also took the gesture up and began painting each other – till most of the audience were also daubed in ochre. As the formal greeting and ritualistic marking of each other continued, one of the retinue began to wind up the red cloth rope that had bound the butoh dancers together, and slowly cradled it in her arms rocking back and forth. This moment was one of inspired improvisation. We knew we wanted to burn this rope, but to cradle it like a child held powerful symbolic resonance in alignment with the theme of honouring the Stolen Generations.

The Aunties then turned and joined the rope holder – and together they let it fall in the flames of a circular fire pit. At this point, as the red rope burned there was a change in atmosphere – Faure’s *in paradisum* fused with frogs croaking filled the air. Two dancers entered and began a fire pot dance together. Others joined these two dancers until about 20 performers were slowly dancing a dance of harmony balancing pots of fire in their hands.

When this dance ended the dancers formed an honour guard around the perimeter of the audience line and knelt down to watch as the two aunties and their fire-torch bearers approached and lit the Njarra Jarra tree. As the tree ignited a solo voice sang the words of the Woiwurrung Call to Ceremony, (this time an Indonesian melodic structure). As the fire burned a meditative and introspective state descended. Mothers rocked children back and forth in their arms, some people hugged as the fire gently burned, illuminating everyone’s faces.
As the embers started to die, cast members came forward to lay white origami flowers on the pool of water the aunties had made. The white flowers, resembling the white chrysanthemum of mother’s day, was an honouring of the mothers who had had their children taken, and in each flower a small tea light candle was illuminated.

Finally, the barrier separating ‘audience’ and performers was breached as audience members were given origami flowers and candles and invited to be included in this gesture of peace. The shrines twinkled and the fire tree (now burnt completely) left a space of incorporation for everyone to enter. The audience milled around, ochre streaked, talking and huddling next to fires, shrines and candles in the cold Melbourne air.

Only at the end did I hear Uncle Herb Pattern say: ‘We've been waiting 170 years to do this.’ There were levels of significance that I was not aware of at the time of the composition process, and which I will not reveal here, suffice to say there is no ‘control’ that he composer can claim over some of the happenings and realisations that occur during ceremony, when the rite is divined and designed well.
The complexities of conceiving this event required a potent metaphor to base the momentary cosmos upon. The central focus of the clootie laden Ngarra Jarra Tree with its intent to generate reflexivity and a space capable of holding reconciliations between participants, the special timing of a Festival Opening, the significance of the specific ritual and site by the river for local Indigenous Peoples, and the requirements of both the festival and local government’s signing off of Occupational Health and Safety documents to care for site and community, were all serious matters of compositional concern for LBL.
Quiet Emergency (2010)
http://margiemackay.com/recent/quiet_emergency

The Invitation

In late 2009, I was one of seven artists invited to Cape Town, South Africa to collaborate on creating a work for *Infecting the City* public art festival 2010. Under the artistic direction of Brett Bailey, the theme for the festival was: Human Rite. This theme, an obvious but clever play on both ritual and ethics at once, was a potent provocation to create work in post-apartheid South Africa. It was an invitation into a vibrant and dialogic space and I eagerly accepted.

Inspiration and Consultation

In order to create a successful season of works for *Infecting the City: Human Rite*, Bailey designed a two-phase residency. The first phase consisted of three weeks immersive ‘ritual boot-camp’ in Cape Town. This was planned so that the seven artists could become acquainted with historical and current local issues, and to create contacts with community organisations and artists who may wish to participate in creating a ritual-work together. This time also gave the seven artists opportunity to witness and participate in a spectrum of different ritual practices, and to discover the diversity of approaches to ritual in the city.

The second phase of the residency was held in early 2010. This six-week intensive saw the artists collaborating with their allocated teams towards the realization of a contemporary ceremony for the festival held in early March.

The Artist’s Self and the Cosmos

I arrived in Cape Town a day early, to allow for jet lag, and was taken by one of the festival staff directly to our guesthouse in the fashionable student and backpacker inner suburb of Observatory. I was anxious, not having ever travelled to any part of Africa before, and unsure of the cultural protocols and signs I was as yet to learn. On my first solo exploration of ‘Obs’ it seemed that every house had a wire topped fence and an ever-vigilant guard dog. In contrast, in the distance Table Mountain majestically reared up steeply shrouded in a cloth of cloud. I tried to shop for a few groceries but became very self-conscious due to my unfamiliarity with handling the foreign currency. As the stranger – the other – I saw myself from a distorted perspective, aware of my not belonging – as fumbling, ignorant and vulnerable – visible in my naivety. This was an uncomfortable space but thankfully one that did not last long.
One summer night, early on, the guesthouse owner beckoned me over to a large floridly coloured bush and pointed into the thicket of branches at what appeared, at first, to be a small, slightly curled, red leaf. Then it blinked. Its large circular orbit eye swung about and surveyed us both scrutinizing him, and then the tiny red chameleon curled its tail even tighter around the thin branch as if bracing for intrusion. Captivated I gazed at him mimicking those leaves so expertly. I watched for some time, and the thought came – the animal world tells me ‘to at least try to fit in’ – to melt into the throng. When in South Africa become a chameleon. This felt like sage advice, and I jettisoned any notion of walking around with my guidebook, took courage, and started to explore.

I had been given ‘chameleon teaching,’ and this was my first guide to these very foreign lands. I frequently have this experience when visiting a new ecosystem. I know British countryside and some European landscapes well, and feel self-assured in these settings. I have been fortunate enough to have fairly extensive knowing of the varieties of Australian bush across the breadth of the country. I have visited much of Asia, but Africa was new territory. The land of lion, elephant, zebra, baboon, giraffe and hyena, of hunting dog and ostrich, of eland and hadedah, of leopard and ibex. It owned a different ontological, and spatial essence that was overwhelmingly new and daunting. I realized that I depended on the animal world for portents, inspiration and omens; I needed to understand more about what and how the non-human world operated in this new place.859

I met the other artists at a dinner party held in a high Dutch colonial home with chandeliers of brass and high-corniced ceilings and 18th Century portraits of landed gentry. It was awkward as many first meetings are, but the seven of us soon became friends over the ensuing weeks of ritual boot camp. We were all staying in nearby guesthouses in the Obs area and we would socialize and talk art life and any manner of things during these first few weeks; it was a honeymoon period.

During phase one, over a period of three weeks we were taken to townships and non-Government Organisations to listen to members tell their stories of struggle, survival and resistance. Scheduled visits included the Slave Museum, the Ossuary in Prestwick (full of unidentified slave remains), District 6 Museum, Direct Action Centre for Peace and Memory, Langa and Lwandle townships, the Centre for Popular Memory, The Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture, Cape Town Art Gallery, Ons Plek – a home for homeless girls, The Prevention of Human Trafficking Centre, and The African Centre for Migration and Society, as well as pilgrimages to numerous sites of massacre and trauma during the apartheid era.

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859 I had experienced this type of unknowing before, not knowing either the land or the animals well enough, and it posed questions in me that I had not anticipated. If I did not know an animal’s behaviour or significance in a particular place – how on earth could I put together a ritual?
We were also given tours of the more luxurious suburbs of Cape Town – the exclusive beachfront suburbs where the super-rich live, far from the dusty despair and crushing poverty of the Cape flat townships. A speedy acquaintance with the social and environmental issues of Cape Town was thoroughly impressed upon us at this time. Indeed, in hindsight it would have been incredibly difficult to pull together any work of insight without such a gruelling and targeted introduction.

Ritual experiences abounded, from a talk given by an Anglican exorcist priest, to a five hour impepo fuelled sweat lodge, divinations and consultations with both white and black Sangomas, and the inspection of a tranquil, exclusive, and gated new-age retreat that held ‘meditation workshops.’

Our experience was exhausting and immersive. In the last week, Brett divided the group into two so that when we returned early in the New Year, for phase two, we could start creating our ritual. I was delighted to be teamed with Zimbabwean choreographer Gilbert Douglas and South African performance artist Anthea Moys. We were also fortunate in Brett’s choice of provocation for us. He asked that our group work with red and white as our colour palate, to use Thibault Square as our site, and that we create a piece of ritual-art that “considers and unsettles power structures in the city.” Our aim, according to Bailey, was to achieve a ritual expression of *communitas*.

In response to our felicitous grouping and thematics, Gilbert, Anthea and I retired to a bar in Obs, and drank a bonding round of cold Mojitos. We all left Cape Town eager and yet also uncertain – unsure of quite how the collaboration might evolve – but with each other’s emails in hand we journeyed back home to let all we had experienced percolate.

**Divination and Designation**

When we returned to Cape Town in early January for phase two, we quickly started amassing ideas. The community groups we particularly wanted to work with were the young arts group from the township of Lwandle, the girls from Ons Plek, iKapa dance company, local street cleaners and we also started to audition individual performers to become part of our core team.

As with many collaborative ventures, the initial teething issues of what to do, what to make and how to work together arose. But we quickly realized each other’s strengths and steered our individual skills into these areas; most of the time just saying ‘yes!’ to our fellows’ suggestions. Gilbert started working with the trained dancers, and on street dancing with the young people from Lwandle, Anthea wandered our site and coopted some street cleaners to participate, and then worked with

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860 A *Sangoma* is a traditional healer, and *impepo* is a herb burned during cleansing rituals.
individual actors to create dislocating moments of “inventive intervention.”\textsuperscript{861} We all searched for red and white props and makeshift costuming. I worked through designs for the meta-structure of the event, drawing on the threefold structure of van Gennep. The process started to develop momentum.

We were frequently ‘visited’ by hadedah birds during this time; the hadedah is an awkward gangly heron-type wader bird, who scavenges the streets of Cape Town for its survival. It seemed a perfect symbol for us, as it was considered locally to be lucky and humorous as well as being an eminent urban survivor. We set about having a large puppet constructed, which could act as an agent of change or simply punctuate the action at some point in the event. We did not know where the bird would fit in the scheme of things but it felt ‘right’ that something large, visual, and hopeful be made.

We each got busy – sometimes together as a group working with whole communities – sometimes off on our own collecting whatever was needed to realize an idea or to give inspiration. However, one thing had been perplexing me. In Australia, I was used to asking for permission from the traditional owners, and so I felt that I needed to seek out the first peoples of Cape Town. I asked this question of Fr. Michael Weeden, an Anglican priest who was a major power behind having the ossuary for unknown slave and ancestors remains built; a contemporary non-denominational shrine of contemplation in the middle of the city.

Fr. Weeden told me that the first peoples were the Khoi and the San peoples (often referred to collectively as Khoi San) and that they had called Cape Town ‘Camissa’ translated as ‘place of sweet water.’ However, the impact of four hundred years of colonization, the cruelties of the slave trade, and the long history of apartheid had all but erased the Khoi San community within the city limits. The influx of strangers from all parts of the continent, and indeed the globe, to the fast-growing colony and port meant generations of loss of traditional lands, and loss of biodiversity and habitat for their hunting and gathering. There were still Khoi San groups in villages in certain parts of Southern Africa, but they were not commonly consulted, or indeed conceived of, as Cape Town’s traditional owners in the way that Indigenous Australians might be in Australia.

Nevertheless, still wanting to pay respect and to enact cultural protocols in the event, I recalled that many of the Sangomas we had met during our orientation period had stressed the importance of burning impepo as a clearing, cleansing, and purifying herb. It was used before ceremony to invoke the right spirits, and was very commonly used among the Khoi San who are renowned for their

herbal knowledge. In Australia, I was used to using gum leaves as smoking ceremony, but here *impepo* was the ‘glue’ that started the ritual procedure. I realized that a call to ceremony and smoking could be translated into an African idiom, and from this we could start to create ceremony, I checked with my South African counterparts as to whether this might be appropriate, and it was agreed that it was an essential element.

The invitation to create a ritual of *communitas* and to examine the power structures of the city makes it impossible to overlook the disadvantaged, the vulnerable and the poor who make the bulk of Cape Town society. Our site in Thibault Square was provocative as the commercial banking and embassy centre of Cape Town, but our intention was to create *communitas* and not alienation. Each of us, and the community groups, liked the idea of celebrating the strengths of survivors, and agreed it was powerful to suggest new paradigms without blaming and shaming. These latter stances would have clouded any hope of achieving *communitas*.

As ideas developed and a deepening into the production took place, synchronicity started to flow. One day we decided we needed an opera singer and lo and behold that afternoon there she was – Thandi a beautiful contralto who was happy to perform for a negligible fee even though she had recently been invited to join the Cape Town Opera Company. A fabulous sound artist started playing with the score we needed to create. As a foundation score to the piece, his aesthetic, and capacity for mixing mojitos, blended seamlessly with ours. A group of actors met with me most days to create a walking meditation, charting and evoking a passage from excess and greed to humility and cleansing. As we needed things and people – they started to materialize, a certain energy started to gather around the upcoming ritual event. A massive and gaudily costumed brass band from one of the Cape townships made themselves available on opening and closing ceremonies to play a rousing rendition of ‘Eye of the Tiger’ we hoped they would lead the audience/ participants on a pied piper dancing march through the city streets as finale, allowing the ritual to dissipate in celebration.

One day, I walked into a bookshop, picked up a book and found a short poem on the page I had opened. It was perfect for our piece. But how could we present it without using spoken word? English was the language of the coloniser and even if it had been translated into Zulu or Xhosa there was insufficient amplification. Words spoken in events of this scale, where the subtleties of intimacy are a luxury, can risk sounding didactic and laboured if not sparingly used, and therefore can lose their locutionary force.
We discussed this conundrum and in considering sign language as a visual option, agreed that the choreography of signing was potent in itself, and in this way, we could also include the participation of the deaf community in this work. A woman from the South African Broadcasting Company, hearing that we wanted to translate a poem into sign language, spent a few valuable hours donating her time, knowledge, compassion and skills to the endeavour, which Gilbert wove into the IKapa Cape Town choreography.

Our only community group to refuse participation was Ons Plek – the street girls refuge. Staff assured us that this was simply because the girls there were too vulnerable, unpredictable and itinerant – and they thought a much longer lead in time would be needed whilst even then not guaranteeing their participation.

The core team of collaborators, Gilbert, Anthea and I, happily continued our evening ritual of finishing each day together – with a mojito. After all, this too was communitas and to be celebrated, we felt the need to foster as much bon homie in the process and making of the piece, as in the intention inside the piece as well. Often when creating work of this liminal nature there is a certain ‘singing up’ of business that occurs and is wise to be mindful of. This was sharply mirrored to us in the experiences of the other group of collaborators who were constantly fighting and threatening to walk out on each other. Theirs was a ritual of mourning and cleansing past wrongs (slavery, apartheid, racism, homophobia, xenophobia etc.). Grief was certainly central to their experience together at this time.

Site

Thibault square was an exciting and dynamic space to be allocated. It has its own particular history both as the commercial, business and diplomatic hub of Cape Town, but also as a section of Cape Town that is land reclaimed from the sea. In essence, the shoreline would have bisected the square that nowadays is a sporadically busy thoroughfare.
Anthea, Gilbert and I became very well acquainted with the peculiarities of the site. I often find that when doing these events (when the unusual happens in the usual spaces of the everyday) that a richness of communication and ‘micro-community’ starts to develop. In Thibault square local traders, cafe owners and street sweepers, vendors and homeless folk all became intrigued with our activities. Most enjoyed our frequent visits, and when production was in full flight eagerly watched our event and greeted us daily with salutations and discounted coffees.

Early on in the process of scoping the site, we took a lift up to the top of one of the tallest buildings overlooking Thibault Square, and from this bird’s eye view scrutinized it below: watching how people and birds utilized and encountered the space. The large open square offered little shade and looming over the hot concrete towered tall skyscrapers: symbols and signs of commerce. A raised concrete stepped stage area, fallen into disuse, was at one end of the site and it was next to this space that street vendors often took up refuge in small stalls which could be hurriedly disassembled should they be ‘moved on’ by police. Suited businessmen in twos and threes dissected the space diagonally in long important strides, occasionally the tell-tale gate of a stiletto heeled businesswoman staccato-stepped with purpose and direction. Groups of women and street vendors sat on benches under the trees, near a café, and rested in the heat of the day and flicked crumbs to eager sparrows. From the patterns of walking we were witnessing we decided to create an intervention play-space across most of the site, colonizing the colonisers space, and to utilize the stage area as part installation and part backdrop.

The Lwandle artists were delighted to be invited to participate particularly excited to be working with Gilbert Douglas who was a well-known choreographer in those parts. Each day we rolled up in our ‘combi’ to the Migrant Workers Museum to have rehearsals. There were always more children eager to dance than we could have managed to feasibly include – an almost unheard-of event in Australian communities of any demographic. As a result, we held a series of workshops and Gilbert taught everybody the dance, so that the maximum number of people could enjoy some participation. Then as the festival drew nearer, in the final few weeks we held auditions.

Unfortunately, we could really only accommodate a maximum of about twenty young people. Lwandle was a good forty-minute drive from the city, and as these kids were from townships there would be no additional financial resources to cater for travel, other than what we could provide from our budget.
Design

Design in visual terms was reasonably straightforward in this event. We were given as starting point the use of red and white as our ‘Cape Town and this we embraced to its limit.

It is also interesting to note that red and white are considered of ritual importance to Sangomas and also in Scottish faery belief – but that’s another story.

Given the scant availability of funds – and a preference for found objects – we scrounged most ‘ritual-props’ and found a way to maximize any funds going to the performers and communities involved. The visual design was very much driven, however, from the liturgical design.

The liturgical design for this piece seemed to fall in to place as soon as we had ascertained the name: Quiet Emergency. In determining what our intent was, what the theme might be, and in embracing each other’s strengths, a liturgical structure came into being. I will not outline it here, but note that once again it was based on the trifold schema of separation, transition and incorporation and had been driven by the divinatory process that commenced with the immersion in Cape Town’s cultural landscape in ‘ritual boot camp’ Brett Bailey style.862

862 Refer Appendix Twelve: Design and Dynamics in Quiet Emergency
Production and Holding Fast

The elements of production at this stage were fairly pedestrian and common to many events of this scale; there is little offering to offer the proposed technique in elucidating the details, but inclusion of the management of the CC as a production required production management. There is a wealth of material on techniques of production managing available to researchers, suffice to say for Quiet Emergency we had a novice on hand who was not used to sourcing materials, ‘making do’ or improvising. All of these are vital skills that fall into the ritual-artists’ more pedestrian skill set.

