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Title: *Encountering Aboriginal Cultural Expressions: Peace, Proximity, Obligation, Responsibility*

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**Encountering Aboriginal Cultural Expressions:  
Peace, Proximity, Obligation, Responsibility**

**By**

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Abstract

Tourism as a venture is in the business of exchange. It has become clear that the tourist is not a passive observer of spectacle, but rather an active agent in change. The interaction between tourism operator and tourist is a complex exchange of meanings, interpretations and sensibilities. Australian Aboriginal tourism ventures offer the opportunity for a rich exchange between Aboriginal Australians and participants in tourism encounters. The quality of this exchange is a matter of how the participants come to view the content, and how this might lead towards a new view, experience, or perhaps even a shifted mode of being; an ontological shift. What is at stake in any exchange is the perpetuation of a Eurocentric gaze; to view an Aboriginal cultural expression as merely aesthetic appearance; as a spectacle (Debord, 1994). This is problematic because gazing at Aboriginal cultural expressions as a spectacle simplifies, reduces and pays no respect to the complexities of Indigenous Knowledge (IK), that is the non-text based relational systems of knowledge that many Aboriginal people regard as constituting those expressions. Therefore, the gaze delegitimises non phonetic-alphabetic forms of writing knowledge and as such it is logocentric. Aboriginal cultural expressions such as traditional dancing or singing are 'giving', mediating signification of Indigenous Knowledge through corporeal movement and/or oral transmission, it is up to observers to 'give' in return. The nature of this mutual and equitable exchange is in no way understood, yet urgently begs engagement for cultural destruction to cease.

[This document explores how the intersection between tourism and Indigenous culture/production can be better mediated. Is it in the first contact or inquiry a tourist might make into a travelling to an experience? Is the shift need to be directive from the moment that 'travelling' is on the tourists' mind. Galliford's \(2010\) transversality speaks of this, of an experience occurring well before the actual interaction and well after. This may take the form of preliminary reading, viewing documentaries, signification of marketing material, travel agents rhetoric, and cultural competence training. Tourists should have a basic understanding that this particular experience requires an 'abandoning', so that abandoning would benefit from starting well before entering the interaction. This approach will allow the positioning of Songlines and Nomad's Palace project and show how these projects might contribute to an approach for working against the dominant logic.](#)

### 1.2 Purpose of the Study

Franca Tamasiri (2010, p. 4) notes through key authors "the socially organised and systematised tourist gaze (Urry, 1990) has long been an accepted approach to analyse tourist practices".

According to this approach, tourists sometimes emerge as rather intimidating voyeurs (Hoskins, 2002) and at other times as consumers delivered to the visions of marketers, compliantly following the images conjured up for them in travel packages. Her research investigates how experiences might be seen outside this realm. So too, the aim of this literature review is to investigate alternative frameworks that might rupture the condition of the tourist gaze. However, this review is not claiming specific application methods, as specific methods must be an immersed collaboration with each locality where the possibility of tourism might be on the agenda. Instead, this is a preliminary discussion that gives voice to alternative frameworks from which to begin to conceptualise how views of cultural expression may be mobilized, beyond the realm of a Eurocentric gaze as aesthetic appearance, as a 'spectacle' (Debord, 1994).

The term 'tourism' refers here to attendance at theatre performances, cultural centres, festivals, community ventures and similar events. The type of cultural expressions discussed are broadly defined in common discourse as 'Aboriginal dance', 'songlines' and other Indigenous mediations of knowledge transmission that occur at a public level, available to view by any spectator (Indigenous or non-Indigenous). This research will not address: such expressions understood at the private level, that is, where 'inside' knowledge may be protected; structural analysis of any of these expressions; or what is named in common discourse as 'hybrid' or 'contemporary Western-style cultural expressions' (however the latter certainly represents an important broadened scope to fit future studies).

The main recognition is that the current state of cultural interaction in tourist experiences has not reached its potential in terms of both host and participant understanding the benefits of a 'mutual experience'. This is recognised as a lack of emphasis placed on what knowledge constructions are de-linked, or abandoned, in order for a participant to fully engage in an experience.

The practical implications of this study offer a chance to better understand how a participant might be dealt with explicitly during an experience, and how they might be mediated in a website (if deemed by community as an appropriate mediation tool).