Given the degree of difficulty that our mirror group were having in their piece ‘Meet Market’ – held on a plaza near the slave museum – by comparison we faced little resistance in our process. Our central focus remained the ritual, and although there were moments of interpersonal angst, we moved through these gracefully and continued to focus on honing our work. The three of us managed to hold on to the ceremonial space of Quiet Emergency for the twice-daily seven days that it was performed. Sharing this space of ‘holding fast’ was a huge gift to me at the time, as I was in recovery from a fairly recent surgery. It seemed a precious thing to share what in the past – and on many occasions since – has been a solitary load.

Ceremonial Circle

Did we achieve communitas? Perhaps, momentarily, but more importantly we had created a strong ‘micro-community’ of ritual practice and a highly reflexive ‘space.’ This strange ritualizing bought together a curious confluence of people and we revelled in learning about each other. At the end of every performance, the audience, not immune to the infectious communal dance got up and danced with us. The celebratory finale saw the riotous brass band create a mood that was ludic, and on cue the crowd followed them off into the city leaving the ‘matters of concern’ raised in Thibault square behind them. Mindful of Freidson’s reflection that an African ontology might be described as
being of the body…" I dance therefore I am," I did wonder whether Australian audiences would be quite so keen to participate in this way.

Figure 31: Celebration dance ending Quiet Emergency (photo: Cameron Richards and Infecting the City Festival)

The elements and dynamics that emerged as recurrent ‘matters of concern’ from QE, alongside from those already identified in SOO and LBL, included the following:

- Situating the **Artist self** in a new ‘cosmos’ – becoming alert to conceptual frameworks and **zeitgeist** that inform that **site**: its histories, physical ‘presence’ and the social practices that it holds. Being alert to other entities, other ontologies, and accommodating complexity aware of one’s own alterity.

- Recognition of the importance of clarity in **divination**; with **intent**, **theme**, and **site** all impacting on choices made in forming the **Heart of the Matter**.

- The importance of **holding fast** to the ‘**Heart of the Matter**’ – our ritual intent/ alignment, theme and the embodied emplacement of these on the site, often requires flexibility, self-awareness and willingness to listen to other entities.

- The importance of roles – the **designations** that made our task as composers, flow, and the **production** of the **ceremonial circle** come into being as individuals understood their place and role within the micro-community and microcosm of Contemporary Ceremony.

**Dreamtime at the G (2010 – 2013)**


One of Melbourne’s most iconic public spaces on which I have been fortunate enough to create four Contemporary Ceremonies is the Melbourne Cricket Ground, commonly known as the MCG or simply the ‘G.’ Built in 1853 on crown land, it has a capacity for a crowd of just over 100 thousand
and is managed by the very white and very male establishment of the Melbourne Cricket Club. Concurrently it is commonly claimed as the ‘spiritual home’ of Australian Rules football.

However, the MCG is also known in certain circles as the ‘Melbourne Ceremonial Grounds.’ Pre-settlement, this very space was the site of regular, large gatherings (or Ngargees) of the five Kulin nations; who would congregate for Tanderrum and other ceremonies; to trade, share news, find partners, and all other manner of social and sacred business. However, if you visit the official MCG web page there is no mention of this rich cultural heritage. Instead it declares: “The MCG is a shrine...It is to this city what the Opera House is to Sydney, the Eiffel Tower to Paris and the Statue of Liberty is to New York; it symbolises Melbourne to the world. It inspires reverence.”

In 2010, I was invited by senior Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy to direct an event of particular importance to the Indigenous community across Australia. This nationally televised event hosted by the Australian Football League, a multi-million-dollar corporate business, was a spectacle attended by around 80,000 people and watched by millions across the nation. The event marked the commencement of the ‘Indigenous Round’ of Australian Rules Football (Aussie Rules). As a complete ‘non-believer’ in what all but amounts to a national religion, (remaining unconverted) this was a foreign ‘space’ for me – but as an artist provided a spectacular scale and range to explore.

The space, bound up in layers of contested social significance, is a place where the sacred and profane merge in unexpected ways. A Lefebvrian spatial analysis of how the MCG might be conceived, perceived, and ‘lived in’ would take cognizance of the multiplicity of gazes through which the site is gauged. From shifting calendrical and highly ritualised sporting activities (is it a cricket ground or a footy oval?) to the continuing cultural associations and significances ascribed by the Indigenous community and others.

The arena is currently the largest in the southern hemisphere. Maps of the MCG do not prepare one for the vast expanse of manicured lawn and sheer scale of this gladiatorial arena. One feels the sanctity, a truly awesome impact, when first stepping up, out and onto the ‘hallowed turf’ from the players’ race. And like any sacred space, there are areas where the uninitiated are not allowed – the centre circle was ‘off bounds’ except in one or two circumstances.

871 [http://www.mcg.org.au/about--us/about--the--mcg](http://www.mcg.org.au/about--us/about--the--mcg) Older iterations of the website once stated cursorily: “the Yarra park area has significant indigenous pre–history” now with the removal of this line the MCG executive ostensibly erase its prior history.
‘Dreamtime at the G’ (D@G) has been held at the MCG for the past ten years. It is the AFL’s recognition of the Indigenous contribution to ‘Aussie Rules,’ with the game’s origins in *marngrook* and the significant contribution made to the sport by Indigenous players. Aussie rules is very popular amongst many Australians and is particularly so amongst Indigenous communities. The considerable talent of Indigenous players sees Aboriginal & TSI community represented as 11% of currently listed AFL players. The AFL has seen many generations of Indigenous football players who were at the top of the game. As a reconciliatory gesture, and one creating positive media campaigns for the corporation, the AFL produced the event in order to honour these connections.

The D@G Contemporary Ceremonies, were pre-match evening events, heralding the start of the ‘Indigenous round’ of the football calendar. I was lucky enough to direct and co-devise them from 2010 to 2013 inclusively, working alongside Aunty joy Wandin Murphy to produce a spiritually steeped event, a celebration of land, cultural survival, and of honouring ancestors. It was a re-inscribing of sovereignty and ongoing spiritual connection to land, on a highly significant and symbolic site. It took place over an exactingly-timed 14.5 minutes, due to broadcast requirements for national television, in the middle of what was ostensibly a ‘footy field!’

A shift and separation occurs when at the start of each dreamtime ceremony, the floodlights are, one by one, switched off, and the arena is plunged into darkness. As the TV commentary blares its introduction all participants await the cue – and then the call to ceremony cuts through the air – the sacred and profane blur, until at the end of the 14.5 minutes the floodlights flash back on and we all rapidly quit the ‘stage’ for the next ritual to begin: the ‘Richmond versus Essendon’ match.

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865 *Marngrook* (*Gunditjimara* language) was a First People’s game played with a possum skin ball, which included high jumps similar to what is known as a ‘mark’ in Australian Rules football. Hallinan and Judd note the racial tensions alive at an institutional level within the AFL. Chris Hallinan and Barry Judd, “Duelling Paradigms: Australian Aborigines, Marngrook and Football Histories,” *Sport in Society* 15, no. 7 (2012); ibid. 980.
My involvement was always at Aunty Joy’s invitation over the 4 years and from the first year we worked at carving out a space and sense of ceremony in what was originally billed as ‘pre-match entertainment’. By the last 2 years, the AFL and the television channels had started to adopt our language and called it Contemporary Ceremony.

The process each year was fairly much the same. It was usually initiated by a call from the AFL (often with only 6 weeks or less lead time to the event) and I then immediately called Aunty Joy to see if she wanted me to be involved, and from there the research phase began. I was new to the footy scene I had no understanding of the game, or its players names, or anything of the Indigenous history with the game. So, I started with acknowledging Indigenous connection to land and country and consulted with Aunty to see what she felt was of central importance to her community. Often when meeting up we would serendipitously and with synchronicity bring the same ideas to the table, and together we would weave ideas into a ceremony which then needed to be presented to AFL events executives, the sponsoring football teams, and an Indigenous advisory board.

2010

In the first year of my involvement, we convinced the AFL of the importance of the Call to Ceremony, and also introduced the idea of large lantern puppets signifying each of the different Creator spirits from the different Australian states. The sense of ceremony in this first event was fleeting – held together by Aunty Joy and the smoking ceremony, but the creator spirits particularly ‘worked’ as spirit symbols on television screens, even when seemingly at times swamped in scale somewhat by the arena.
2011

Year two was a simpler affair. There were no puppets and with only two weeks to go till the event, my invitation gave me little time, or budget, for divination. This time Aunty Joy invited another Wurundjeri ‘elder’ and his group of men to participate and we also invited a group of schoolgirls from a rural Indigenous community dance program to be involved. We were given access to the whole of the centre of the arena, where an Aboriginal flag had been painted, and here Indigenous opera singer Don Bemrose performed the Call to Ceremony.

From the middle of the darkened stadium, a spotlight snapped on illuminating an ochre clad man, standing on the Aboriginal flag – a symbol of prior sovereignty. His voice boomed across the vast arena, as he called out Woiwurrung words in a rich baritone. Don’s operatic ‘know how’ merged with his ceremonial ‘know how’ and with this understanding of the epic spirit scale, his call to ancestors was a challenge to the contemporary audience to ‘come together, as one, for healing.’ I found this image potent as many “regimes of value” were bought together in ‘affective fields’ powerfully forging new relationships to identity, place and time.

2012

In 2012, I worked alongside Australian folk-music legend Shane Howard to mould the musical score for the ceremony. Issues arose around questions of protocol, and for the first time in my involvement there was some opposition towards non-Indigenous participants – in spite of the Senior Elder’s wishes. I took this information on board and had many consultations with cast and crew to see what the best road ahead might be. But there were ruptures even on the level of the executive.

During one meeting both Shane and I walked out, saying that unless Elders were happy and respected we would not continue. The particularities of these negotiations are not important to compositional dynamics, and in taking my relational accountability into consideration I will not divulge more details, but, what is important is that through adopting ‘dadirri,’ inner quiet listening,
throughout the process of divination, the way ahead clarified. In spite of some personal discomfort with this event, I was required to ‘hold fast’ to the intent of the ceremony.

In spite of the challenges, it was a beautiful event and conjured up a magical and transporting atmosphere. Big puppets were made as effigies of Aunty Joy’s story of emu and brolga. This story is of a battle between the birds over an egg, and when it splits open, sunlight fills the darkness and the laughter of kookaburras fills the air. Unbeknownst to us all at the time, we had been enacting this story during the process of composition. It was also symbolic of what the two football teams would soon be undertaking in contest.

This was the first year that we included the raised fist gesture at the end of the ceremony as a gesture of community solidarity, to be read as both rock ‘n’ roll gesture and ‘black power’ salute. It was also significantly, named by the television station as the ‘Dreamtime Ceremony.’

2013

This was the fourth and final year of my involvement with Dreamtime at the G. I had found that dealing with the corporate world was taxing and was not convinced of the sincerity of the organisation’s position, regardless of individual executive’s personal commitment, with regard to their more-than-symbolic support for the Indigenous community. Also, I felt it was the appropriate time for me to ‘back out.’ I had always felt that my role would be one that I would hand over to an
Indigenous ritual-artist, as the next generation were keen to take on more of these responsibilities. So, I intended to ‘go out with a bang’ and make it the most diverse and fun celebration we could muster.

After consultation with Aunty Joy, I asked the other four senior Elders from the Kulin nations to come together to be part of this ceremony. This was a huge endeavour, as since European invasion there had been no recorded coming together on this significant site with Elders from each of the five tribes of the Eastern Kulin nations. This year we decided to refocus on ‘identity’ as a theme, as this was what the community were most concerned with celebrating. The Indigenous advisory committee were also very firmly in agreement that they did not want any more effigies, so the design needed to be massed full of ritual performers to compliment the scale of the site.

We had a huge number of participants, and alongside Elders and musicians there were 60 – 70 dancers on the arena from Indigenous schools from across the state, an Indigenous children’s circus troupe from the central desert, a band of 40 young drummers, and the ‘core team’ of Indigenous choreographers, performers, artists and musicians who had collaborated with me on these events since the first year.

This year for the first time the event was described in print and other media as a Contemporary Ceremony. Viewed in its entirety the event stands in stark contrast to the ritual of the football match.
that was to follow. This, coupled with the experience of ‘working for television’ made these experiences particularly curious for me. The televised Contemporary Ceremony, when reviewing it via video, is so very different to the lived experience. The televised version is interspersed with edited in images of ‘blokes kicking footies’ or ‘cut-aways’ to the teams warming up. The televised ritual created a very different experience (and yet a parallel one in time): a technologically framed ceremony versus the embodied and experiential one. The difference marked a poverty in translation, a different entity made for a mediated engagement.

For expediency, I will not go into detail of this event, but note that it was a joyful and riotous affair – which the five Elders held together. This ceremony during process and enactment exhibited the same concerns that I had been grouping since the first year, these recurring ‘categories of meaning’ were: Invitation, Consultation, Site, Intent, Cosmos, Community, The Artist’s Self, Theme, Alignment states, Divination, Heart of the Matter, Inspiration, Design (trifold schema, liturgical, visual, musical etc.), Designation, Production (as process and genre of organisation), Holding fast, Exhalation.

Conclusion to Book Two

In this book ‘Community – Rites of Transition’ I have focused on the Heart of the Matter, in practice and research. I have discussed how CC composition might be perceived, focusing on the ‘know what’ and ‘know that’ of ceremony composition, and charted the PaR process. I have defined CC as a relational and spatial practice, a contemporary ‘art of community’ practice, and have charted the perceptual and affective aspects of composition from a ritual studies perspective. I have articulated the Practice as Research methodology and recounted each of the case studies identifying the recurrent ‘codings’ and ‘categories of meaning’ that they revealed. I have also considered the sensuous and design aspects of CC composition and enactment in this process. It now remains to enter the third and final stage of the research ritual process: incorporation.
Book Three:  
Artist’s Self  
Rites of Incorporation
Chapter Seven: Towards a Theory for Contemporary Ceremony Composition

Introduction

In Books One and Two, I revealed that the practice of Contemporary Ceremony ranges widely in scale, from intimate indoor performances, to large-scale outdoor events in civic spaces involving audiences of many thousands. Narratives of belonging, recognition, and connection to land were co-created and enacted publically in these ritual-art events. In effect, the ‘micro-communities’ collaborating on these ceremonies enacted these concerns through the process of ceremony composition, and whilst ‘performing’ them.

Book One, outlines the theoretical, ethical, and onto-epistemological concerns for CC composition, introducing the conceived realm of this research. Book Two covers the perceived aspects of this research and considers the relational and affective dimensions of CC composition. The methodology, a PaR project, includes use of ‘performative text, auto-ethnographic analysis of case studies, photographic and video documentation, artist’s journals and drawings and responses to anonymous questionnaires by participants. This data was then analysed and grouped into ‘categories of meaning.’ The case studies in Book Two reflect a variety of contexts and communities, and revealed the ‘categories of meaning’ that have enabled, through their considered analysis, the proposed ‘praxial technique’ as found in this book.

As noted earlier, in imaging and imagining the ritual project, appearance, affect, and atmosphere as found within the ceremonial space come under the composer’s purview. This includes the
theatricality and performative requirements of ritual enactment, and the Heart of the Matter in conceptual and philosophical constructs. It requires a choreographic understanding in the coordination of bodies and objects as abstract idea, to the practicalities of executing embodiment in process, performance and participation.

Book Three signals the final stage of the ritual process: Incorporation. In this book, the findings of the first two books are combined, and the praxial technique emerges from the ‘categories of meaning’ I discerned in analysis of the case studies and from pedagogical observations.

This book is intended as reciprocal and respectful offering in gratitude to the communities and artists who were integral in collaborating on the case studies. They have been inseparable from the development of this theory and their contribution must be acknowledged. It is a ritual and relational, but not yet a scholarly, requirement to situate myself according to my heritage and birthplace. In respecting this protocol, I have offered an account of my background in the appendices, but have not included it here for brevity’s sake. However, what is important to understand is that my heritage is Celtic – my ancestors from the highlands of Scotland and the moors of Devonshire. The significance of this will soon become apparent. I am Australian, born in Sydney: a second-generation Celtic migrant.

A Momentary Cosmos of Metaphor

In Book Two I noted that in examination of each of the case studies, recurrent matters of concern arose in composition, and it is important to reiterate these here. Abbreviated grounded theory methods assisted in clarifying these concerns as:

Invitation, Consultation, Site, Intent, Cosmos, Community, The Artist’s Self, Theme, Alignment states, Divination, Heart of the Matter, Inspiration, Design (trifold schema, liturgical, visual, musical etc.), Designation, Production (as process and as genre of organisation), Holding fast, Exhalation.

If as previously suggested, in making Contemporary Ceremony one is composing a ‘momentary cosmos of metaphor’ then the very notion of what cosmos seeks to embrace must surely be addressed. The ‘divination’ of this cosmos is arguably the genesis of a ritual. If one is to make with it “a world thought, sensed, felt,” (or in Lefebvrean terms conceived, perceived and lived) then the
role of composer might be seen as creator of a micro-cosmos. However, importantly, this notion of a metaphorical and momentary cosmos also requires the complimentary agency of participants who in embodying the ritual processes (re) affirm and help define the symbolic order.

Arguably, contemporary ceremonies might be considered, on an interpersonal level, as democratic affairs as each participant is able to choose the level of attendance and engagement they wish to commit to – in spite of outwardly appearances. One can go through the motions and yet seem to be in the thrall of the ritual process, or alternatively participate wholly, in one’s ‘wholeness wholly attending’ with the subtlest of gestures. The subjunctive mood, so pivotal to the ‘suspended disbelief’ of theatrical conceit, in ritual blurs time and condenses experience. That which is symbolic momentarily becomes ‘actual’ (not merely symbol, but the symbolized entity itself), whilst paradoxically remaining tacitly symbolic.

Grimes’ use of the term ‘cosmos’ not simply to suggest an ‘imaged and imagined’ world, but an entire universe which operates according to its own order. The term ‘cosmos’ therefore embraces all that is incarnate and material as well as all that is sensed; all that is experienced and conceived. The metaphoric cosmos works on us through ephemera and atmosphere, as much as via material and visual symbols. The composition of a ritual cosmos must needs be conceived, perceived and ultimately, embodied.