At the core of this review is a respect for Indigenous Knowledge; be it through stories, customary law, connection to country, ceremony, dance, the performing arts and the visual arts. The recognition is that this knowledge is a domain of complexity, and much care is needed to avoid repeating past mistakes of inducting this knowledge into a domain of spectacle. This review seeks to present a theoretical framing from which future studies, on how encountering dance as a domain of complexity, might be directive of a shift in the visiting participants' consciousness away from a Eurocentric gaze. How might these Aboriginal cultural expressions be re-framed as 'decolonial projects' (Mignolo, 2011b, p. 4) that delink from the discourse invention of the Other?

How might a mutual experience of betweenness with the Other not define, describe, be a process of myth construction for a national identity, or be a process of difference building?

In tourist studies there is a clear body of momentum moving closer to alternative experiences that are said to transform. However, since it is well known that tourism derived from a product of the Eurocentric market economy, decolonising tourism would seem to require that the very construct of tourism itself be contested, notably its underpinning connection to modernity, colonialism and globalization, and not least its associated logocentric typologies. The current dominant business structures of Aboriginal tourism (Ruhanen, Whitford, & McLennan, 2013; Schmiechen, 2006) appear to fall very short of any such acknowledgement.

## 2. Framework and Literature Review

### 2.1 Emphasising the significance of Aboriginal Cultural Expressions

Aboriginal cultural expressions come in many forms, but by emphasising the significance of Aboriginal dance as an example, one can get a grasp of the complex relational patterns that are also inherent in most other cultural expressions. The pre-colonial significance of *dance* is still present, in fragments, in many parts of Aboriginal culture. For example, having spent several years working with Aboriginal singing groups in Northern Australia, Patrick McClosky (pers comm: May 2013) relays the significance which the Warumungo men from Boroloolo place on their word '*pujjali*' in the context of what it means to them today. McClosky says:

*'pujjali' is all these things combined: the preparing to dance, the preparation of costumes, the gathering of materials, the hours of painting the ochre totemic or dreaming symbols on bodies, the webs of relationships between initiated men, dancers and singers, the songs delivered by the singers and the direction they gave to dancers, the teaching of dances to children, the invocation of ancestral forces, the teaching and embodying of ancestral narratives and the public presentation of dances".*

This explanation of '*pujjali*' is one amongst many that Aboriginal people from numerous other language groups may use to describe dance, yet this example exposes a complexity well beyond the commonly understood English definition of *dance*. The Encyclopedia Britannica (Mackrell, 2013) defines dance as "movement of the body in a rhythmic way, usually to music and within a given space, for the purpose of expressing an idea or emotion, releasing energy, or simply taking delight in the movement itself". Aboriginal dance is much more than this. It is a complex domain of social relations, both within and between different language groups.

Furthermore, there is a dialectic relationship between what remains and what has been lost since colonisation. '*Pujjali*', as with all Aboriginal dance, is situated within a larger narrative of

colonialism. This narrative is part of a discourse wherein 'the Other' is designated and objectified. As such it constitutes and projects an identity from which subaltern selves are formed. This projection originates from a 'zero point' geography of Western Europe, which Walter Mignolo (2011a, p. 80) points out, is a 'geography of reason'. It is the geography from which European imperial rationality was exported across the world. Underpinning this research is recognition of the need to reject hegemonic structures deriving from any singular 'zero point'. Mignolo (2011a, p. 80) describes this as a way of "knowing and sensing (feeling) that do not conform to the epistemology and aesthesis of the zero point". The zero point "is the site of observation from which the epistemic colonial differences are mapped out" (Mignolo, 2011a, p. 80). From there, other ways of knowing, are "cast behind in time and/or in the order of myth, legend, folklore, local knowledge" (Mignolo, 2011a, p. 80). The implications of thinking from this zero point when viewing Aboriginal dance, is that it merely serves as a reference point from which an observer can see a comparative image to their own constructed image of the 'modern' and civilised self.

Positioned in the borders "where imperial Western epistemology meets with its global differences", Mignolo (2011a, p. 208) points out, it is insufficient to 'compare' differences in viewing the Other. Comparative methodology "epitomises the hubris of the zero point [and is a] method to ensure that the observer remains uncontaminated, and guarantees that Western epistemology remains on top, controlling all other forms of knowledge" (Mignolo, 2011a, p. 208). The line of reasoning from which this research aligns, is that in any engagement with Aboriginal cultural expressions, an 'imparative method' (Mignolo, 2011a, p. 208) should be employed. This means making the effort to learn from the Other and adopting "the attitude of allowing our own convictions to be fecundated by insight of the Other" (Panniker cited in Mignolo, 2011a, p. 208). Following from Panniker, Mignolo (Mignolo, 2011a, p. 208) asserts, "decolonial thinking, then, is one type of imparative practice that aims to delink from coloniality of knowledge and being (that is, from imperial/colonial subjections of subjectivities through knowledge) and to engage in border decolonial thinking". It is important to make explicit that, having Aboriginal heritage, yet having a mainstream modern urban upbringing, the author recognizes that this preliminary research is an intellectual review of the oppression of colonialism on Aboriginal cultural expressions. Future studies require an extended engagement and dialogue with those who can provide their experiential voice.

## **2.2 Australia: Significance of living knowledge**

A common characterisation of Aboriginal dance, as articulated by Aboriginal people, is stated by Paul Carter in *A Road to Botany Bay* (1987, p. 27) as told to him by a Walbiri Elder of the Northern Territory. She describes a corporeal re-enactment of country as a form of writing, of spatial story telling that acts as a channel of communication with a repository of narrative meaning. As Carter (1987, p. 346) states, "the character of this unwritten, enacted spatial history is ably generalized

by the French cultural theorists Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their book *Anti-Oedipe (Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia)*:

*...[pre-colonial Indigenous] forms of expression are oral, vocal, but not because they lack a system of writing: a dance on the earth, a pattern on a wall, a design on a body are systems of writing, spatial writing [un geo-graphisme], a geography. These forms of expression are oral precisely because they possess a system of writing, which is independent of the voice, which neither aligns itself with the voice nor is subordinated to it, but which is linked with it, coordinated within a radiating, multi-dimensional structure. (And it is necessary to say that the opposite is true of linear writing; it is aligning itself with the voice that writing both supplants the voice and introduces a fictional voice". (translation by: Carter, 1987, p. 346)*

Extrapolating from the Walbiri Elder, Carter's understanding of her re-enactment of country was that writing, dancing or simply making tracks symbolised not the physical country, but the enactment of a historical space. Re-enacting symbolically was the figure of intention that brought the country into focus in the first place. It is commonly accepted among Aboriginal cultures that the pathways, also known as 'songlines', provide the multi-dimensional structure of spatial writing, which acts to link social relations and obligations across thousands of kilometres. In Mary Graham's (2007, p. 6) view, (a Kumbumerri Aboriginal Elder and respected academic writer), 'songlines' are connected with historical spatial meaning by placing much emphasis on the Law of Place:

*"Aboriginal Australia's perspective on the nature of existence is that the Sacred Dreaming is the system of creation that brings the whole of existence into being and ensures its continuance. The Dreaming, with the Ancestral Beings as intermediaries, brings into being Place, and, along with the emergence of Place, comes the Law for that Place. Law and Place come into the world at the same time. Identity, obligation, kinship and marriage rules, or the Law of Relationships now comes into being".*

Graham's description of Dreaming, bringing Place into being, is one narrative of the pre-colonial significance of Aboriginal dance, or 'songlines', that act as a collective memory; a pedagogy for transferring knowledge of spatio-historico narrative meaning. Graham illustrates an important point that begs emphasis: different Aboriginal groups remained connected to different places, producing their own geo and body politics of knowledge. Graham (2007, p. 6) offers a succinct conclusion for her conception of modes of knowledge production and social praxis: "multiple places = multiple dreamings = multiple laws = multiple logics = multiple truths". This is a clear distinction from the zero point rationality as outlined previously. The zero point rationality acts to legitimise and impose ego and body politics of knowledge ungrounded from local histories, geographies and bodies. Complex relations to 'country', such as outlined by Graham, remain in fragments today, inescapably linked as they are to colonialism.



Many Aboriginal groups retain a connection with songlines prior to 1788 and, despite the dispossession from colonialism, can speak of a history of intergenerational knowledge transfer (Parsons, 2002, p. 3). Norman Sheehan (pers comm: 2013) speaks of a function of Aboriginal dance passed down for many generations in terms of the articulation of meaningful social relationships. He suggests that when watching “authentic Aboriginal Dance, one can see the dancers’ clan groups and skin groups, and read a story of pathways; of relation and connection between those groups”. Since ‘country’ is knowledge, these songlines, tied to what Graham (2007, p. 6) calls ‘custodial ethics’, contribute to social conditions that place emphasis on reciprocal relations between human and land in which the world reveals “to us and to itself...there is nothing to discover”. The interconnected symbolic spatial and collective memory outlined above forms part of Indigenous Knowledge (IK). Sheehan (2003, p. 320) sums up IK saying, “Indigenous Knowledge is an observation-learning which follows the ways of knowledge in the world. As we live and grow and move through the world we meet knowledge as it too moves about in the world”. He reflects further to add, “IK is a layered understanding that includes divergent streams of knowledge related within natural systems. IK generally is ontological because inquiry is situated within an intelligent and intelligible world of natural systems, replete with relational patterns for being in the world” (Sheehan, 2011, p. 68). Aboriginal dance as ‘songlines’ is a mediator of exchange in communicating relational patterns for being in the world. Colonialism continues to obstruct transmission of these Indigenous Knowledges - both through physical displacement and an internalised imperial colonisation of imaginations of the colonised. Therefore, Aboriginal dance forms part of a larger narrative, which Deborah Rose (cited in: Sheehan, 2003) might describe as a “wounded space...where ethics of respect and care are necessary to negotiate the social rupture that is the reality of Indigenous issues in Australia”.