Other Recurrent Motifs in composition – Spheres and Knots

Throughout this research, there have been recurring motifs, aside from those listed above as ‘categories of meaning.’ These motifs have particular significance to this research and have led me deeper into the Heart of the Matter, so some account of their qualities as methexical symbols is necessary before embarking on detailing the final stage of research.

Spheres and Circles

The circle is a potent symbol and geometric structure. As a two-dimensional counterpart to the sphere, the circle has been used multi-variably as a symbol of unity, equality, the collective, eternity, wholeness, as an anti-hierarchical method of gathering, an instinctive form in which children play, and as a symbol of perfection, and countless more sacred significations.

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871 Grimes, Rite out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts. 153.
872 Refer Appendix Fourteen: Full Circle
In her article *Musings on the Vesica Piscis*, geometric and theatre designer Rachel Fletcher notes that it is: “The only form that encloses all other radially symmetrical or regular figures, it may connote pre-form, the genesis of form, origins or beginnings.” She notes that the circle’s circumference – its bounding edge – without beginning or end conveys notions of “continuous cycles of endings and beginnings.”

In Fletcher’s accounts circles are liminal in their symbolism. The circle signifies ‘inside’ and ‘centre’ as well as ‘outside’ and boundlessness, “… drawing upon its magical and protective qualities … As a sacred space, the circle orients to the horizon and to the cosmic edges of the universe.”

She suggests that there is a temporal significance to circles as they also point to the phases of sun and of the moon bringing with them cycles of light and darkness. As such she suggests they are: “… perpetual rhythms of sleeping and waking, birth and death, growth and decay, systole and diastole, and inhalation and exhalation. In its totality, the circle suggests the timeless whole.”

Fletcher describes the geometrical phenomena of a *vesica piscis* as the almond shape where two identical sized circles overlap, intersecting in such a way that the centre of each lies on the circumference of the other.

Any two circles can intersect to produce an almond shape, but when two circles of identical size intersect such that the centre of each lies on the circumference of the other, the result is a *vesica piscis*. Noting its ubiquity as a ‘sacred’ symbol in many religions, Fletcher adds that its proportions can be seen echoed in gothic arches and both the floor plans and projections of many sacred buildings. She explains its significance:

> The vesica piscis signifies the mediation of two distinct entities; the complementariness of polar opposites, as when two extremes complete and depend upon one another to exist. One circle may signify the breath of spirit, which is eternal; the other may signify the body physical, which is forever changing and adapting. The vesica piscis itself symbolizes that which mediates spirit and body; or the psyche or soul.

The circle as symbol of community and Wilson’s analogy of a relational circularity that finds the four aspects of his Indigenous Research Paradigm in a matrix of continual flux and change; mirrored by

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874 Ibid.
875 Ibid.
876 Ibid. 95-97.
877 Ibid. 96.
a circularity of thinking and storytelling that is essential to Indigenous epistemology, further confirmed my instinctive choice of motif.

Given the metaphorical potential of the circle and the potency of the *vesica piscis* as the meeting place of differences, I continued to use them in my working drawings. As a result, I found another image recurrently emerging from the pages: that of the knot.

**Knots**

Recently, scholars have argued that the simple knot may predate man’s discovery of fire.\(^{878}\)

Although the claim is a grand one, which they admit is difficult to substantiate (most knots are made out of organic perishable materials), the capacity to bind and hold things together, to fasten and secure, is an ancient and ongoing practice that has had considerable application in technological developments in many fields of human endeavour.\(^{879}\) The knot has inspired artists, seafarers, mathematicians and physicists across time and cultures both for its physical attributes and its symbolic resonances.

In the 19\(^{th}\) century knots gained increasing focus in the mathematical sciences and the nascent field of topology. The study of links and linked structures, and their computation, was integral to the development of the vortex-atom theory, an early enquiry into the physical substance of the atom that drew heavily upon Aristotelian notions of celestial ethers. This theory posited that atoms were “knots of ether” which were “imparted with vortex motion.”\(^{880}\) Although the vortex-atom theory is no longer credited, the study of knots and ‘knot theory’ has continued to present day contributing to fields beyond mathematics including quantum mechanics, genetics and solar physics.\(^{881}\)

Knot Theory in the physical and mathematical sciences has become so profoundly a matter of concern, that an entire academic journal is devoted to its academic exploration. Yet, according to Silver, “the physical significance of knots remains elusive.”\(^{882}\) He suggests that it is possible that knots represent “a fundamental relation of quantities” and that there is a need to conceptualise beyond an “overly literal view” of knots and their linking structures. It is possible that this fundamental relationality, and its ensuing quantitative and symbolic resonances, has inspired the application of knot imagery in many cultural art forms and ritual devices.

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\(^{879}\) Ibid.


\(^{881}\) Ibid. 158-165.

\(^{882}\) Ibid. 165.
Susanne Kuchler in her analysis of the knot as used and conceived of in Pacific imagination suggests knots symbolized a way of “imaging the body politic.” Kuchler notes that it is the very functionality of knots – their “ubiquitous presence as mode of binding” – that has indicated to anthropological studies that knots are more than simply utilitarian. She cites contributions made to ethno-mathematics in considering knotted forms as mnemonic “mapping devices” (citing Scholarly reviews of Incan knotted cords as systems of “knowledge storage,” and knots and number systems in Kenya and Nigeria.) She suggests these observations reveal the significance of knots and for their capacity to emulate both thinking and being – captured in physical form.

Kuchler notes that in the Pacific Islands, the knot becomes: “the object of meditative thought and holds together not two things but two concepts: that of the visible, and that of the invisible whose momentary entanglement facilitates temporal concepts of genealogy and remembrance.” Kuchler draws on some of the fundaments of Knot Theory to support her claim for the knot as, “… a carrier of the cognitive force of religious symbolism.”

These notions were to have a profound resonance for me as I continued with my research. I kept drawing my categories of meaning in ever more complex relationships … networks of relationships between entities.

According to Kuchler, Knot Theory’s observation suggests that an essential component for understanding knots lies in their capacity for flux and change, and that the surface of the knot alone is insufficient to describe its form. The spaces that surround the knot are equally important in constituting it, for even in the simplest two-dimensional depiction, there is always a ‘visibly impenetrable plane’ which lies occluded beneath another plane of the knot. The knot can be viewed both physically and metaphorically as a dynamic system of flux being mutually constituted by the known (visible) and the unknown (not–visible).

**Composing a common language: emerging theory**

Before fully revealing the praxial technique a further chapter in the story of its emergence is important to recount. This inclusion is also part of my relational accountability to those cohorts who over the years entered into the spirit of ritual-making and have as thanks for their contributions to my thinking.

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884 Ibid. 206.
885 Ibid. 207.
886 Ibid. 208.
Whilst teaching ‘Community Performance and Ritual’ at the Victorian College of the Arts, it became apparent to me that in order to convey my notions about composition to students, and for them to hone their own ritual making processes, I would need to find and develop a shared ‘language.’ As part of my pedagogical approach I began to deconstruct and reconstruct ritual theory alongside my own 20 plus year ritual-art practice. I tested out my coalescing ideas in weekly laboratories that challenged the student cohort to make and share a ‘ritual,’ using some of the identified approaches and terms (Books One and Two) as guides. It was from this practical and theoretical exploration that I started to distinguish essential ‘matters of concern’ for Contemporary Ceremony composition, and to discern the proposed technique.

In pursuing the compositional dynamics of Contemporary Ceremony, I analysed a suite of four case studies through many iterations of drawings. I considered each ritual-event from the moment of its inception, through the myriad processes and requirements of ceremony composition, to the practical implementation in the practice of contemporary ceremony. I considered factors that were common to all four cases and allowed the ambiguity of their individual and different concerns to be included in my initial analysis.

As previously mentioned, Van Gennep’s theory of the trifold structure of rites of passage and liminality and Turner’s concept of ‘attendance’ and *communitas* were central theoretical constructs, but these were not the only dynamics to accommodate. I drew several iterations of what I had found to be the major compositional concerns of Contemporary Ceremony, but soon realised that what I was drawing was simply an increasingly complex web of fractal mappings as the prosaic, poetic, and ritual concerns of composition overlapped.

In an attempt to disentangle the increasingly knotted jumble of intersecting compositional elements, I quickly discerned the need for a more elegant solution to the issues of composition. I began to play with the idea of a delimited number of groupings that could house each of these concerns, which seemed necessary in order to capture the complexity of the process of composition.

My first iteration of these groupings divided the concerns into five meta-groupings or realms:

1. The Self

This realm signifies the undeniably necessary element of the composer, whose participation in creating the ‘event’ requires mention. It is through the composer as ‘conduit’ that the ceremony comes into being. The ritual-artist’s presence clearly affects every decision and choice made in the
final composition. Therefore, the practitioner’s ethical, ontological and artistic concerns, experience of community practice, and awareness of their own heritage are of relevance here. If considered from an objectivated stance, the ‘self’ in this emerging theory might be applied not simply to myself, but could embrace other ‘ritualists’ who are concerned with composing contemporary ceremonies of their own.

2. Community

An understanding and appreciation of the intended participating communities’ concerns and their potentially differing ontological frameworks, histories, power structures and cultural frameworks are vital to creating any ‘art of community’ event. In composing Contemporary Ceremony, the community and their concerns are important factors in ‘divining’ the Heart of the Matter.

3. Heart of the Matter

This term came to be used in my teaching as a way of discerning that amidst the myriad of concerns involved in composition, that there was a pivotal concern that reflected the communities’ concerns around which all of the ceremony revolved. The Heart of the Matter evolved and changed in meaning for me over time, but might be summed up at this proto-stage of technique development as the ‘theme’ or issues of communal concern.

4. Ritual design and ‘liturgy’

This realm included both structural elements of the ceremonial form (van Gennep’s threefold structure) and the artistic act of ‘designing’ ceremony practically and experientially in terms of the artistic modalities to be used – dance, chanting, procession etc. These were to be considered alongside the demands of site and embodiment. The term ‘liturgy’ (borrowed from ecclesiastical terminology), was interpreted very loosely in order to invoke a sense of the ‘dramatic arc’ of the ceremony that the students were being invited to create. At the same time, this term suggested some notion of the formality of structure they were dealing with (separation, transition, incorporation), alongside the formal physical and embodied elements that their ceremony was to be composed of. In essence, this realm was the ‘scripting’ of the ceremony – not so much as libretto, but rather as score, set design, and libretto combined.

5. Practical implementation

This realm indicated a process that included all of the technical, practical, and personnel requirements of production (permits, sound, lights, etc.), creative team management, rehearsal and
making schedules and their implementation, meetings with stakeholders, budgetary juggling, and the final enactment of the ceremony.

In an attempt to communicate simply the many complexities inherent in the process of making ceremony, I outlined the layered approach of my praxis to my students in diagrammatic computer-generated charts. However, my three initial attempts at capturing the multiple vectors of ritual concerns and dynamics were flawed, simplistic, and too static. The first diagram hinted at the iterative nature of the process but in spite of the hermeneutic cycle, this diagram suggested a straightforward and procedural approach that belied the many twists and turns experienced in the designing and divining processes.

![Figure 41: My first attempt at a theory for composition](image)

The second diagram attempted a reinterpretation of the first, with further consideration of the relationship between different ritual elements. This time the vectors radiated out from a central source identified as *The Heart of the Matter* (HoM). However, this diagram’s limitations lay in the suggestion of a predefined HoM which projected its central concerns outwards to other spheres of ritual consideration yet again indicated none of the dynamics, dilemmas or design processes of divining what that central core might be.

![Figure 42: My second attempt at a theory for composition](image)
My third attempt was even more oblique and less helpful, resembling a simplified ‘target’ it became clear that I had missed the mark, and that the computer-generated imagery of Microsoft could never explain the complexity of a sensorial, intuitive, theoretical and personal method. However the embedded concentric circles hinted at the central focus of the HoM and the inextricability of the conceptual and practical demands of the making process. So, with this in mind, I began to draw. Here the knowing of the hand and eyes were given authority over the act of designing, allowing their ‘knowing by doing’ to interpret the mind’s eye.

I reminded myself of Grimes’ observation that ritual is “kinaesthetically conceived” and as such requires “an act of stepping in to be.” In the act of “stepping in to be,” in composing, the composer learns the ‘know how’ of composition. Theorizing (knowing that, what and how) can only arise from bodily informed “stepping back to know.”

Inspired by Henri Lefebvre’s triadic dialectic on the Production of Space, I began to muse over how the space of CC might be conceived, perceived, and experienced in the act. I carefully considered what aspects of ceremony making these spheres might contain and how this might relate to technique. Long fascinated by geometry (often the blue print of many forms of ritual art) and particularly with the shape of the vesica piscis, I started to draw interlocking circles. I allowed memories of the proprioceptive choices I had made to fill sheets of data. I was back to the drawing board, but this time used my hand and allowed the kinaesthetic process of drawing – material thinking – to occur.

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889 Refer Book Two Chapter Five: Lefebvre and the Production of Ceremonial Space
The requirements of theory

Grimes has noted that developing theory in both the social sciences and the arts and humanities rarely follows scientific models of enquiry, as predictability or experimental replicability is not a focal concern in these types of qualitative research. Grimes proposes that criteria for ascertaining sound theorising is thus dependent on degrees of: “public intelligibility, imaginative stimulation, moral accountability, practical utility, internal coherence and comprehensiveness” in the model.\textsuperscript{890}

In “The Craft of Ritual Studies,” Grimes lists several requirements of theory in ritual studies research. These include a comprehensive and consistent approach that is explicit about methods used in generating the theory.\textsuperscript{891} His fourth requirement is further nuanced, as he suggests that the research should include orientation into how the theory will:

- Specify how the word ritual is used,
- Propose a way to classify types of ritual,
- Identify constitutive elements, phases, and layers of ritual,
- Explain how these ritual dynamics work as a system or tradition,
- Demonstrate how rituals function,
- Ground interpretations, hypotheses, explanations, and predictions.\textsuperscript{892}

\textsuperscript{891} Ibid. 175.
\textsuperscript{892} Ibid. 174-175.
He proposes that for any model of ritual to be considered adequate, it should account for three specific concerns, and in doing so enable an explanation or construction of a ritual from them. Theory must account for the ritual’s:

- Static elements,
- Internal dynamics, and
- Interactions within their contexts.

Grimes in appreciation of the complexity and enormity of this instruction notes: “No theory can actually contain every possible variation, but a theory of ritual should at least sketch the innermost core and outermost boundaries of the phenomenon, knowing full well that these determinations are tentative, culture-bound, scholarly inventions.”

Research into the composition of CCs has taken each of these requirements into account in Books One and Two. In the following pages, Book Three offers an account of how the static elements, internal dynamics, and emplaced interactions of CC’s fuse in the proposed praxial technique, and offers further account of the spheres and knots that form its methexical imaging. In doing so, I reflect on Grimes’ comment: “To theorize is to leverage something big using a small conceptual tool that is metaphoric and imaginative.”

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893 Ibid. 174.
894 Ibid. 177.
Chapter Eight: The Three Realms of CC composition

Towards a common ceremonial language – the evolution of the praxial technique.

Grimes suggests that in “fuzzing” disciplinary boundaries it may be possible to reconnect ritual practices to their “vital sources and tributaries.” This boundary drawing and fuzzing became a methodological imperative. When drawing, the image of the sphere was an instinctive choice. The sphere made it immediately clear to the eye the delineation of boundaries, and their ‘bleeding,’ as I charted the “vital sources and tributaries.”

I drew several iterations of coded spheres bounding the ‘matters of concern’ found in each of the case studies. In doing so I was assisted in thinking of Robin Nelson’s spheres of artistic knowledge:

- ‘Know that’ – of academic theory and beyond… – propositional discourses,
- ‘Know how” – the process of making and its modes of knowing – procedural knowledge,
- “Know what” – informed reflexivity – knowing what ‘works.’

Aware of their imbricated quality as praxis, I drew the three as interlocking spheres. The central point suggested a ‘hot-spot’ where all three knowledge bases converged, but the conundrum of how to analyse my theoretical and practical research remained unclear. After several iterations, I found I was drawing an increasingly complex web of fractal mappings. A structured but flexible analysis of the emerging categorisations was necessary. In disentangling the increasingly knotted jumble, I placed findings in coded groupings that could house their concerns.
As noted, inspired by Lefebvre’s triadic dialectic on the Production of Space, I considered how the Space of CC might be ‘produced,’ taking into account these ‘vital sources and tributaries’ and the matters of concern outlined in the Indigenist oriented research paradigm.

In brief, Lefebvre’s triadic dialectic describes a convergence between three essential moments, which he saw as being either in interaction, conflict or alliance with each other. They might be described thus:

- Representations of space (conceived spaces) identify how spaces might be ‘thought’ into being and conceptualised; this is a realm of ideas, theory, maps and language.

- Spatial practices (perceived spaces) as embodied phenomena indicate how spaces are perceived in the material world of activities, sensory phenomena and entities and objects.

- Spaces of representation (lived spaces) signify a realm of lived experiences – of desire and imagination – reflexivity and the poetry and symbolisms of everyday life.

I considered next how these 2 diagrams might relate to each other, aware of the need to draw in the focus of my lens – or risk more fractal rupturing.
I decided to further pursue the idea of the production of the ‘space’ of Contemporary Ceremony – envisioning it as evolving from three interconnected epistemological spheres: with distinctly fuzzed boundaries:

- The conceived sphere of theory and ideas – the ‘know that’ and ‘know how’ of PaR – stepping back to know,
- The perceived sphere of the sensate and relational, the ‘know what’ and ‘know that’ of PaR – stepping in to be,
- And lived experience – a sphere of the intuitive and temporal. ‘Know how’ and ‘know what’ reflexivity and the poetics of composition.