Take, for instance, *bunggul*, performed at the famous annual Aboriginal Garma festival on Yolngu country. Franca Tamisari (cited in: Phipps, 2009, p. 40) relays the festival’s co-founder Galarrwuy Yunupingu’s expressions of concern in negotiating this space: “*The bunggul is the space in which Yolngu epistemological difference is made visible to visitors from outside, while still not being easily understood at anything but a relatively superficial level of meaning*”. Tamisari (cited in: Phipps, 2009, p. 40) emphasises her interpretation of the significance of *bunggal* when she writes:

*“Dancing in any Yolngu [bunggul] ceremony ... (is) an event in which knowledge associated with country is transferred, judged, asserted, and negotiated, and through which obligations are fulfilled by offering help to, and demonstrating love and compassion towards one’s relatives. In this way Yolngu Law is seen to be immutable yet changing, maintained yet renewed, replicated yet reinterpreted ... ‘Yolngu dance because they hold the Law’.*”

Extrapolating from Tamisari, Phipps (2009, p. 40) writes, “In this respect Garma is a deep pedagogical exercise, particularly for *Balanda* (the Yolngu term for dominant culture Australians) who in most cases have no or very little knowledge of the Yolngu world”. *Bunggal* Performance

as a pedagogical exercise is an example of an event where the enunciation of respect and care attempts to nurture the experience of Aboriginal dance at deeper levels. This could be related to an imparative method of fostering *Balanda* to allow their convictions to be fecundated by insight of the other.

The picture being framed here is that many Aboriginal people do not produce knowledge in a western linear fashion—that is, in terms of something material that exists out there, that is free for anyone who can access it. As one Aboriginal Elder once cautioned, “We cannot carry around a basket picking up knowledge as we go and putting it in our basket, in the same way white fellas imagine is possible” (pers comm: Costello, 2013). For many Aboriginal people, knowledge is linked to responsibility and obligation. Different levels of knowledge are made available to people as they demonstrate the ability to be able to ‘handle’ the knowledge with responsibility and respect. Nunuccal dancer, Matthew Burns (pers comm: 2013) explains that when he and his peers dance for tourists, they are conveying a certain level of knowledge, just so much that the tourist can handle and no more. He points out that the deeper layers of knowledge are still embedded in the dance: the mapping of place, the kinship roles and responsibilities of people, the relationships with other beings and so on. He adds that “these deeper levels are still taught to the children as they become ready, and to community members as they meet their obligations, and the deeper layers exist as part of the preparation of the dance as much as in the presentation itself. But the knowledge at these levels is not available for a tourist observing through a Eurocentric gaze because they have not earned that degree of responsibility or obligation”.

### *3 Literature Review*

#### **3.1 Encountering colonialism, modernity and tourism**

Thus far, this review has framed Aboriginal dance as a domain of complexity. If Aboriginal dance is the mediator of reciprocal exchange connected to IK, with a pedagogical obligation attached, then tourism is the mediator on top of this that has the alluring power to either engage with Aboriginal dance as has been outlined above, or reduce it to a Eurocentric gaze; as a spectacle. Chris Healy (2008, p. 175) writes “tourism is the modern medium of neocolonial relations between first and third worlds.” Furthermore he notes, “Aboriginal cultural tourism is a broad designation that allows consideration of a field stretching from ventures in which Indigenous involvement is perhaps purely nominal, glossy exploitative and culturally destructive to instances in which complete Indigenous control may be productively linked to cultural and economic autonomy” (Healy, 2008, p. 175). But what is in this ‘neocolonial’ transaction? How has a tourism venture either created or destroyed what is of most importance to secure Aboriginal communities’ modes of existence? Under whose terms are these modes of existence created and are they colonially constructed terms?