![Figure 48: The Production of Space of Contemporary Ceremony as a Venn diagram](image)

As I have noted in Book Two, I documented the case studies using: auto-ethnographic accounts, photographic images, drawings, and videos in order to reveal the inductive forces at work: my “material thinking” during process and event. Utilizing Carla Willig’s interpretation of inductive and ‘abbreviated’ grounded theory methods, I grouped dynamics and matters of concern into “categories of meaning,” and a clearer image began to emerge. I analysed my case studies through many iterations of drawings – from their inception in invitation, through the many processes and requirements of producing, composing and production, to the practical implementation of these concerns in enactment. I considered factors that were common to all four cases and allowed for their individual concerns to be included in my initial analysis.
The Three Spheres

Arising from my analysis of this data, three fundamental and interrelated spheres of concern proved to be common and fundamental in ceremony composition. A reflexive and flexible awareness of each of them was common to all the case studies.

They are:

1. The Cosmos – Space
2. Communities and Other Entities
3. The Artist’s self

The 3 spheres are the starting point for composition – the place where self meets other, self meets cosmos, other meets cosmos, and the convergence of all three. This diagram would appear impenetrable if it were not for the sphere of the Artist’s self.

1. The Artist’s self: This sphere includes a reflexive understanding of ones’ ethical and artistic concerns, experience in art of community and ceremony making, and lineages of artistic and theoretical practice.
2. Community & other entities: An understanding and respect for the participating communities’ concerns and their (potentially differing) ontologies, histories, power structures and cultural frameworks
3. Cosmos/ space: Emplaced in the cosmos, we perceive it sensually and materially via our practices, we conceive of it and represent it in stories and sciences, and we experience it through our inhabited relationships and cultural responses to it.

Together the three spheres manifest three vesica piscis – their central meeting point is a distillation of matters of concern for composition. The three spheres could be conceived as three-dimensional interlocking worlds. The other immediate spheres are thus in direct relation – other entities (the community) and space (not simply physical site but ‘cosmological spaces’ as well) which revolve and jostle against each other.
The Celtic Knot

Further drawings revealed the central knot, binding the three spheres together. I found I was repeatedly drawing a Celtic trefoil – a methexical symbol of unity from my own Celtic heritage.

![Figure 50: The Celtic knot emerges from the Three Spheres (Margie Mackay)](image)

Soon the Celtic knot started to ‘pop up’ frequently in everyday life, from the nape of the neck of a passenger sitting in front of me on a tram, to a bottle of hemp oil in a neighbour’s fridge, then a doodle set in cement... I saw these symbols in the most unexpected of places. As with the process of divining ritual, I took such synchronicity as an affirmation that I was ‘on track’: on to something.

![Figure 51: Synchronicity – ‘found’ Celtic knots](image)

On Celtic Knots

Brent Doran has charted the significance of abstract forms found in Celtic art, which he finds to be “highly evolved” and representative of “extensive intellectual contemplation and effort.”

From his analysis of Celtic art, literature, and sciences, he notes that the Celts’ worldview was unlike their classical counterparts in Ancient Greece, instead reflecting an alignment with the “… subtlety and

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intricacy of the natural world – a world built from simple strands: infinitely knotted, iterated, and nonlinear.”

Doran proposes that because these spiral and knotted abstract designs were a dominant if not defining feature of Celtic art, with transmission of their forms occurring over centuries, that they were very likely to express a core aspect of Celtic identity, religion and worldview, which embraced a metaphysical appreciation of “the subtly cyclic and occasionally chaotic world around them.”

He continues: “The world of the Celts was, like their art, a dynamic one, with few points of stability. To try to make it finite, simple, and comprehensible, as did the Greeks was probably unthinkable. Such global order was out of the question.” In his considerations of Celtic stories, Doran notes an emphasis placed on the shift between night and day and time and space, which are “rescaled” in “violating classical rationality.” He found in his reading that worms grow into dragons that giants feasted amongst the people and that transformation in being from human to beast, and back again, were common themes. According to Doran the borders of tribal lands signified the borders of “reality and order – beyond lies the Otherworld, where reality becomes inverted.” Although he finds that magic and chaos dominate in the stories of the “other-worlds,” Doran could perceive a “bizarre order” in these accounts: that in some stories “there are those few…who through the magic find wisdom and meaning.”

The profundity of this worldview when considered in this age of the Anthropocene is strangely fitting; we live in great uncertainty and instability, wherein the future appears increasingly dynamic.

In examining the scientific basis for the mathematical construction of knotwork and spiral designs, Doran notes a probable link to calendrical calculations, and that their “dynamical systems…capture the germ of the idea” of fractals. Like Kutchler, Doran observes the knot’s significance to assist in an understanding of “the sub particulate structure of space-time itself.”

896 Ibid.
897 Ibid. 276.
898 Ibid. 276.
899 Ibid. 276.
900 Ibid. 276-278.
901 Ibid. 278.
902 Ibid. 279.
Envisioning a three dimensional ‘metamorphology’\textsuperscript{903}

The Celtic knot which weaves between the three spheres of the praxial technique is a closed system. This knot can never be disentangled, and hints at the dynamic and divinatory processes held together in ceremony composition. If conceived of in three dimensions rather than two, the knot becomes a woven ball: a complex of m\oe bius strips with many vectors.\textsuperscript{904}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{three_spheres_celtic_knot}
\caption{The Three Spheres and the Celtic Knot conceived in three dimensions}
\end{figure}

Kuchler’s observations of Knot Theory’s finds that knots have an inherent capacity for flux and change. Importantly, the surface of the knot alone is insufficient to describe its form. The spaces that surround the knot are equally important in constituting it, for even in the simplest two-dimensional depiction, there is always a ‘visibly impenetrable plane’ which lies hidden beneath another plane of the knot. The knot can be viewed both physically and metaphorically as a dynamic system of flux being mutually constituted by the known (visible) and the unknown (not-visible): so too the composition of Contemporary Ceremony. Handelman similarly notes with regard to ritual modelling that: “Self-entering m\oe bius movement can be understood to fold into itself, to self-connect through itself, thereby describing itself self-referentially, yet without creating levels or binary distinctions between inside and outside. This actually relates to the potentiality for fractal organization in such cosmoses, but fractals that entangle or braid with one another rather than nesting neatly within one another on different scales.”\textsuperscript{905}

\textsuperscript{903} Elden and Mendieta,. 11. Elden and Mendieta cite Blumenburg’s use of this term and apply it to Sloterdijk’s spheres analogy. I use it for its resonance.
\textsuperscript{905} Ibid.
Soon the praxial technique emerged in my drawings, as details of composition were visualised forming sections of the Celtic knot. I have divided the resulting ball of energy into three compositional realms.

The Three Compositional Realms

This research has identified three realms of composition, which together in a fluid relationship form the base for the proposed praxial technique. The term ‘realm’ has been used here to emphasize the multidimensional aspect that each of the three aspects embrace. ‘Realm’ conjures up notions of delimited territories but could be viewed as equally suggestive of an imaginary or a symbolic ‘place’: it is a domain concurrently and utterly multi-dimensional, both imagined and real. Rejecting an imperial definition of the term, opting rather for an ecologically defined zone (similar to geographical and zoological interpretation,) these realms of ritual composition are dynamic spaces where the impacts of living beings entangle and trouble any attempt at a straightforward or structuralist approach. Realms in this sense could be seen as their own micro-cosmoses – part of the necessary whole of the ‘cosmos of metaphor’ – that the ritual composer hopes to engender and inhabit. The realms are:

- Realm One: The Three Spheres of Artist’s Self, Cosmos, and Community
- Realm Two: The Divinatory Matrix of the Celtic Knot
- Realm Three: The Ceremonial Event of the Ceremonial circle

Realm One: The Three Spheres

The Artist’s Self

There is a need to ‘give an account’ of the lived experience of ceremony composition, from the composer’s perspective. During the process of composition, the ritual-artist is required to engage in honest and considered self-scrutiny. As noted elsewhere, ritual forms are open to abuse when mishandled, and ill-considered best ‘intentions’ may not serve the ritual’s intent. As an ‘art of community’ practice there is a further ethical requirement to be critically aware of one’s own alterity to the gaze of ‘an other’ and to be alert to possible cultural imperialism and appropriation. In tempering the self against such possibilities, there are a number of approaches and issues to be aware of. These include:

906 Refer Appendix One: My Self
• Reflexive self: ethical engagement and relational accountability, power, privilege, etc.,
• Ethical and Ontological constructs: awareness of one’s heritage of belief, own belief system/worldview, interrogation of one’s ethical and moral alignments, flexibility in accepting differences in these from others,
• Artistic lineages and perspectives and aesthetic choices,
• Designation – composer.

Community
This second sphere “community” exhibits a shift in emphasis from the composer’s perspective, which although central is not the sole vector of composition. The community and their matters of concern, ontologies, ways of knowing, being, and doing, and the relational networks extending far beyond the human realm require agency and expression within the compositional process.

The idea of an ‘art of community’ practice has been discussed in Book Two, and use of the term ‘community’ also considered within that context. However, importantly for composition purposes, community might be reconsidered as a ‘symbolic entity’ demarcating a sense of ‘boundary’ by marking out that which it is, as much as delineating that which it is not.

Anthony Cohen offers a ‘soft definition’ of community as a “small-scale social and cultural entity” being “… bigger than the ‘family’ but yet less impersonal than the bureaucracy or work organization.”

Cohen notes the importance of scale and in it a conundrum. From the outside, as communities decrease in scale, “objective’ referents” marking their boundaries are increasingly less clear, but alternatively for those inside the community, boundaries become increasingly important as according to Cohen: “… they relate to increasingly intimate areas of their lives or refer to more substantial areas of their identities.”

Cohen argues for an interpretation of communities according to their meaning rather than on structuralist interpretations that are linked to form. His approach considers the ‘meaning’ of community, its symbolism, and how this sense of meaning is attributed and operates from within,

907 Cohen. 8.
908 Ibid. 75.
and from outside, a community’s boundaries.\textsuperscript{909} He proposes: “… rather than thinking of community as an integrating mechanism, it should be regarded instead as an aggregating device.”\textsuperscript{910}

In thinking so, Cohen places the notion of boundaries as central to communities, as they envelop a community’s identity which “… like the identity of an individual, is called into being by the exigencies of social interaction.”\textsuperscript{911} Constituted by interactions between the networks of relations making up the community, Cohen suggests that the ‘consciousness’ of a community lies in its perceptions of its boundaries. Communities are conscious of their boundaries, and are particularly so when they are transgressed. As such Cohen points out that as an “entity” communities are “invested with all the sentiment attached to kinship, friendship, neighbouring, rivalry, familiarity, jealousy, as they inform the social process of everyday life.”\textsuperscript{912}

In boundary keeping, a “variability of meaning” is integral to the symbolic construction of a community and the maintenance and finessing of its symbols. This enables use of a common symbol that remains significant to the collective, but concurrently allows individual orientations towards the interpretation and meaning of that entity.\textsuperscript{913} He articulates: “… since structure determines neither behaviour nor attitude it follows that members of different communities may use similar structures, yet think about them in quite different ways.”\textsuperscript{914}

Alongside an understanding of a community’s matters of concern, their ontological frameworks and ways of knowing, being, and doing, understanding that the idea of ‘community’ is a collectively constructed symbolic entity is an important understanding to grasp in composing CCs. Cohen observes that if a community’s structural bases are weakened due to social factors its members will perform increasingly symbolic acts to reaffirm their sense of boundary. In determining the symbolisms that are active within a community’s imaginary – its construction of its identity – and where its boundaries might blur or whether they have become weakened or not, will impact directly on design, and theme and ultimately on articulating The Heart of the Matter of the ceremony’s intent. Cohen notes that a community’s strength lies in its “…members’ perception of the vitality of

\textsuperscript{909} Ibid. 20.
\textsuperscript{910} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{911} Ibid. 13.
\textsuperscript{912} Ibid. 14.
\textsuperscript{913} Ibid. 15.
\textsuperscript{914} Ibid. 75.
its culture. People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity. 915

Cosmos

The next sphere to enter is “Cosmos.” I use the term ‘cosmos’ to articulate the multiple layers of significance that spaces, places and sites extend to the emplaced practice of CCs. Grimes offers a helpful analysis, he states, ritual is:

... a way of being oriented in the cosmos, and a cosmos is the world as ritually and mythically constituted.... when one's world is ritually oriented, space is no longer abstract, and one place may not be as good or powerful as another. Ritually considered, some places are more generative than others. To go to them is orienting, therefore life giving. 916

He continues offering an analysis of the generative impacts of site:

As a given ritual environment precedes and exceeds the ritual itself; it is a force field encircling a ritual, those who enact it, and even those who study it. As an artefact, a ritual set is built of all sorts of things, some of it tangible, some of it conceptual, transforming the given into the made-over. 917

In Book One and Two I outlined some of the spaces that enable the ritual-artist to conceive and perceive of the composition of contemporary ceremony. These include:

- **Emplacement**: location of the CC including histories of place, contestations over sovereignty, environmental influences and concerns, sensitivity to the ‘more-than-human’ realm in plants and animals, awareness of seasons, climates and weather.

- **Zeitgeist**: awareness of conceptual spaces - the ‘spirit of the times’ as reflected in the cultural, ethical, and conceptual influences that are matters of concern for the communities engaged, and those that composer perceives as vital to CCs.

- **Ontological frameworks**: admittance of a plurality of worldviews, axiologies and cosmologies.

The final aspect of Cosmos that is vital to consider deeply, which has only been lightly touched upon in the first two books is ‘site.’ As Grimes elucidates: “Rituals operate in environments that are simultaneously biological, geographical, social, political, historical and cultural. A ritual's
environment is the totality of whatever surrounds it and interacts with it. I add here some of the considerations of site that have been essential considerations in composing each of the case studies:

- **Site**: A rigorous analysis in choosing site for the ceremony which may involve divinatory processes to assist in determining its suitability including: rhythm analysis of usage and patterning of site; historical awareness of past usage of site – its “architectural and geographical…symbolic valence;” mapping of the site for production requirements, rehearsals and occupational health and safety requirements; attaining permits and approvals; aesthetic suitability; capacity for the ritual intent to be realized in considering all of these analyses.

**Realm Two: The Divinatory Matrix**

The Divinatory Matrix (DM) is driven by the dynamic forces of attraction and repulsion in the trefoil Celtic knot, which ebbs and flows between the spheres, moving into the unknown and then towards illumination (threading under and over other pathways). The dynamic forces which drive this compositional force are part divinatory and part pedestrian influences, they include practical and relational necessities, aesthetic and embodied choices, spatial and spiritual sensitivities, and a certain ‘centeredness’ or orientation which nurtures the ability to hold the many threads together (whilst remembering to breathe).

The Divinatory Matrix includes the following interlocking matters of concern:

- Relational and ethical imperatives: invitation, consultation, and inspiration,
- Aesthetic and embodied choices: design, designation, and production,
- Spatial and spiritual sensitivities: divination, holding fast and,
- Exhalation: ending the process well.

918 Ibid.
919 Ibid.
The DM of Realm Two is constructed from analysis of both “sources and tributaries” of ritual studies, current ritual theory, and their presence in praxis. The nine vectors that are entangled in the DM were revealed in grounded theory analysis of each of the case studies. I have used the term ‘Divinatory Matrix’ to convey the purpose of the Celtic knot metaphor in bounding together the ‘divinatory’ elements and compositional dynamics of CC composition. I use the term ‘vector’ to convey the sense of being carried by the divinatory process and to compliment the mathematical basis of the Celtic knot metaphor. The DM charts the flow of energetic shifts between the spheres – from matters of fact (that include such pedestrian matters as budget and other practical or quotidian constraints,) to matters of concern, (including function, form and intent,) which shape and shift the design process bringing the ceremony into being. These nine vectors I have named:

- Invitation
- Consultation
- Inspiration
- Divination
- Design
- Designation
- Production
- Holding fast
- Exhalation

The order above is not perceived of as sequential – as certain aspects must be repeated, attended to concurrently, or considered at unforeseen times in the process. As the Celtic knot twists in and around on itself – similarly the ritual composer is at times cast into darkness and unknowing, at others finds paths out of confusion. Often however, the composer must compose the self, by simply remembering to breathe and hold fast. Details of each of the nine vectors will now be examined.

Invitation

There is always invitation. Without invitation – nothing happens. I have been invited to create most Contemporary Ceremonies. However, sometimes this invitation might be prompted by a suggestion I have offered to Elders, whose permission to create ‘such and such’ a ceremony on their country I necessarily must attain, and they then either choose to take up the notion (or not) and invite participation of their wider community. At this point, our work becomes intensely collaborative.

Often, I am trusted to my own devices with processual and production tasks, and with the over-all arc of the ritual structure, but constant checking in and being receptive towards how certain ideas are received by Elders (through silence and gesture as much as words…) and relying on their garnering of community involvement is paramount. At times cultural guidance is offered, as
elements of CC resonate with tradition, are cleft from it, or are augmented. Often, new guises are
found for ancient practices, remaining recognizable to community, transformed are introduced to a
broader public. Invitation extends to inviting input, critique and guidance from others, and that the
notion of invitation is extended to include access to participation, even if attending as ‘audience,’
through thoughtful design.

Consultation

Consultation is a vital protocol and process in composing CCs.
Consulting with Elders, communities and potential participants is an
early and ongoing part of the process. This means listening to the
space of the ‘more-than’ of words. To listen to country and take to
heart and mind in an embodied awareness of what surrounds you. To
keep an ear and eye cast to the unexpected places – for auguries
from winds, birds, animals, stars – singing up and being receptive.

Inspiration

Focus on breath reminds us of our shared humanity and shared
atmosphere – our place in the bubbles and foams. It is a practice of
calming and focusing The Heart of the Matter amidst the multiple
dynamics in flux during process. This enables ‘inspiration’ of the
imaginary and artistic variety the space to emerge and enter into the
work – drawing things in to self as much as drawing in air. Inspiration
in others, in the ‘work,’ from the site, in the many dynamics and elements that have to be arranged
in composition are all part of this dynamic. Remembering to breathe allows reflexivity and a
heightened awareness further footing in our beings, allowing discerning choices to arise.

Divination

Divination as a process is ongoing and relationally tuned throughout
the composition process, in allowing this ‘space’ to emerge the
composer ensures that they are attuned and alert to the unexpected
and subtle shifts of the matters of concern that buffet and reflect the
ritual concerns. I have detailed scholarly observations of divination as
process in Book two. It can be a mode of clarifying concerns engendering a state of surrender to forces beyond the individual, a potential safe guard against ego driven concerns. This process of waiting ‘in attendance’ requires patience, the willingness to listen, and belief in the process and intent of ceremony that one is engaged in. As this book is the ritual-artist’s account of the lived experience of composition, I will not repeat these concerns here, but offer another interpretation of divination, from my own experience, which may assist in understanding the divinatory process: see appendices. 920

Design

As referred to earlier the notion of designing a ceremony is a holistic one including all aspects of the event. Mindful of Latour’s notion of design as: “the antidote to founding, colonizing, establishing, or breaking with the past,” as a discipline that requires the designer to see the macro and the micro concerns – applying attention and attentiveness to detail in an iterative process honing past practices and new insights to current conditions.

A useful vision of design is comprehensively articulated in the Royal College of Art’s definition as: “the collected experience of the material culture, and the collected body of experience, skill, and understanding embodied in the arts of planning, inventing, making and doing.” 921 This holistic definition articulates the sensate and perceptual experiences (knowing what) of embodied experience and skill which are melded with conceptual processes of planning and inventing (knowing that), and tempered by the lived experience of making and doing (knowing how).

Design in the praxial technique embraces:

1. ‘Liturgical’ design: ‘plot’ structure of ceremony in running order/ script /score – reflecting the conceived matters of concern in ‘enacted arc’ of the Heart of the Matter. Included in this aspect of design is the considered use of Van Gennep’s trifold schema, with awareness of micro-rites within rites. Liturgical design also considers the modalities of ritual that one might use and whether the ritual is primarily a rite of separation, of transition, or incorporation.

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920 Refer Appendix thirteen
2. **Production design**: how all elements come together at a particular time and place – including schedules, budgets and other logistics – complimenting the lived matters of concern in producing *The Heart of the Matter*,

3. **Sensorium and Aesthetic design**: symbols and metaphors including vestments/ costumes and site/scenography – complementing the perceived matters of concern to ‘render us sensitive’ to *The Heart of the Matter*.

**Designation**

Allocation of roles and resources – a fairly pragmatic but essential step – making sure the right ‘roles’ are in the fibre of the design and that the right candidates are allocated these. This includes a considered understanding of the role of the composer within process.

I shall share an account that articulates the importance of this concern and the way in which I conceive it operating in composition. One year, whilst managing teams of personnel on an NCP production for the Woodford Folk Festival Fire Event, I found the crew to be anxious and overly concerned about where they were in the hierarchy of the company. Continuing debates over ‘roles’ were distracting the process from creating the ceremony and to me signified a lack of focus on what was of realm importance – the art itself.

Some people had been volunteering for years and others had worked their way into paid roles with the added responsibilities of taking charge of certain scenes or production tasks. I decided to jettison the hierarchical tree structure that Neil Cameron had adopted, and at this stage re-conceptualised the team as a turning wheel.

This management system placed the ritual-art event, the ceremony, at the centre, as the axel around which everything was in relation. The closer to the centre the higher the degree of responsibility, and the ultimate responsibility was not to a director but to the event itself. At the time, we were creating a 15m high ‘Ferris wheel,’ inspired by the ‘Wheel of Life’ and the eight auspicious objects of Tibetan Buddhism, so inspiration for this model was (as usual) right under our noses.
In the model I drew up, different spokes held different aspects of the ‘Fire Event’ team’s roles, and the audience as participants formed the outer ‘tyre’ of the event. Thus, there were multiple responsibilities towards the centre: for each other holding the circle ‘just’ and to the audience without whom the event would not have taken place. This model created a state of relative harmony, as the vital nature of each role was assured and unlike the former tree model did not have branches that could be overlooked and thus die, unseen; dropping off untended. For the wheel to spin on its axis every section and individual was required for the integrity of the whole.

![Diagram of the Wheel of Roles](image)

Figure 54: The Wheel of Roles – Woodford Folk Festival, The Carousel 1996. (Margie Mackay)

**Production**

The term production is intended, not just to describe the event itself as a ‘production,’ but embraces all of the production management and production design elements of composition, and the production period in which the ceremony is in its final stages of preparation. The production period can be a precarious time, as it is at this time that the most intense interactions between the three spheres, and thus intersecting energetic flows, collide. Here chaos and the unexpected are expected as the nearness of the ceremonial event draws closer. Production although the most pedestrian aspect of the praxial technique is vital, without which the ceremony will never be realised, so attention to detail in production requirements are of paramount importance.
Holding Fast

In doing this work there is the need for courage. It is often difficult and frequently emotional work, as a variety of agendas and values from different quarters collide. A process akin to ‘dog-paddling’ through a storm, ‘holding fast’ to the production as it nears its final stages is required of the composer, often the most ‘risky’ as the many vortices whirl with increasing energy. At this point ‘holding fast’ requires that you, as the composer, bear the brunt of any negativity, of any chaotic disruption, to find a solution to whatever arises. In the field, I have had to deal with many unexpected incidents during this fragile time, from death of a significant participant, to delusional behaviours – requiring serious psychiatric assistance – threats of physical and mental harm, threats of last minute walk outs, and significant weather events (once freak winds blew down an entire set on the day of the scheduled ceremony with an expected 10,000 audience members.) There is always an element of risk, and it is often times an unknowable one, which challenges the composer to the quick to overcome. Utilising the divinatory facility of reflexive questioning of self, of one’s own motives, choices and possible need to change can be a painful, humbling and revelling process which can result in uplifting and deeply receptive states being created within the ceremony as integrity in vision and design is clarified.

Exhalation

Having traversed the ceremomial process, there is a need to finish well. Remembering to breathe out what one has inspired. This process of exhalation I often compare with an Olympic gymnast, who after performing death defying leaps and twists mid-air comes to rest, when moves are exactingly executed, on both feet, stable, and as final gesture raises arms in salute to completion.

Inside the Matrix: The Heart of the Matter

At the centre of the Divinatory Matrix and the three interlocking spheres, woven into the negative spaces of the vesica piscis, is a space that I have called The Heart of the Matter (HoM). It is the symbolic centre and intersecting point of the three spheres and pays attention to three ritual dynamics – those of site/space; theme/ narrative and type of rite; meta-narrative/
receptive state. This is a term I developed in teaching ritual, and for me it suggests an essential coming together of intent (spiritual states or alignment states,) in receptive relationship with matter (physical affect) and matters (conceptual themes).

The HoM is the focal intent of the CC and the divinatory process and comes into being when the ‘meta-narrative’ and a suitable ‘theme’ to which the community ‘attaches meaning’ have been ascertained, and are found to be in sympathy with the chosen site.

The Heart of the Matter determines the ‘liturgical design’ that emerges in process, as it is only after entering the matrix that one can begin to divine the HoM and thus all design and designation choices. This pivotal zone has at its heart an experiential essence which emerges only in the doing and which cannot be captured or reproduced. This ‘mysterium’ of The Heart of the Matter attunes us to liminality and holds the potential for communitas. It holds a timeless moment in time, which can be designed for, facilitated, ‘techniqued’ but never assumed, reduce-able or replicable.

Borrowed from the Rider Waite tarot deck, I use The Heart of the Matter as a way of highlighting that amidst the myriad concerns involved in composition, there are pivotal matters that reflect the communities’ concerns and the composer’s concerns, around which the ceremony revolves.

The Heart of the Matter considers three aspects concurrently:

- Theme,
- Meta-narrative, and
- Site.

These three conceptual, aspirational and perceptual spaces are entwined – each informing the other and in turn affecting every stage, process and design choice in making ceremony.

**Theme (issue/ focus/ myth/ narrative)**

**Theme:** the chosen vehicle with which to attain the ceremonial intent. It informs and creates possibility for the meta-narrative to emerge and become an embodied state in participants. The theme is not a form (dance/ story/ food) or a political conviction or ideology, but the story that encapsulates the matter of concern for the community (e.g. bush fire memorial, climate change action, etc.) How the theme is handled requires a delicacy of touch as a heavy-handed approach
may appear as an attempt to proselytize and will possibly have the opposite effect of that intended. If too light a touch, the degree of attachment to the rite may dissipate and it is probable that in both cases the ritual will simply fail. Many forms of aesthetic and poetic representation are then divined as fitting to carry this theme in liturgical and aesthetic designs.

The Meta-narrative (intent and alignment state)

The meta-narrative (MN) is the sought-after affect or alignment state that the composer seeks to achieve within participants, aided by the theme and site, in order to successfully determine and realise the ceremonial intent. The MN determines what the participants experience and embody in order to achieve a ‘realigned state of being,’ even if fleeting. One could consider Cameron’s four alignments states as starting point for discerning the MN, (noting that many other states are possible alongside these). This process of determining the MN requires a fundamental understanding of:

- The affect or atmosphere that needs to be created to convey the theme, and which mode of ritual sensibility is most fitting to this theme,

- The alignment state being designed for. Does it intend transcendence, transformation, reinforcement, catharsis or *communitas* – or simply to transport and create a reflexive space-time?

- Whether the ceremony is primarily a rite of separation, transition, or incorporation?

In ascertaining the Meta-narrative, one can start to divine where liminal moments will have most impact, and how they might be nested in the ceremony’s ‘liturgical’ structure, according to the type of rite and modes of ritual emphasized.

Site

The decision on choice of ‘site’ can, like most ritual making, be the result of a combination of practical, ephemeral, temporal, meteorological and social reasons. Nonetheless the ‘right’ site is essential in order to capture the energetic resonances of emplacement that augment and inform the ceremonial event.

**Site**: how does the chosen site hold the other matters of concern (theme and meta-narrative)? Are they appropriate to the land, and what agencies and entities are there to support the HOM and to affect participants? How will the site ‘work’ for production elements – what permissions are required
for its use? How accessible is the site for all participants? How will the site be impacted by the CC, what mitigating factors need to be addressed to ensure it is safe and kept clean?

In discerning *The Heart of the Matter* an embodied and emplaced framework evolves which informs the composer’s sensibilities and sensitivities. It will greatly assist in divining where emphasis, metaphor and transition are placed liturgically and physically in the CC.

**Realm Three: The Ceremonial Circle**

This is the final realm in which there is a synthesizing of design and production choices made from the nine vectors of the divinatory matrix. It marks the time when all elements are synthesized on site and the ceremonial process of enactment is immanent. The emplaced and enacted Contemporary Ceremony then unfolds – with improvisatory and unexpected elements arising, and after rites of incorporation are complete, the dissolution and deconstruction of ceremonial elements occurs, and completion achieved with exhalation.

Crisis and conflict are often the hallmarks of this realm as the ceremony making process, and the risks inherent in the ritual form, become embodied and shift from the perceptual and conceptual realms and into a relational lived experience. Again, the need to hold fast and breathe is often a very real need for the composer.

Note that the ceremonial circle in the diagram above passes up under over then down and under the knot matrix. This emphasizes how tightly these vectors and matters of concern are bound together in practice, how the ‘unknown’ still looms large in the process, and how much the distillation of divinatory choices made (as echoed in the matrix) compose the final ceremonial event.
Chapter Nine: Closing the Circle – Ritual Critique and the Praxial Technique

The Praxial Technique

The final synthesis of the three realms (three spheres, divinatory matrix, and ceremonial circle) and their compositional matters of concern that together comprise the praxial technique have now been accounted for in detail. It remains to envisage – to ‘image and imagine’ – a three-dimensional paradigmatic model for Contemporary Ceremony composition. This stage of incorporation is the final stage of this PaR and ‘research as ceremony’ process, and as such it is fitting that the image for the praxial technique, as noted elsewhere, is the Celtic knot.

It is a methexical symbol, holding the meaning ‘participation’ at its core with a collective ‘bringing something into being’ in a state of receptive attunement. The Celtic trefoil knot is a symbol from my heritage and, as discussed, has been used in Celtic art, sciences, religion, and philosophy for centuries. As a reflection of my own process of CC divination it is a fitting, although unexpected, metaphor. However, before offering the image of the final praxial technique, I note that Grimes offers ritual scholars six possible “vectors of ritual interpretation” as methodology for ritual criticism. Urging for the development of a “critical interpretive edge” in the study of ritual, he suggests a triangulated approach through formulating a critique based on more than one of the following vectors: “representation, form, production, exegetical analysis, reception and tradition.”

Acknowledging that these ‘multiple vectors’ form the foundational rationale of Grimes’ critical gaze, I suggest that their echoes must necessarily be reflected in the construction of Contemporary Ceremonies, and should be found nested in the proposed technique. It is not the composer’s place, however, to critique in this instance but rather I have offered what appears to me to be the spheres and realms in which these knotted vectors might be situated and included as reflexive tool. They are embedded in the spheres and networks of relations amongst entities represented in and by the praxial technique, and it is intended that their presence contribute to its reflexive and robust nature.

In describing the dynamics of this theory I defer to Don Handelman’s eloquent description of the braided qualities within rituals. He notes:

\[922\] Grimes, The Craft of Ritual Studies. 73.
\[923\] Ibid. 74.
One can envisage some rituals as braids of moebius surfaces that self-enter and emerge further along or deeper into the braid. This kind of movement of the ritual through itself — this deeply interior quality of dynamism — generates the ritual and abjures the shift of one ritual phase into another...

... creating and holding itself together from within itself through its own emerging phenomenal integrity, the very quality that makes a particular ritual the kind of phenomenon that it is. This is the significance of thinking of ritual as self-organizing. The idea of braiding, if it is ever developed, may well offer a very different take on classification through ritual...

With these provocative and encouraging words in mind, I also heed Grimes salutary warning to the theorizer of ritual. He observes:

To theorize ritual one has to levitate, making the whole enterprise a bit grandiose, a little foolish. To theorize ritual is to propose something big hat-in-hand... I have to puff up my chest, bolster courage, and, doing what the ceremony requires, deliver the big question on bended knee ... Proposing either theory or marriage is a scary business, so it is tempting to stray from the plan, forgetting your memorized speeches.

Figure 55: The Praxial Technique for Contemporary Ceremony Composition

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This research project, *Composing Contemporary Ceremony*, which has been articulated over the past three books, is an offering from a ritual-artist musing on the conceptual, perceptual and lived experiences of composition. In completing this ritual’s process, the offering of the praxial technique is a cautious one, for, as with most gifts the offering may be refused. However, a gap in knowledge has been perceived, and this research sets out to examine and boldly contribute to ‘closing the gap.’

**Conclusion**

This PaR project has successfully charted the compositional dynamics and matters of concern evident in Contemporary Ceremonies. In doing so I have developed a grounded theory for composition as described in the praxial technique.

The intention in composing CCs has been to utilise the reflexive potential within ritual modes and ritual alignment processes towards states of reflexivity, whilst the intention in elucidating a technique for their composition has been to make the “know that, know how, and know what” available to others who may wish to compose CCs, and to offer a ritual-artist’s contribution to the field of ritual studies acknowledging that there are few examples interrogating composition from this perspective.

Grounded in ritual scholar Ron Grimes’ contention as to the “inventability” of ritual practices and his challenge to consider a “revised theory of ritual,” this research has proposed a ‘praxial technique’ for CC composition. In “fuzzing” disciplinary boundaries and reconnecting ritual practices to their “vital sources and tributaries” (and disconnecting from them where deemed fitting,) this research has offered an artist’s philosophy and theory for Contemporary Ceremony composition from a trans-disciplinary perspective. Through an emplaced reconsideration of ritual theory, I have clarified and articulated the many processes and paradigms that are part of my praxis, resulting in the proposed praxial technique.

In Book One, I outlined this research project as a whole, described its structure, and introduced the ‘conceived realm’ of CC in which representations of the ‘space of CC’ are mapped in ritual studies and Indigenous studies literature. I developed a fitting research paradigm in the *Indigenist oriented research paradigm*, and examined all research and findings through its relationally framed lens.

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926 "Reinventing Ritual.", 38
927 Refer Introduction: A Praxial Technique
928 Grimes, "Reinventing Ritual." 38.
The conceptual spaces of CC’s were also identified given their compositional emplacement in Australia along with explanation of this ‘space’ for its histories and complex political, ritual and social relationships. I outlined onto-epistemological perspectives on space and relationships, knots and spheres, from Sloterdijk and Latour that assisted in articulating the ‘matters of concern’ in CCs from a western epistemological perspective.

In Book two, I focused on The Heart of the Matter, in delving into the requirements of practice and research. I discussed how CC composition might be perceived, focusing on the ‘know what’ and ‘know that’ of ceremony composition, and charted the PaR process whilst defining CC’s as an ‘art of community’ practice. I also charted the perceptual and affective aspects of composition from a ritual studies perspective and articulated the Practice as Research methodology and recounted each of the case studies identifying the recurrent ‘codings’ and ‘categories of meaning’ that they revealed. I further considered the sensuous and design aspects of CC composition and enactment in this process.

In Book Three I have presented the final image of the complete praxial technique and have summarised my research activities found in the three books of this thesis. I will now turn to future directions for this research.

**Future directions**

I consider that there are a number of possible directions for further enquiry for both the praxial technique and its application in future Contemporary Ceremonies. These areas of enquiry are in both realms of future practice and further academic research.

The most pressing direction for this ritual-artist is to compose further Contemporary Ceremonies, and to continue to assess the praxial technique in the field. I am very fortunate to have two opportunities to do so looming in the near future. As is fitting to the praxial technique, I have been invited to be the Artistic Director for the City of Greater Geelong’s ‘extreme art walk,’ Mountain to Mouth 2018 (M–M), which is described as a “contemporary songline.” This 80-kilometre walk, form the You Yangs mountain range to the mouth of the Barwon River, takes place over two days in regional Victoria, and comprises three sites of ceremony and 11 commissioned art installations along its path. This event, the creative vision of ‘art of community’ luminary, M–M former artistic

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director, and dear friend Meme Macdonald, involves Indigenous Elders, singers and dancers and large numbers of artists, collaborating community members and the general public.

In 2018 the theme is ‘Earth.’ As such it provides me with an opportunity to directly engage with Latour’s provocation: “what might render us sensitive to the new climactic regime,” and to compose three Contemporary Ceremonies along the contemporary songline, while offering artistic direction to the 11 installations in interrogating this quest. Although in its nascent stage, it is an event that is gathering momentum, and the Arts and Culture Department of council have envisioned its continuance into the future in commitment to community, Indigenous culture and the land.