Since it is well known that tourism derived from a product of the Eurocentric market economy, decolonizing tourism would seem to require that the very construct of tourism itself would need to be transformed in order to change the terms of the conversation under which Aboriginal cultural expressions are experienced. From this perspective, Healy's culturally destructive tourism replaces all 'symbolic use value' with 'tourist sign value', which is only useful within the dominant narrative. That is, as Freya Higgins-Desbiolles describes, the 'consumer commodity-culture' (2010a, p. 5). Another perspective Higgins-Desbiolles (2010b, p. 194) highlights is that the construct of tourism creates an industry of economic resilience in a globalised market, providing jobs to communities. Still, he continues, others say it is all being over thought, and that tourism constructs are simply for fun and fulfillment. It is obvious these advocates have no wish to contest flaws underpinning tourism's connection to modernity, colonialism and globalisation, not least its associated logocentric typologies. However, there is a need to bring to light efforts that do strive to contest such models.

As has been well argued in the literature, (Giddens, 1990; Harvey, 1990) modernity is associated with progress and change, a linear path to a social development in which the 'pre-modern' is swept aside for the progress of the march of modernity. One of its master narratives has been to create an anthropocentric distinction between the modern and traditional; to see 'the Other' (see Orientalism: Said, 1991) as less 'human'. As has been summarized above, this is in stark contrast to Aboriginal ways of being, in which, albeit in varying and fragmented ways since colonisation, little emphasis is placed on modernity's narratives of progress, development, ownership and nature as resource (Graham, 2007). Even if one takes the position that the master narratives of modernity are now in chaos, what remains in modernity's Eurocentric gaze of Aboriginal culture is an essentialist view in which tourism, as did anthropology, played a large role in reducing 'the Other' to forms and schemas of the primitive spectacle, which continues to resonate in tourist attractions today (Meethan, 2001). Healy (2008, p. 176) offers a succinct conclusion:

*"Australia, a place constituted for Europe in bestselling accounts of voyages, inaugurated a project of 'bringing a region and its peoples under the gaze of Europe...etching new networks of power...enacting coastal journeys which explored metaphors of new horizons. This truism is instantly persuasive in the world of cultural analysis of tourism that have grappled with the stories and images of tourism in their attention to sites and signs, spectacle and semiotics, glancing gazes, and their photographic and written records".*

Aboriginality today is regarded by Healy (2008) (as with Taylor, 1984; Willis, 1993) as perceived as an important component of marketing Australia's national identity to a global tourist market seeking spectacles of differentiation. The prognosis that seems often alluded to, by key Australian cultural theorists concerned with postmodernity such as Taylor (1984, p. 159), is that Australia is actually a fragmented nation of many unresolved and contested differences with no common vision other than adhering to a global capitalist paradigm. David Harvey (1990, p. 63) argues that

in this model “the production of culture has become integrated into commodity production generally”. Where culture is commodity—Aboriginal ‘culture’ as ‘commodity’, is often all that is valued.

The face, and the dancing by Aboriginal people, become signs of a timeless and universal origin point from which Anglo-Australians might find a grounding. Andrew Lattas (1992, p. 56) describes that in this discourse, “art and science link up to create for the Australian nation a sense of depth greater than the perceived shallow time of 200 years. He continues, “it is not only the nation but also the self which is being psychically extended upon and added to here through the myth that Aboriginal culture provides an underlying memory.” Eurocentric tourism could be charged as using Aboriginal cultures as a place to seek and recover what has been lost of their own groundedness. Healy (2008, p. 177) illustrates the point well:

*“Tell us what you are really like’, say the white institutions, ‘Dance for us once more and sing your songs. We will say to the world that this too is our Australian heritage: this is the nation which can stand proud amongst others because it has a timeless history in the Aboriginal peoples”.*

Meethan (2001, p. 14) argues however, that it is these very “uncritical assumptions that lie behind this form of theorizing that have hindered a fuller understanding of the cultural process involved in the development of the symbolic economy of tourism”. He argues that “what we see emerging are new forms of culture that are either ‘hybrid’ or perhaps more accurately, the result of synthesizing diverse elements...and that cultures need to be conceptualized as dynamic systems, not as collections of self-contained essential characterizations” (Meethan, 2001, p. 15). Meethan is alluding to a long-standing debate of *proper* authenticity versus in-authenticity (Attwood & Arnold, 1992; Russell, 2001). A 2013 Aboriginal tourism demand report, (Ruhanen et al., 2013, p. 96) alludes to the same ‘problem’ stating: “tourism has the capacity to induce cultural change and commercialization which can ultimately diminish the importance of meanings and destroy the authenticity of culture.”