The other significant opportunity, and one that had its pilot-run during the writing of this thesis, is an invitation from the National Celtic Festival to create both opening and closing ceremonies in 2018. This duo of Contemporary Ceremonies, created for and amongst those who share my cultural heritage, enables me to explore Celtic histories, ritual practices, stories, arts, and ongoing cultural practices that I have not yet had the opportunity to fully explore. This is another opportunity to test out the praxial technique, this time within its own cultural setting.

An area for further theoretical research concerns in-depth consideration of how ‘energy’ flows in CCs are activated between the ‘networks of relations’ and ‘spheres of concern’ in the dynamics and vectors of the divinatory matrix. Research into ‘affect theory’ and cognitive psychology (focusing on the senses, memory, kinaesthetic perceptions and interpersonal communications) from a critical theory perspective,930 may offer useful findings for both the aesthetic and the liturgical design of CCs, with a particular focus on what renders us sensitive (to alterity, to communion, to receptivity) and how it does so. Further investigation of Celtic forms (as listed above) and research into their practice may reveal further affective practices and designs that might render us sensitive.

In undertaking this future research, I have been inspired by Grimes’ comments regarding models, he observes:

… dramatistic models are homocentric, so we need something more ‘ecological,’ such that a change in one part ripples through another and finally through the whole system. A web is suggestive of systematic interconnection, reminding us that, although we may be talking

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930 Scholarly works like those of Lauren Berlant – given her specific interest on intimacy and belonging and the ‘fantasy’ of citizenship.
about a ritual, this ritual may embedded in a ritual system, which is embedded in a cultural system, which is embedded in a global system.  

In concert with this observation, and being ever increasingly mindful of the folly of being led by ‘good intentions,’ I intend further scrutiny of non-dramatistic models for CCs. Aware of the symbolic constructions made within the communities with whom I compose CCs, attention and sensitivity must be brought to shifting notions of identity and belonging that arise. One observation that Cohen makes regarding marginalised communities is that the more at risk of rupture, the more ‘tight’ the boundary drawing of belonging becomes for that community. This can often cause conflict and distress. CCs are at risk of contributing to this trend if they do not ‘hold fast’ to ethics of engagement that sees all entities as belonging within the ceremonial circle.

Gilroy suggests an antidote to the combination of amnesia, ignorance, denial, guilt and shame prevalent in postcolonial societies lies in fostering an attitude of “conviviality” – or just living together. Yet, in order to avoid tokenism – I suggest we need to ‘re-meet,’ to listen and learn, and to actively expel our individual and collective discontents. To hear and embrace the laws/ lores of welcome and of belonging, and to live by these, may just transform individuals in unexpected and powerful ways: reimagining our cosmos, our community and our futures together.

Coming full circle, I reflect on research as a ceremony in which Wilson, using a knotted analogy, notes:

While forming all of these relationships, you can understand the responsibility that comes with bringing a new idea into being (or articulating/ making visible an existing one). The new relationship has to respect all of the other relationships around it. Forming and strengthening these connections gives power to and helps the knot between to grow larger and stronger. We must ensure that both sides in the relationship are sharing the power going into these new connections.

I propose that within the convivial bounded formalism and acts of inventive intervention of Contemporary Ceremony that we might be rendered sensitive towards ‘just – and justly – living together.’

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936 Gilroy., 6.
933 Wilson. 79.
Acknowledging Country and Welcome to Country

The Welcome to Country ceremony is one that welcomes foreigners to an Indigenous tribal area and often states the local lore and laws of belonging and being welcome. ‘Welcomes’ can only be performed by traditional owners, and preferably by an elder. In absence of a traditional owner an acknowledgement of the land – its traditional owners and ancestral spirits is considered respectful practice on commencement of large gatherings or meetings.

Blackfella

A colloquial term used amongst First People’s and some ‘whitefellas’ to signify indigeneity. It has a sense of awareness of the gaze of the outsider viewing.

Whitefella

A colloquial term used amongst First People’s and some ‘whitefellas’ to signify non–indigeneity. It is a reciprocal term. Most well-known from the song Blackfella Whitefella by the Wurumpi band.

Categories of meaning

On examination of each of the case studies, recurrent matters of concern arose in composition. The abbreviated grounded theory methods assisted in clarifying these as:

- Invitation
- Consultation
- Site
- Intent
- Cosmos
- Community
- The Artist’s Self
- Theme
- Alignment states
- Divination
- Heart of the Matter
- Inspiration
- Design

- (trifold schema, liturgical, visual, musical etc.):

- Designation
- Production (as process and as genre of organisation)
- Holding fast
- Exhalation

Clew and Clootie

A clew is a thread and clootie is a Scots word for cloth or rag

‘Close the Gap’

This is a slogan adopted by OXFAM to garner support to breach the disparity between Indigenous and non– Indigenous Australian’s health, wealth, and education outcomes.

Contemporary Ceremony (CC)

A site specific and relational ritual-art practice, which in this thesis pertains to my practice over the past 16 years, but could be applied to other contemporary ritual-art practices in the field. The term ceremony takes into account Grimes’ description of mode of ritual sensibility and also embraces its usage in Australian First People’s parlance.

‘Country’

As Australia is a mosaic patchwork of over 350 different language groups, each custodians for their tribal lands. When referring to being ‘on country’ the significance of place is being made, noting whose ‘country’ (whether your own or another’s) you are currently on.

Dadiri

Inner deep listening and quiet awareness – as described in Mirriam Rose Ungmarr’s article of the same name.

Decolonise the self

In seeking to ‘decolonize the self’ I suggest that non-Indigenous Australians have been impacted by their ancestors’ colonial endeavours. Decolonisation from an Indigenous perspective clearly is a vastly different experience – and incommensurable with the reality of white privilege (including access to wealth, health and education). I suggest that for non-Indigenous Australians the bid to ‘decolonize the self’ endeavours to expose one’s colonial conditioning: inherited, trans-generational, systemic and institutional morés that are the product of colonial regimes and still active in the present.

Doing business

In some First Peoples’ circles, when busy with the process of making ceremonies, this term is often used – to signify that ‘special’ business is being attended to.

First Peoples

Indigenous Australian, Aboriginal Australian, Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and First Nations are all terms that are used to describe the generic grouping of Australia’s First Peoples. Currently ‘First Peoples’ is the preferred term.

Indigenist oriented research paradigm (IORP)

This paradigm, drawn from readings in Indigenous Research Methods, describes the ethical and relational worldview that I have adopted in my ritual-art practice and which governs this research enquiry. Foremost amongst the ethical concerns are thinking, speaking, and behaving with: respect, reciprocity, recognition of Indigenous peoples, operating from an anti-colonial perspective, and being aware of my relational accountability to all other entities.

Knowledge keepers

Those who have had traditional knowledges passed down to them – often an elder – who know particular songs or stories, dances, lore, ceremonial business etc.

Kulin Nations

The five Eastern Kulin Nations whose traditional lands encircle Melbourne and the Port Phillip bay area are:

- Woiwurrung
- Boonwurrung
- DjadjaWurrung
- Wadawurrung
- Taungarung

Narangeeta

Senior elder (male) of the Woiwurrung of the Kulin Nations

N’arweet

Senior elder of the Boonwurrung of the Kulin Nations
Practice as Research (PaR)

Nelson uses the term ‘Practice as Research’ (PaR) to describe artistic practice as a legitimate form of knowledge-production within higher research degrees. Within this meta-category, two definitions commonly used are ‘Practice Led Research’, which includes an artistic ‘product’ as an examinable component (commonly amounting to 50% of the total PhD requirement with complimentary exegesis), and ‘Practice Based Research’ which ‘draws from, or is about, practice but which is articulated in traditional word-based forms.’ Whilst this exegesis is a written account, the ‘tone’ is informal and performative.

Praxial Technique

The term ‘praxial’ is borrowed from music studies as a praxial view embraces a “variety of meanings and values evidenced in actual practice in particular cultures.” The praxial view is emplaced, relational, enacted and multifaceted, whilst an attitude of technicity accepts the iterative, the heuristic and the teleological: whilst aware of the ever-changing pulses of life.

Ritual-art

The term ‘Ritual-art’ has been used to emphasise that these are not civic or institutional ceremonies, but ceremonial performances created by artists using ritual modes and theories to compose the works which are called ‘contemporary ceremony’ in this thesis.

Sangoma

Traditional Healer in Southern parts of Africa.

‘Singing up’

To bring something into being – almost an invocation.

Ubuntu

A southern African term that signifies the relational nature of all interactions – often translated as: “I am because you are.”

Uluru Statement – message from the heart

“The Uluru statement was drafted following a three–day summit of more than 300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders and legal experts in May, following a year of consultation. The process was conducted by the Referendum Council, which was funded by the federal government to develop a model for constitutional recognition that had support from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people...”

“The overwhelming message of the summit was a rejection of symbolic constitutional reform in favour of a constitutionally enshrined voice to parliament, which would sit outside the parliamentary structure but provide advice and consultation on issues and legislation affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Uluru statement also proposed establishing a Makarrata commission with a view to establishing a treaty, or treaties, between Indigenous people and Australian governments.”
Appendices

Figure 56: Woman teaching geometry from Euclid’s Elements. Illustration at the beginning of an illuminated manuscript of Euclid’s Elementa, in the translation attributed to Adelard of Bath. Between 1309–1316. British Library: Burney 275 f. 293 r.
Appendix One: My Self

Introductions of another kind.

In accordance with Indigenous protocols, having paid my respects and acknowledged traditional owners, and outlined the major thrust of this thesis, I turn to another important protocol and disclose something of myself: by way of introduction to my genealogy, my ancestry, socio-political locatedness, and lineages of practice. You will throughout this text, perhaps, come to know a little something of me, contextually, and as such those from whom I owe my being and my practice.

I was born on Australian soil, on the lands of the Gadigal peoples of the Eora Nation in Sydney, New South Wales, just over 50 years ago. I am a second generation Australian, primarily of Scots and English ancestry (although the Scots side often likes to omit the English gene pool, however it does concede that my English heritage is from Celtic cultures). As is common to many who come from migrant families in diaspora, I was bought up to be proud of my heritage and of the distant homeland. To dispel any doubt, my father frequently regaled me with a lilting recitation of my grandfather’s adage: ‘If a cat has kittens in a dog’s kennel, they’re nae pups’. I knew little of my English heritage, my mother kept quiet in the face of such rampant nationalism.

When I was nine, the whole family moved from Australia to the ‘homeland,’ to the South West borders of Scotland and the bucolic hills of Dumfriesshire. We lived in a pink sandstone house on a hillside, surrounded by sheep in stone dyked paddocks and 12 acres of forest, looking down on a small, distinctly quaint, village called Moniaive. Here, I was not a Scot at all. I was the Australian, ‘Skippy’, who as an outsider, and culturally I did not fit in. My grandfather’s words rang hollow in the face of border logic. The culture, class structures and etiquettes of lowlands life (not to mention the peculiarities of lowland dialect) demanded fast assimilation and appropriation.

On my return to Australia some six years later, my now broad ‘glottal-stop’ borders accent differentiated me from Australian schoolmates as ‘outsider.’ I learned that identity is fluid and flexible, a performed sense of self that one could mutate and tweak to fit according to purpose, pressures and locale. There was a potential for self-preservation in this mutability, and an uncomfortable appreciation of the erosion of identity that lies at the heart of even the ‘softest’ of racist taunts: an ‘other-ing’. This knowledge became one of many in my toolbox of practice. Shifting borderlines of identity as suited occasion and audience.

My notions about connection to country began to evolve. I was born here, but not of here – born here but from there… connected there, but only historically and ancestrally, born here but, in political terms, in no way Indigenous. My curiosity to reconcile this has in part led to this body of work, and themes of relational responsibility and accountability, of trans-national experience and post-colonial discourse continue to be spheres of influence.

I came to the practice of making ritual performances as a young woman after a year’s long immersion in a Lecoq Method Physical Theatre course, which introduced me to the influential work of director Neil Cameron. I was to collaborate with Neill for over 13 years in the creation of epic performances.

Jacques Lecoq was a French theatre maker who opened a movement based drama school in Paris.
scale, community based, ritualised ‘fire events’ before setting out to explore the medium of ritual and ceremony in my individual artistic practice.

I have discussed Neil Cameron Production’s influence (NCP) elsewhere, however, the fit with ‘ritual performance’ for me was like putting on a well-worn glove. In the large-scale rituals and ceremonies of NCP, I found the totality of theatrical production (from every practical and poetic aspect and concern), focused through the form and content of seasonal rites of passage to be a modality whose multivalent demands I was at home with. They demanded that mind, body and spirit be immediately engaged, and this made sense to my artist self. An artist’s self who had been steeped in ritual processes and performances.

As the grand-daughter of two generations of Methodist ministers on one side of my family, and a father who was both Presbyterian minister and Federal Minister on the other, I was bought up attending churches of many varieties, as well as being privy to the civic theatre of Australian national politics, throughout my childhood. The odd coupling of religious and political minister meant we as a family belonged to a hybrid of social classes. The already always fluid and indeed liminal place of clergy was, in terms of economics, distinctly working class but the societal placing belonged its own category entirely – able to minister to poor and rich alike. The political persona – on the other hand was a very public experience that cast the complete family as having roles of extraordinary privilege.

Thankfully my father was a moderate voice in the Australian Presbyterian Church, and being equally passionate about human rights and civic justice, he gave us kids access to many interfaith and cross-cultural experiences (often ‘dragged along’ to visit mosques, temples, synagogues and all manner of faith based communities). I was accustomed early on to the theatre of ritual, as performed by my father. I saw it as just that, for whilst some of those in the congregation may have seen in him a ‘holy man’, as his youngest daughter I saw the man leaning on the pulpit, clad in dark vestments, clearly as my dad; a dad who could be grumpy and unapproachable, or jovial and loving depending on his focus and mood. I saw my dad playing a role, and for me it was extremely theatrical, for as Grimes notes:

“…sacred people like sacred objects are both ordinary and sacred… not only a divine given but also a human construction”

… we are pretenders to our offices.

The necessity for sincerity in ritual enactments was quickly proven to me to be of secondary importance, for, I remember one day as a child, considering, in a quite philosophical manner, my father’s preaching to be at times hypocritical. He was not the benevolent and thoughtful father his ministerial self belied when he angrily remonstrated against some misdeed of mine. The performed and performative sanctity was not lost on me – but neither were the moments of sincerity – which were personal and internal.

My world has been patterned by the close proximity of performances of religion and of politics. Being symbiotically schooled in both of these theatres of civic responsibility meant that ethics, service, and spirituality were familiar and constant concerns actively debated in my childhood and early adulthood familial environments. Whilst I acknowledge that it is impossible to evaluate exacting

degrees of influence, as a ritual artist committed to cross cultural forms, I suggest that an awareness of one’s own heritage and ancestry, privileges and biases, are the necessary first steps of a reflexive and ethical enquiry.

That the gut and the heart too have their own knowing, and it is always worth listening to one’s self whilst practicing an “immanent critique”\textsuperscript{937}…. and this is what for the very most part navigates my purpose in both life and art. Upholding the role of artist: holding up a mirror, whilst looking through and past and at myself, Janus faced. It’s all any of us can do in these troubling environmentally, technologically, and politically fraught times – that or go completely barking mad.

Judith Butler in her paper ‘Giving an account of Oneself’ charts the development of the notion of the self, from Cartesian declarative through centuries of philosophy, ending with the ethically inflected notion of a self that is ultimately, intimately, relational in being. This understanding is reflected in the Southern African tradition of Ubuntu – a deeply relational ethic which holds we must share to survive; that the collective is central to this – that ‘I am,’ only because of you.\textsuperscript{938} In Indigenous Australian “Ways of Being, Knowing and Doing”\textsuperscript{939} similar themes arise in the practice of Dadirri\textsuperscript{940} (deep listening). Reciprocity is implicit, recognition is given and respect is earned, and these qualities are not reserved for human forms – but for all “modes of existence.”\textsuperscript{941} An awareness of the other, of us together, situated in the cosmos and in relation: as embodied and entangled. The cosmos – perceived in experience and conceived in story, is lived in all manner of relations, revealing where, and with whom, we are in space/s. Foucault considered ‘the self’ from another perspective – an important iteration of the relational in a reflexive awareness of self. He takes from Plato’s writings on Socrates discussion with Ascepuilus the idea of ‘Care of the Self’ – which includes everything that makes one self a ‘better’ self – in knowing of oneself.

For over two thousand years philosophies of Buddhism, and ancient Vedic practices of Hinduism, saw as central the empirical quest for mastery of the self and ultimate ‘enlightenment’ with the conditions of life. The meditative practices of these traditions are housed in a strong philosophical dialectic of inquiry, through a conversational practice within the tacitly inseparable embodied mind. Guided meditations ask us to consider what and where is the ‘me’ that makes ‘I’? Is it my head? My chest…. My leg? If it is my head then what about my leg – is that not me too? If I cut off my leg am I still me? Where does me start and end – in the end am I not composed also of inhalation and exhalation? Made of atoms, that in imperceptible circular orbits compose the perceptual solid matter of myself, and, in breath, inspiration – unites me with others. The very notion of a definable ‘self’ is beset by the pluralities of our constant becoming. As Manning notes we are always more than one…never static beings…never fully able to articulate or apprehend, even to ourselves, an inherent ‘I.’ The questions are circular – and as such circularity is a theme in this thesis. Much of its structure has ended up being so too… Being in relation we are faced with accountability.

\textsuperscript{937} Manning & Massumi
\textsuperscript{910} Refer Glossary
\textsuperscript{939} Martin.
\textsuperscript{940} Ungunnerr.
\textsuperscript{941} Refer: Modes of Existence
Appendix Two: Latour’s Networks and Modernizing Frontiers

Networks (of relationships between entities)\textsuperscript{942}

Latour notes that the Actor–Network Theory (ANT) of the 1980s was developed in response to the seemingly unchallengeable notion of domains of knowledge in the academy.\textsuperscript{943} From his perspective as a social scientist, whose intellectual quest at the time was to “reassemble the social,” challenging the reductive tendency of Modernity was integral to such an endeavour. Latour’s intent was to follow the heterogeneous associations – the relationships between actors or actants (a term he used to extend agency to non–human entities) and their networks – found in scientific and technical pursuits as well as other forms of practice. These relational phenomena he described as “networks of associations.” His approach included variable readings of the term ‘network’ as both infrastructural device – a way of connecting – and the actual ‘substance’ or ‘associative element’ that determines the establishment of networks.\textsuperscript{944}

Latour admits that the conceptual limitations of the Actor Network Theory, in which a tendency towards the “unification of all associations” led inevitably to the reductive, critical thought processes it had endeavoured to escape, prompted him to re–think his theory of ‘networks’ in a way that could allow for a “multiplicity of associations.”\textsuperscript{945} Latour reassures the reader of AIME that the concept has not been jettisoned, but rather re–fashioned for his current inquiry. Keeping the sense of the term inherent he notes: “The term “network” reminds us that no displacement is possible without the establishment of a whole costly and fragile set of connections that has value only provided that it is regularly maintained and that will never be stronger than its weakest link.”\textsuperscript{946}

An Anthropology of the Moderns

Latour’s quest to compose a “common world,” conceived of as heterogeneity reliant upon interdependence,\textsuperscript{947} stems from his endeavour to render humanity equally sensible, as much as sensitive, to the “New Climactic Regime.” This endeavour is prefaced by his intellectual quest to “reset modernity.” Resetting, he explains, is used in the sense of recalling a faulty product, or rebooting a computer program that has become corrupted.\textsuperscript{948} In attempting to diagnose the roots of the current ecological crisis, to ‘re-boot the system,’ Latour detects that a major ‘fault’ lies in the characteristic and

\textsuperscript{942} Martin
\textsuperscript{943} modes vocab
\textsuperscript{944} Latour, An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns., 33.
\textsuperscript{945} Foster., 110.
\textsuperscript{946} Latour, An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns., 61.
\textsuperscript{947} Foster. 109.
reductive processes of Modernity with its preference for discreet and homogenous domains of knowledge.\textsuperscript{949}

Latour contends that the “Moderns” (as he calls them) have never really achieved the Modernity for which they laboured. He views the “Modernizing Front” as the story of a flawed emancipatory mission based upon the grand narrative of the supremacy of ‘Reason’ over ‘Illusion’ in which Modernity, “pushed by time’s arrow,” colonized the planet: “distinguishing in all collectives an archaic past and an emancipated future.”\textsuperscript{950} Somewhat ironically, he notes that in fact ‘the Moderns’ had succumbed to the very illusion they sought to escape, haunted by a backward glancing historicist spectre. Whilst yearning to break from the past, paradoxically, they continued to assess their own progress according to pre-modern, Enlightenment criteria, taking the bifurcation of nature as an absolute.\textsuperscript{951} Caught in this ‘category mistake,’\textsuperscript{952} the Moderns’ fatal flaw lay in their adoption of the wrong paradigm, the wrong narrative or frame. Latour articulates the fetish for reductionism and categorization that is integral to this paradigm, stating:

\[ \text{… a Modern is one who believes that others believe while he knows how to distinguish between what is built and what is true. A Modern is one who does not confuse figurative language with the order of the world. In particular, a Modern is one for whom these distinctions are not relative but absolute. This is why “others” are absolutely other, because they are unaware that their gods have been constructed and because they confuse the order of the world with their ways of speaking.}\textsuperscript{953} \]

He continues in his analysis of the Moderns, noting: “\textit{behind them} lies an archaic past unhappily combining Facts and Values, and \textit{before them} lies a more or less radiant future in which the distinction between Facts and Values will finally be sharp and clear.”\textsuperscript{954} Having categorized and analysed ‘others,’ the Moderns failed to locate and interrogate themselves with a scrutiny similar to that they afforded other cultures, entities, and matters. In failing to perceive or much less inquire into, their own alterity, failing to undertake an in-depth analysis of their own institutions – segregated as they have been into discreet and impenetrable domains of knowledge – Latour suggests that “an anthropology of the Moderns” has been long overdue.\textsuperscript{955}

\textsuperscript{949} Foster. 109-110.
\textsuperscript{950} Latour, SciencesPo, and Medialab.
\textsuperscript{951} ibid.
\textsuperscript{952} ibid. Category mistake: These are made by interpreting a thing, being, idea or event with the wrong ‘interpretive key’ – using the wrong frame of reference. Latour notes: “The expression is valuable in beginning to separate the different modes: it supposes that we question a situation in a key which we soon realize is not the right one and in which it will be pointless to persist.”
\textsuperscript{953} ibid.
\textsuperscript{954} Latour, \textit{An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns}. 8.
\textsuperscript{955} Ibid. 8-10.
### Appendix Three: Onto-epistemological Concerns for Contemporary Ceremony Composition

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<td>Climate change the result of the error of Cartesian dualities. Mind/ matter and natural/society – a category mistake. No “outside” Quest to be rendered sensitive and to compose a common world in the “face of Gaia” – aware of the political, scientific and artistic responses required.</td>
<td>An emplaced practice – in a colonized land. Sensitivity to the zeitgeist. Respectful of Indigenous prior sovereignty, knowledge systems and of ways of doing, being and knowing. Quest to compose a common ceremonial language for composition, that might render us sensitive – reflexive – to alterities, to the planet, and to each other. Grimes: role of ritual and climate change as way of rendering sensitive – values and attitudes.</td>
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<td>Networks of relations between entities “Communism” Relational accountability</td>
<td>A reconceptualization of Dasein from Heidigger’s largely temporal and individualistic model to a spatial and relational consideration of what it is to be in the world.</td>
<td>Embracing the model of spheres and networks in which relationships between entities are upheld, respected and ethically accounted for. Think of Rituals as weblike – “reconceive its interconnectivity and boundaries, because it attends to the relations between rites and their contexts”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflexivity, Responsibility, Respect and Reciprocity</strong></td>
<td>Telling one’s own story – not speaking for others.</td>
<td>Modernizing frontiers: The need to ‘reboot modernity’ to consider selves as object of study – our own alterity, and to consider other realities as equally valid.</td>
<td>Plural ontological perspectives embraced from the perspective of embracing one’s own alterity. Telling one’s own story and offering space, time and resources for others aware of power imbalances and privileges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spiritual Realms</strong></td>
<td>Relations between ancestral and spiritual realms considered as integral to Indigenous relational ontology</td>
<td>Respect for alterity</td>
<td>Grimes: “practiced attentiveness aimed at nurturing a sense of the interdependence of all beings and all things ordinary”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix Four: Grimes’ Five Ritual Knowledge Bases and Examples from Contemporary Ceremony composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factual knowledge</td>
<td>Practical and procedural knowledge – the ‘know how’ of budgets, engaging lighting and sound operators, rehearsal schedules, sourcing materials, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional knowledge</td>
<td>The ‘know what’ of Traditional dance steps, costumes, making special foods, cultural knowledge of protocols, appropriate ceremonial activities, songs, objects, art of community protocols, Indigenous protocols, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambient knowledge</td>
<td>The ‘know how’ of creating an Atmosphere …utilising different artistic and ritual modes…… including the ambience created around the ritual – audience in attendance – learning can happen through immersion in the “affective field of power” that rituals can exude.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexive knowledge</td>
<td>Performing self and contemplating who you are, who you aspire to be – relationally what your responsibilities and networks of associations might be. Learning about self and other in doing ceremony together. The composer examining self and motivations for composition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontological knowing</td>
<td>(Most common in religious ceremonies) – but perhaps in CCs too as questions of ‘What really matters?’ or ‘what is real?’ are given space to arise from a deontological perspective that embraces the plurality of ontological positions. Indigenous participants bring their own ontological understanding to CCs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works</td>
<td>Image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Queen’s Baton Relay</strong> Healesville Commonwealth Games 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Dreaming International Indigenous Arts Festival 2006 – 2011</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Navigators 2006</strong> VCA – DAS Arts collaborative work for Melbourne International Arts Festival 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Walking with Spirits Festival 2007</strong> Beswick Community Northern territory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bangari Kundma’rindma Bundaleer Forest Weekend Festival South Australia 2009</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event/Activity</td>
<td>Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Interfaith Exhibition**  
Whittlesea VIC  
Sikh Installation  
2009 | Artist | Installation artwork created to represent the Sikh faith—a devotional and meditative space. Created in consultation with the Whittlesea Sikh community. Collaboration with Bernard Nagle. |
| **Welcome to Country**  
| **Opening Ceremony**  
for AAMI park stadium  
National Rugby League 2010 | Director | Director of performance for the Opening ceremony for AAMI park stadium—working alongside Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy and Indigenous dancers and musicians. |
| **Garma 2010** | Festival Organising Team | Part of the organizational team of Garma 2010 in remote far north-east Arnhem land on the Gulkula site. A five-day Indigenous cultural festival that showcases Yolngu culture and hold forums on Indigenous matters of concern. Produced by the Yothu Yindi Foundation. Artistic Director: 2010 Rhoda Roberts. |
| **Illuminated by Fire**  
Swan Hill 2010 | Ceremonial Artist – Composer | Ceremony created with the Indigenous and Sikh communities of Swan Hill in rural Victoria. Incorporating dance, fire and traditions from both Sikh and Indigenous ‘mob’ in the creation of a public ceremony of friendship and celebration. Collaboration with Jacob Boehme. |
| **Yallukit Wilam Ngargee**  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Tanderrum 2013**                | Melbourne International Arts Festival  
Produced by Ilbijerri  
Director: Jacob Boehme  
The first year of a Gathering of the 5 Kulin Tribes since colonisation. This included clan members as well as Elders in a Tanderrum – welcome ceremony. It is now an annual event for the opening of the Melbourne International Arts Festival. |
| **Balit Ngulu 2016**              | White Night Festival Opening Ceremony, Melbourne.  
Produced by Ilbijerri  
Director: Jacob Boehme  
Opening ceremony involving the 5 Kulin nations for White Night Festival. |
| **The Gathering of The City**     | Geelong Connected Communities  
Mountain to Mouth 2016  
The midway point of Mountain to Mouth Geelong’s extreme art walk – a ‘contemporary songline.’ This ceremony in the heart of Geelong city welcomed a symbolic canoe and the walkers with a ceremony and dance celebration. |
| **The Gathering 2017**            | National Celtic Festival Portarlington, VIC  
The inaugural “gathering” ceremonies – opening and closing for the National Celtic Festival. |
Appendix Six: Surveys

R ritual Performances Survey - Margie Mackay

Q1 What was the name of the event/s you were involved in (participant or audience)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dreamtime at the G (2010 - 2014)</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yalukit Wilam Ngargee (2008 or 2014)</td>
<td>37.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song of Ourselves (2006)</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longing, Belonging, Land (2008)</td>
<td>54.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet Emergency (2010)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illuminated by Fire (2010)</td>
<td>8.57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 35
Ritual Performances Survey - Margie Mackay

Q3 How would you categorise the event?

Answered: 34  Skipped: 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>performance art</td>
<td>29.41%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participatory art</td>
<td>44.12%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ritual performance</td>
<td>58.82%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ceremony</td>
<td>38.24%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contemporary ceremony</td>
<td>64.71%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 34

Ritual Performances Survey - Margie Mackay

Q5 How effective do you think this event was in achieving its aim?

Answered: 34  Skipped: 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>very effective</td>
<td>76.47%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moderately effective</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mildly effective</td>
<td>2.84%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unsure</td>
<td>2.84%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not effective at all</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 34
Appendix Seven: Australian Contemporaries

**Neil Cameron Productions:** 1991 – 2003 a visual theatre company producing large-scale celebratory events, often in a festival setting

**Lismore Lantern Parade:** 1994– 2017 (https://www.lanternparade.com/lightnup-inc/p/31) a “community based event” produced by LightnUp Inc – “a community based arts organisation” in Lismore, NSW, Australia. The event was in part created “in response to community concerns about antisocial behaviour and economic decline in Lismore’s CBD as a way to bring people back into the often-deserted city centre, in a safe and celebratory environment – lighting the heart of the city.”

**Marrugeku:** 1994– 2017 (https://www.marrugeku.com.au) an Australian contemporary intercultural performance company under the artistic direction of Rachael Swain and Dalisa Pigram. They describe their work as: “Drawing from the lives of people and communities living in remote North-Western Australia” which “shares the memories and traditions of Indigenous culture through contemporary dance theatre.”

**Tracks:** (http://tracksdance.com.au) is described as “…a recognised centre of excellence, … an innovator, developing an Australian dance idiom that values and utilises a diversity of dance practice while remaining fiercely local, producing dynamic, site-specific dance performances that celebrate an important part of Australian culture – the frontier of the Northern Territory.”

**Tanderrum:** (http://ilbijerri.com.au/event/tanderrum/) Tanderrum is a ceremony of greeting and gathering and belonging from the five clans of the Central Kulin Nations of Victoria, Australia. In 2013, the Kulin Nations brought the practice of Tanderrum back to central Melbourne to open the Melbourne International Arts Festival. Ilbijerri Indigenous Theatre Company, who produce Tanderrum, note: “This cross-cultural moment has quickly become an essential and living element of Melbourne Festival, and a Welcome to Country for local and international artists and audience.”

**Mountain to Mouth – Contemporary Songline:** (http://www.mountaintomouth.com.au/what-is-mm-2016/) an 80km extreme arts journey of discovery over two days and 11 stages.
Appendix Eight: My introduction to ‘dowsing.’

My introduction to ‘dowsing’ took place in a hay field in summertime Vermont, USA. Beside a pond where bullfrogs belched and the encroaching forest darkly beckoned (wherein black bears, coyote, deer and moose could be all found), I, unaccustomed to American soil and alien, found myself confounded, unsure of how to tread. How was I supposed to ‘be’ on this country? I didn’t know the behaviours of animals, their significance nor their variety. Plants and landscape were foreign. How could I read the signs and portents, which in my own country came to me as second nature? I had been invited to create a ritual performance with Singing Stones and Maple Corner communities and I had no conception of how to begin; the task ahead seemed onerous, baffling and insurmountable.

Patrick MacManaway, a geomancer of some international re–known, was similarly invited to participate in the creation of the event, and one day handed me a set of what appeared to be sawn off metal clothes hangers (held–double–shooter–old–West–shot–gun–style, Dr MacManaway called them ‘dowsing rods’), and suggested we divine for where the ceremony might take place.

Dr MacManaway directed me to hold the L shaped rods, ‘just so’… to allow pressure to be light enough for their free, swinging movement, and yet firm enough to feel some connection and prevent random, wayward jiggling. For some hours, a group of us wandered back and forth across paddocks, tracing pathways through the long grasses from the impulses fed to us by our suddenly jerking rods which swung and crossed, seemingly at will, hinting at subterranean energies and rhythms.

Part sceptic, part mesmerised, I wandered for hours fixated on the movement of these little metal rods balancing lightly in my grip. Incrementally I began to observe and register subtle internal shifts, as things felt ‘right’ or at times ‘uneasy’… It was seductive and ludic. Sense and reason had little place here. All that was required was to keep a quiet, focused tether to material reality to ensure that the touch was kept ‘just so’ and then to simply let the rods do the rest. If you were to relax your attention and slip into unfocused wandering then any clear gauging of the rod’s movement and where your intention and influence might begin or end would be impossible to trust, the data hard to read. Being in a liminal state – neither here nor there, neither pre-emptive nor inert, simply being in attendance was all that was required – waiting for something to be revealed – to be divined.

956 “Dr. Patrick MacManaway has been in professional practice as a geomancer, geopathic stress & spirit release consultant since 1994, practicing and teaching regularly in both the UK and the USA. A third-generation practitioner of psychic and healing arts, he was trained first by his parents at the Westbank Natural Therapy Centre, Scotland’s first healing centre established in 1959, before taking a degree in medicine from Edinburgh University.”
957 Grimes, Deeply into the Bone: Reinventing Rites of Passage.12.
958 Grimes has stated two models for ritual creativity – the ‘plumber’s model’ and the ‘diviner’. The former model is based on a notion of repair rather than innovation and creation. I have adopted Grimes’ classification of ‘diviner’ to be my own approach. Ibid.12.
Appendix Nine: Dynamics and elements of ritual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grimes’ Terminology for Ritual Dynamics</th>
<th>Brief Description from VIEWER/ SCHOLAR perspective</th>
<th>Praxial Technique Terminology</th>
<th>Praxial Technique: Description from COMPOSER perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ritual activity</td>
<td>Totality of human movements witnessed in and around ritual event.</td>
<td>Ceremonial circle</td>
<td>Process, event and atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritual acts</td>
<td>Prescribed activities for ritual enactment</td>
<td>Ceremonial art–forms</td>
<td>The ‘choreographed’ and composed ritual–art–forms e.g. “Call to ceremony,” “Smoking ceremony,” “procession of Elders” etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary/ core ritual acts</td>
<td>A subset of ritual acts. Essential actions that make the ritual ‘official’</td>
<td>Heart of the Matter influencing Design: “liturgical” or script structure within the 3–fold schema</td>
<td>Essential actions that articulate the ‘Heart of the Matter’ (theme, alignment state, site) as addressed in the Design of each stage of the 3-fold schema – Separation, Transition, and Incorporation – these are often pivotal and liminal moments. e.g. Lighting the ceremonial fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary (tributary) ritual acts</td>
<td>A subset of ritual acts. Supportive of core acts</td>
<td>Design: cues within liturgical/ script structure</td>
<td>e.g. lighting the fire torch that will light the ceremonial fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritual action</td>
<td>Plot of the ritual (liturgical structure) diachronic phased, unfolding trajectory</td>
<td>Design and Production</td>
<td>Music/ sound score and ‘liturgy’ (script) of the CC as well as action, lighting, cues, objects, times and timings etc. Everything held within the running order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritual processes</td>
<td>Synchronic internal workings between elements of ritual</td>
<td>3 fold schema and Composition</td>
<td>Structuring of the elements of ritual (see next table) for CC this includes the process of composition and improvisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritual changes</td>
<td>Diachronic alterations – change in way performed or prescribed</td>
<td>Improvisation</td>
<td>Improvisation and Bricollage: pedestrian and / or formal movements or gestures made in the moment. A ‘synchronicity’ experienced in gathering movements, objects, music, peoples etc. – arising from being in process of divination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritual functions</td>
<td>A ritual’s response to systems – social/ ecological…capacity to make things happen/ prevent them from happening</td>
<td>Heart of the Matter</td>
<td>Theme: basic narrative of ceremony – engages with concerns of participants Meta– narrative: intended alignment state for participants Site: physical/ spatial location – temporal, relational and aesthetic resonances and matters of concern</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The themes around reconciliation, identity, and so on, which we were working with for Dreamtime at the G, for example, were ones that we were clearly working through during the process of this ritual’s creation. It is part of my experience, that if you have a clear focus on your chosen theme and the ceremony’s intent, parallel passages are made in the process of composition, which occur without being contrived. They arise and seem ‘sung up’ during the process and are mostly keenly appropriate to the wider ‘zeitgeist’ surrounding these themes, which we are in many ways wrestling with. Often this process requires some deal of introspection, listening, breathing, and attending as to what might be the next ‘right’ decision or gesture. It seems that the parallel spaces of liminal time and intent, can also be parallel spaces of theme and process.
Appendix Ten: Why a Praxial Technique and Research Methods

- To chart my praxis of composition,
- To articulate the multiplicity of concerns and skills required in the field – uncharted territory,
- To propose a meta–model of this schema,
- To articulate Contemporary Ceremony as an intercultural artistic practice wherein ‘ritual’ is the mode of expression.
- To support the increase of composing of Contemporary Ceremonies as a practice that extends beyond my own work.
- To contribute ‘new knowledge’ to the field of ritual studies.