In one sense, Meethan’s argument agrees with the post-colonial discourse in seeking to unravel master narratives of self-contained essential characterisations. However, there is a moment of caution that might be implanted here, in that Meethan assumes Indigenous cultures are satisfied with the “symbolic economy of tourism” which ultimately colludes with the dominant narrative of developing and growing tourism. Hybrid culture or not, the question remains, to what extent is the Aboriginal tourism experience disconnecting with master narratives of colonialism; disconnecting from reservoirs of imperial rationality and seeking knowledge, dialogue and praxis with specific agency that decolonises the industry. Decolonial ‘tourism’, or a decolonial intercultural experience, would not forget the past wrongdoings of colonialism by remaining in the ‘development of cultural tourism’ for the now.

Healy's (2008, p. 172) conception of tourism offers an extension and clarification of Meethan's 'synthesizing diverse elements' theory touched on above. He states, "a proper history of Aboriginal Tourism would refuse the moment in Time in Australia when white feet hit the sand and Aborigines 'disappear'. Such a history would be concerned to continue the project Paul Carter began in *The Road to Botany Bay*, of thinking of place-making in this country as involving indigenous and non-indigenous people from the beginning". In short Healy (2008, p. 172) is saying that for many Aboriginal people, "involvement in tourism offers a way to remain connected to, or to reconnect to country...remembering seems to be a crucial part of enacting this: remembering stories, language, cosmological relationships, skills, family, plants, animals, and so on." What is inescapably indivisible with this memory is a memory of dispossession from colonialism. Therefore, memory for Aboriginal people could be described as closer to how critic Homi Bhabha describes Frantz Fanon's evocation of memory in *Black Skin, White Masks*: "Never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful remembering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present" (cited in: Healy, 2008, p. 201).

Non-indigenous people share this memory too; as the colonised reflect on the dispossession they have caused. The point is this should not be a static memory of retrospection, rather a matter of concern, of making sense, of re-writing narratives of the past for the sake of alternative futures. By invoking this memory there is an inevitable abandoning and a becoming - a 'becoming-minor' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In order to do this, it would require one to transcend Western modes of logocentric knowledge production, such as modern tourism's privilege of the visual, leading to a closer proximity to other forms of knowledge production, such as dance and song.

This theoretical framing places the following literature review, concerning the current state of Aboriginal tourism, in an elevated domain of complexity.

#### *4 Literature Review*

##### **4.1 Business of Aboriginal tourism**

There have been two studies of note since 2010 (James, 2010; Ruhanen et al., 2013) that can be regarded as investigating 'practical demands of doing the business of Aboriginal tourism'. Joc Schmiechen (in: James, 2010) highlights a gap area:

*"A common problem...is that the research is often repetitive with a strong emphasis on evaluating visitor expectations and reactions to Aboriginal tourism and most critically, few of the findings from these works are readily available or applied to the practical demands of doing the business of tourism...utilising a gap analysis approach, this research aimed to map demand side characteristics alongside the voices, experiences and insights of Indigenous tourism operators".*

This literature review does not aim to fill Schmeichan's identified gap. Rather, it aims to address the other area on which he comments, when he highlights that "visitor expectations and

reactions to Aboriginal tourism are often repetitive” (in: James, 2010). The aim is to contribute to the discourse on tourist experiences in a non-repetitive manner by positioning it within a decolonial discourse.

The CRC report by James (2010) resides solidly within a dominant colonial narrative. The report’s rhetoric follows the 2005-2008 Tourism Research Agenda (Schmiechen, 2006), in which the 2010 Audit tool was conceptualised, by using words such as ‘niche market’ (James, 2010, p. 13), and ‘branding’ (James, 2010, p. 29). This type of rhetoric sits well within a consumer-commodity culture role, as is highlighted by the objective of the study:

*“To develop a ‘story audit tool’ to be used in the field with indigenous people and other key informants to collect local stories for use in tourism enterprises and marketing; to establish a prototype IP agreement for commercial tourism for the use of images, film and written accounts of local Indigenous stories in tourism; To critically review the Story Audi Tool as applied in the pilot projects at Groote Eylandt and Hermannsburg” (James, 2010, p. ix)*

The section ‘Future Actions’ discusses a generalised need to understand IK, particularly for those in product development and marketing departments. Also called for is an understanding of ‘protection measures’, along with a ‘plain language paper’ for informing IK owners of tourism operations (James, 2010, p. 37). What is least recognised is that Indigenous Knowledge is a domain of complexity incapable of being reduced to plain (western) language, nor should it be. It is also a domain of several layers, in which only the most superficial would be available for this kind of public sharing.

The Indigenous Tourism Report, by Ruhanen et al. (2013) attempts to quantify IK and experience. Its explicit aim was to fill the gap Schmeichan had mentioned in his 2010 paper:

*“The aim of this research was to undertake a gap analysis of the demand for, and supply of, Indigenous tourism in Australia. The objective of the study was to address clear and acknowledged research gaps in identifying, understanding and developing strategies for responding to the discrepancies between demand for, and supply of, Indigenous tourism products in Australia” (Ruhanen et al., 2013, p. 2).*

A further addition to the study was the inclusion of a stream of research specifically focused on the Chinese inbound visitor market and their demand for Indigenous tourism in Australia. The practical side of doing business is concerned with empirical data gathering to calculate supply and demand. They deal with quantities; they do little or nothing to question the quality, or political economy in which they’re operating.

As was briefly encountered above Hollinshead (2007, p. 165) describes how Meethan’s book *Tourism in Global Society (2001)*: “produced the most valuable work which challenged much of the received thinking in Tourism Studies about the role of tourism in the production of ‘society’

and 'space,' and of the marketplace 'consumption' of those phenomena". Regardless of the book's flaws, it seems these studies are far from informing frontline supply and demand business studies.

## *5 Literature Review*

### **5.1 Current 'shifts' in Aboriginal tourism**

The critique of the discursive use of binaries has been a dominant topic of tourist studies for many years now. Hollinshead (2007), Olsen (2001) and Meethan (2001) all discuss binaries such as 'authentic/in-authentic'. Meethan (2001, p. 163) contends "too much of the conventional thinking in Tourism Studies is based upon shallow typologies, structured around stark 'binary' or 'dualistic' classifications — particularly over those matters of *authenticity* (2001, p. 112) that tourism/travel are found to significantly and iniquitously rub up against". The Indigenous Tourism Report (Ruhanen et al., 2013, p. 96) also identifies 'authenticity' very briefly yet places a significance on it stating that, "while there is no clear solution to reaching consensus on what constitutes authenticity, arguably there will be consensus that authenticity still matters". However, "authenticity" matters only in the eyes of a Eurocentric gaze. Thinking of tourism in relation to authenticity places the discourse in a mode of forgetting, rather than remembering the relational impacts of colonialism. So too, the hybrid nature that Meethan (2001) appears to describe in the 'development of cultural tourism' for the now, is a non-recognition of the destructive nature that the tourism industry has on cultures who may not wish to be inducted into the commodity market paradigm; or a colonial narrative, in any shape or form. However, if they do, it should be on their own terms, where knowledge and memory take on a different form. Logocentric schemas of knowledge production only deriving from textual narratives might be replaced with an understanding and responsibility to recognise Indigenous forms of knowledge production, such as the language held in dance and song (Healy, 2008, p. 201).

What is described here is far from a Eurocentric understanding of Aboriginal cultural expressions, in which the value of the cultural expression has been transformed in order to be viewed as a consumer-commodity. Parsons (2002) examines this colonial construction in relation to the corroboree while providing an interpretation of the rise of Indigenous Australian Cultural Tourism. He offers a dense anecdotal and chronological account since colonisation. Although Parsons acknowledges repeatedly the problem with tourism's historical quest for experiencing the Other, he plays in favour of the economic benefits gained from cultural tourism, and appears to downplay the fundamental flaw of Aboriginal tourism; that the currency that Indigenous people are often required to adhere to is a capitalist system of commodification, of leisure consumption. Parsons offers no alternatives for transcending this and moving Aboriginal cultural tourism away from a consumer-commodity paradigm.

This is problematic for two reasons; the first (as it has been outlined above) is that it perpetuates a Eurocentric objectification of the Other; the second, when this is coupled with Aboriginal Eco-tourism, is that it acts to quench the tourist's guilt for traveling unsustainably. Now, the tourist can both consume culture and do well for the environment.