Methods

Case Studies: The artist’s (speculatively pragmatic) voice in auto–ethnographic writings of past events, in drawings that have served as thought processes, and in the media accessible via hyperlinks in the text and footnotes. The contemplation and analysis of the case studies for commonalities and divergences in their structural (conceptual), ontological (perceptual) and artistic (poetic – lived) boundaries, was the starting point for …

Performative text and Storytelling: The Self as artist and researcher is necessarily embedded as subject in the auto–ethnographic accounts. Being both researcher and the researched requires a flexibility and reflexivity of gaze that is also cognisant of the ritual-artist’s tacit knowledge, acquired over years of embodied practice and that is an ongoing process. The ‘multi–vocality’ of self as narrator, as storyteller and as analyst could be seen as “providing representational space … for the plural and sometimes contradictory narrative voices located within the researcher.”

Tacit, Anecdotal and Oral Knowledge: Through conducting interviews and collecting data from questionnaires targeted at participants and collaborators in Contemporary Ceremonies, an inter–subjective analysis of the practice /role of artist and researcher has revealed unexpected insights in considering the proposed praxial technique. Data and knowledge collected from sources other than the self, once reflexively analysed, enabled the adding of new knowledge to the field of an inter–subjective nature.

Tacit knowledge as embedded and embodied in the divination of contemporary ritual performance, ongoing practice and primary source materials: personal journals, documents, production notes, emails, festival ephemera, videos, photographic images and writings.

Examination of the “other/s” (participant/ witness /collaborators) sensate, embodied, emotional, ‘spiritual’ engagement (from video footage and photographic stills, emails, letters and other documentation) in a series of contemporary ceremonies (archive).

Semi structured interviews with four experts in the field – ranging from ritual practitioners to collaborators in contemporary ceremonies.

Responses to questionnaires: 36 questionnaires received from audience members/ participants at one or all three of the contemporary ceremonies.

**Drawing as method of knowing and analysis:** working drawings revealing my material thinking and the process of the grounded theory unfolding.

**Videos of case studies:** Documentation of case studies in visual and written form as support material for reflection: film – offering the key visual / aural moments in filmic device; writing – elucidating compositional concerns from anecdotal and personal challenges inherent in composition.
Appendix Eleven: Ethics and Values

Essential Principles and Qualities for an IORP

The following principles reflect Wilson’s concerns for ethical research as found in Research is Ceremony. They include:

1. Respect for all forms of life, aware of our interconnectedness, and building relationships that are respectful – including the relationships between my research and myself, and other research participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spirit and Integrity</strong></td>
<td>This is an overarching value that binds all of the other 5 into a coherent whole. It has two components: The first is about the continuity between past, current and future generations. The second is about behaviour that maintains the coherence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and cultures. Any behaviour that diminishes any of the five following values could not be described as having integrity. ‘Researchers are perceived as owing an obligation to the spirit and integrity of communities not just to individuals. It is clear that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will look to see if what is proposed is consistent with their values… Community decision making based on shared values is an implicit part of spirit and integrity.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reciprocity</strong></td>
<td>In an Indigenous context reciprocity can be seen as a ‘mutual obligation to achieve an equitable distribution of resources, responsibility and capacity to achieve social cohesion and survival’. Reciprocity extends to land, animals and other aspects of the natural world. Contemporary examples may also include: redistribution of income, sharing housing etc. ‘In the research context, reciprocity implies inclusion and means recognising partners’ contributions, and ensuring that research outcomes include equitable benefits of value to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or individuals’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respect</strong></td>
<td>Both of individuals (particularly Elders) and culture, being mindful of verbal and non-verbal communication. ‘Within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures respect is reinforced by and in turn strengthens dignity. A respectful relationship induces trust and cooperation. Strong culture is a personal and collective framework built on respect and trust that promotes dignity and recognition. ‘Respectful research relationships acknowledge and affirm the right of people to have different values, norms and aspirations. Those involved in research enterprise should not be blind to difference’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equality</strong></td>
<td>One of the values expressed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and cultures is the equal value of people. One of the ways this is reflected is a commitment to distributive fairness and justice. Equality affirms Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ right to be different… ‘Research should seek to advance the elimination of inequalities… to treat people less favourably is not only unethical, but also discriminatory’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Survival and Protection</strong></td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples continue to act to protect their cultures and identity from erosion by colonisation and marginalisation. A particular feature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and these efforts has been the importance of a collective identity. This collective bond reflects and draws strength from the values base of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and cultures. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples do not intend to forego the distinctiveness of their cultures.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>Includes those to country, kinship bonds, caring for others and the maintenance of harmony and balance within and between the physical and spiritual realms. A key responsibility is to do no harm, including avoiding having an adverse impact on others’ abilities to comply with their responsibilities… one person’s responsibilities may be shared with others so that they will also be held accountable…’ ‘Ethical research occurs when harmony between the sets of responsibilities is established, participants are protected, trust is maintained and accountability is clear’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

951 Australia.
961 Wilson.
2. Behave in a way that helps to build respectful relationships, mindful of methods, in a spirit of kindness, honesty and compassion.

3. Intend that the research brings benefits to the Indigenous community, and that the topic is one that is understood by the community, and be honest to their experiences.

4. Any theories should be grounded in Indigenous epistemologies, received Elders’ and community approvals.

5. A focus on process– oriented research methods, in which the researcher reflexively situates themselves in the research process.

6. Responsibility for the research in all of its stages lies with the researcher, in which relational accountability and respect are paramount concerns.
Appendix Twelve: Design and Dynamics in Quiet Emergency

The wishing tree of pledges: This tree was a small apple tree, which alive and in its pot, was to be donated and planted outside the Lwandle Migrant Cape Town Museum for the community to nurture and hopefully benefit from. We asked the audience to participate in writing a wish or a pledge for the future of South Africa on a strip of white cotton cloth and to go and tie this to a rope on the tree. Over the week of performances, the rope became more thickly endowed with ‘wishes,’ and at the very last event these wishes were taken to the fire (an old red weber BBQ) and ceremonially burnt – releasing all the wishes into the ether.

Call to Ceremony – Yizani (Zulu for Come! Singing the community together: separation from the quotidian.) PJ was one of the slightly older women who were part of the youth art group, a generous and fun-loving performer PJ became the Lwandle groups’ leader figure and she helped corral any wandering kids and muster up any flagging spirits. She was the first to sing out Yizani in the show and each time she did so with heart and conviction. Yizani was then heard bellowed from the windows and ledges of surrounding skyscrapers until the whole cast had been called out from the peripheries of Thibault Square in to a big circle to begin the ceremony.

Impepo burning – circling the audience. (Separation) Encouraging pledges for change written tree. Whilst Pj was calling the ceremony together, Gilbert, Anthea and I had lit a small fire in the bright red BBQ, and started to remove coals so that we could carry around bunches of impepo to burn in small swinging incensors to ‘smoke’ or ‘cleanse’ the audience.

Cape Town Stories: The community of performers from Lwandle were keen to put their own stories into context. Coming from one of the most marginalized communities in Cape Town, they grasped at the opportunity to have their say – their way – in such a grand city location. Gilbert, Anthea and I had decided to divide the group by gender, as we understood that culturally – as in many areas in Indigenous Australia – the genders are often not involved in each other’s ritual business.

The Cape Town story from Lwandle – of sisterhood. The women and girls created a piece of visual story-telling and dance using strong gestures and ideas of inclusion and exclusion, of deceit and forgiveness, of violence and resilience. Once the women understood that my role was simply to assist in bringing their ideas into physical form, they took to the task with gusto and created a piece which ended with glorious cameo solos surrounded by Busby Berkley-esque dancers with palm tree fronds (from garden refuse).
The Cape Town story from Lwandle Boys and Men: a story of initiation – the abuse of violence and the strength in brotherhood. This section was a ritualised response to the violence of ‘life in the township’ and was explored by Gilbert and the men. Gilbert enjoyed working with the men and boys – but was unsure of how to abstract from their material a dramatic depiction that was not simply mimetic and wordy. In a bid to remove words, we gave the men bamboo poles and asked them to improvise with them. I had a thought and suddenly said to Gilbert – “Initiation!” He replied – “Aah, Yes!” and rushed off to work with the men. The created a scene using these sticks as cages, symbolic mountains to climb, fighting sticks, and ways to help achieve balance each other.

The dance of the invisible, the voiceless and the marginalized: (Transition) Gilbert worked with IKapa Dance Company and choreographed a dance which evoked some of the fragility and tenuousness of existence he had witnessed in Ons Plek and amongst homeless people. He used Arvo Partes Fratres as his score and created a meditative and beautiful evocation of this spirit. Towards the end of the dance gestures started to slip in to the fabric of the dance until all the dancers were running around gesticulating – signing the poem we had found in sign language … concurrently, whilst this dance unfolded…

The bad reds; The pilgrimage from greed and avarice to humility and apology – the bad reds group. Just before the iKapa group started dancing a group of performers who had been lolling on the white chairs up on the red cloth covered stage, descended the steps to street level and began a unison movement sequence in their gaudy mix n match red costumes, gestures which conjured up visions of avarice and greed of vanity and pride were slowly repeated as they travelled in a wide berth around the periphery of the performance area, while IKapa held centre stage. The dancers who were all in white, counterpointed their slow lazy pace. As the group continued their way around the periphery, their movements started to shift and change – they started movements that invoked sorrow and repentance, apology and shame, humility and modesty. As they changed slowly, chameleon like, they slowly divested themselves of articles of red clothing, leaving a trail of red cloth in their wake.

Liminal moments

1. CHAOS – disaster – the interruption of the air raid siren – everyone. As iKapa’s movements got more frenetic with sign language, other performers joined in, they too gestured the same language – until the whole cast was rushing madly to and fro on the plaza. At a certain point the
slow drawl of a hand wound air raid siren started to slowly then with increasing speed &
shrilness to wail. At the height of this a marine hand smoke was set off, the siren ceased and
the whole cast dropped to the ground – stillness.

2. Annihilation – this stillness lasted for about ten seconds but then in came the street sweepers
making way for the Opera singer and the hadedah. The Opera singer was up on a bamboo
frame held between a group of gumboot dancers, and as they slowly walked on with her she
started to sing a well–known Anthem for Africa. The hadedah puppet flew around her and past
the bodies of the performers – as she passed each person sat and then rose to standing. At the
end of her song the men who had been carrying the opera singer whistled loudly and ran to the
thick red perimeter ropes that we had placed along the audience line. Then the rest of the cast
split into three teams of rope pullers and just like Australian Life savers threaded the rope
forward hands over heads to enable the front rope bearer to fasten to the white chairs of power
up on the blood red stage and connect it to them. The teams then started to tug and topple the
chairs – as they did so a change in dynamic occurred and when the last chair fell, the whole
cast started – Bollywood style to begin dancing their celebration song. Anthea jumped on a red
ice–cream wagon with bike a yelled, “I Scream,” I scream” Mtubizi had a spray pack of water on
his back and doused audience and performers in the heat. And soon the audience and
everyone was up and dancing too. The event always ended with most of the audience
participating and a warm sense of spirit.

3. The Opera singer and the hadedah – singing back spirit – and laughter

4. The red ropes toppling of the fat cat's big white chairs.

5. The funky dance – with water spray and gumboot dancers and sweepers and ice–cream bike
and brass band and eventually the whole audience – dancing and singing…

Parallel passages in space are not only true of the liminal spaces or moments within ritual, but of
much of the rite itself. Rites of separation contain acts and passages of separation (cleansing,
etc.) and the same can be identified in the incorporation phase. Regarding liminality, I would go
further to suggest that what is a liminal moment for one individual may not be shared by another,
and thus the whole ceremony must hold within its ‘dynamics’ the capacity for a multiplicity of
shifts. The liminal moment that can achieve communitas (without anti-structure) is speculative
and generative of states of reflexivity – arising as a moment of ‘grace.’ The ‘space’ assists the rite
as a whole by echoing in parallel the content that is being enacted.
Appendix Thirteen: My Sister's Tarot cards

As a teenager, I often secreted away my big sister's tarot cards and attempted to give myself readings. The mysterious images intrigued me, and the process of questioning was alluring. I took it all very seriously, yet only skimmed through the Rider Waite tarot book in my haste to reveal a reading. I soon became adept at laying out the 'Celtic cross' divination spread, although I still needed to refer to the book for definitions of my auguries. What interests me now in this technique of augury, is whether the process of divination it describes has anything to offer, even by way of insightful metaphor. The process could be described thus:

Firstly, you identify the 'querent' (questioner) and their query: who (community) and what (theme). Next you ask the querent to select a 'significator' card – this card signifies the querent in the reading. In signifying the self, the tarot process' starting place is a potentially reflexive act and can be a revealing one. After some shuffling and cutting – often done thrice in – the first card in the reading is drawn by the diviner and placed over the significator, hiding it. This card indicates the prevailing influences on the person or matter at hand – it 'covers' the significator – the problem to be solved – what is the general issue at hand.

Next with card two comes that which 'crosses' the querent – the obstacles affecting the situation – challenges and dislocation – this card is placed horizontally over the first. Next a card is placed above the significator – 'that which crowns you' – the querent's aims and aspirations – conscious influences and that which is hoped for. Then card four is placed below, that which is fundamental to you, and the unconscious – the basis of the matter at hand. To the left the diviner places the fifth card – 'that which is behind you' – the influences that are moving out of your field. To the right card six indicates – 'That which is before you' – those influences you will be moving into. In essence, the 'cross' cards signify the 'Heart of the Matter' – the central issues and its prevailing challenges.

Card seven, placed to the right by itself shows the querent's position or attitude. Card eight, placed above seven, is the circle of environment – house, friends, world, job etc. Card nine, above eight, holds 'hopes and fears' while card ten, placed above nine, shows that which is to come: the final result which is brought about by the influences shown by the other cards in the divination. Together they might offer insights into the querent's internal alignment and perception of obstacles regarding the query.

Whilst the Rider Waite Tarot to some may be more parlour game than divinatory tool, its questions (if considered openly with the question of the ceremony's realisation as core question,) are all appropriate during the process of divining CC's in that it reveals a reflexive and relational questioning of one's place in time, of different spaces (both mental and actual) and one's perceptions and understandings towards situations. I have not used a tarot spread in diving CCs, but note that the questioning process is helpful to reconsider – as a divinatory method – throughout the process of composition. Most helpful for me, was the term 'Heart of the Matter' as a way of interpreting the core of the divinatory matrix.
Appendix Fourteen: Full Circle

Spheres as metaphorical bounding entities – ‘containing spaces’ for ideas – have been integral to the development of this theory. Sloterdijk’s notion of the self as a ‘bubble’ is a rich spherical metaphor, for when we meet the ‘bubble’ of ‘an other,’ our spheres of interest merge in relationship, and our individual boundaries are, in part, breeched.

Where these two spheres of self and other intersect, in rituals of meeting, a third space is formed and suddenly my/your/our world has changed. If we translate this third space as a two-dimensional diagram it is the vesica piscis – the fish bladder shape that recurs in ‘sacred geometry’ in many cultures (today subsumed by capitalist forces). It is also the emblem of the Presbyterian Church, which I have seen embossed on hymnbooks since childhood, and it is the shape of the shield of the Kulin Nations’ warriors on whose land I have made most of the case studies.

However, in meeting, if these two spheres are considered contextually, they are never the sole vectors of relations. Given the inescapable reality of an embodied and necessarily emplaced being, we must admit a third circle – the circle of the space in which we meet – the earth – cosmos – space.

So, If we are to consider three rather than two circles (reflecting the Lefebvorean triadic dialectic of the production of space: conceived, perceived, and lived)… and extend this reading to the relational ritual-art of ‘making receptive states of reflexivity’ … an entry point into the matrix can come from only one vantage point: the artist’s self.

If ‘reflexivity’ is a CC’s intent – Before creating work with ‘an other,’ surely we must be aware of what reflexivity is, in order to create it – to know self and to ‘take care of oneself,’ understanding our situatedness, our ontological paradigms, our prejudices and privileges and ancestral belongings.

The three spheres are the starting point for the ceremonial event. Without self, other and space – there is no possibility of reflexivity. There is no possibility of the space of ritual. The three spheres shown overlapping manifest not one but three vesica piscis – a ‘hot-spot’ – the place where self meets other, self meets cosmos, other meets cosmos, in all these different networks of relations. The triadic vesica piscis is an efflorescent form, indicating fundamental building blocks – a base blueprint – a yantra – for the dynamic system emerging.

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Author/s: Mackay, Margie

Title: Composing contemporary ceremony

Date: 2017

Persistent Link: http://hdl.handle.net/11343/215920

File Description: Composing Contemporary Ceremony

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