In Australia, we live in a capitalist system with the enticements of consumerism that have built in mechanisms in order to persuade people that the system is natural (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010a, p. 6). Higgins-Desbiolles (2010a, p. 7) contends "the major ideological underpinning of consumerism in tourism is the notion of the right to travel". She continues, 'the privileged assert their rights, while the...marginalised serve and host them on their holidays in order to eke out a living, try to pay off the debts fostered by capitalist globalization" (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010a, p. 7). Bauman (1993), (in: Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010a, p. 7) claims the tourists "pay for their freedom; the right to disregard native concerns and feelings, the right to spin their own web of meanings...the world is the tourist's oyster ... to be lived pleasurably - and thus given meaning". All the while, the eco-tourist "consumes as an expression of individuality and freedom for the environment in treading lightly." Wheeler (1993, p. 126) exposes this deception, stating (in: Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010a, p. 7) "the reality globally is a capitalist society with inbuilt growth dynamics and a 'get it while you can' grab mentality, but the rhetoric of alternative tourism and sustainability including 'slow, steady, selfless, cozy, back to nature, sustainable, eco-friendly, controlled small-scale solution to tourism problems' continues to be deployed to deceive". Higgins (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010a, p. 2) asserts that "the proponents who advocate sustainable tourism as the answer to the problems of mass tourism are right: Sustainable tourism does provide the answer. Unfortunately it is the wrong question. Rather than effectively addressing the complexities of tourism impact, what it is actually achieving is the considerably easier task of answering the question - 'how best can we cope with the criticism of tourism impact?' - as opposed to the impact itself". Tamisari (2010, p. 3) has explored how this condition of the industry allows people to "believe in the worth and ethical correctness of sustainable tourism initiatives [but] deters people from asking epistemological questions about the dynamics of the tourist encounter and the consequent possibility of really comprehending the Other".

Higgins-Desbiolles (2010a, p. 8) advocates "a post-development stance that eschews the universalising tendencies of current economic discourse and instead advocates local agency, diverse options and alternatives to development." Decolonial thinker Arturo Escobar (2001, p. 155) (cited in: Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010a, p. 8), is against the 'erasure of place' that occurs with capitalist globalisation and suggests instead that we make "visible practices of cultural and ecological difference which could serve as the basis of alternatives". Heather Zeppel (2007) asserts Aboriginal ecotourism is frequently positioned within such alternatives worldwide and Indigenous peoples are becoming more involved with ecotourism. Higgins-Desbiolles extends on the work of Zeppel, and argues that a more suitable title for indigenous ecotourism is



“indigenous cultural–ecological tourism” (2009, p. 147) because “it would seem that, by definition, indigenous peoples that are integrally related to their environments and indigenous ontologies do not separate the cultural from the ecological as Western ontologies do...this analysis suggests that rather than hold indigenous people to non-indigenous standards of ‘ecological stewardship’, a better practice would be to engage with them on their own terms and learn what indigenous cultural–ecological tourism can teach”.

## *6 Literature Review*

### **6.1 Current ‘shifts’ in Aboriginal tourism: Case Study: Camp Coorong**

Higgins spent much time at Camp Coorong and suggests that this is a successful model of cultural-ecological tourism. So successful, and this is the point about tourism, that

*“The Ngarrindjeri who founded Camp Coorong as a place for significant and meaningful cross-cultural contact perceive the label ‘tourism’ as demeaning to their vision and their dedicated work. Similarly, the visitors who have been interviewed and observed at Camp Coorong think that their visits are more than just ‘tourism’ and their relationships with their Ngarrindjeri hosts have real meaning that is not often associated with the contemporary tourism encounter”* (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009, p. 151).

Camp Coorong, in South Australia, was founded by the Ngarrindjeri in 1985 as a cultural camp for Aboriginal youth but quickly became a facility aimed at changing “race relations between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians” (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009, p. 149). Furthermore Higgins-Desbiolles suggests the camp owners agree that indigenous ontologies are needed to lead non-indigenous people to a more balanced way of living. She invites us to understand a more complete picture of Camp Coorong’s commitment to transforming the consciousness of visitors in her thesis (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006).

## *7 Literature Review*

### **7.1 ‘Shifts’ in Aboriginal tourism discourse: towards new praxis**

Higgins-Desbiolles provides an overview of some examples of tourism being harnessed for justice in the global community. She argues “in an increasingly interdependent world, tourists of conscience should turn their holidays to efforts in fostering justice and poverty alleviation in the places they visit” (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010b, p. 207).

Higgins-Desbiolles (2010b, p. 195) says “there is clearly a relation between tourism and injustice”. She goes on to outline forms in which “the phenomenon of justice tourism works at

numerous levels to foster transformations that are intended to spark changes for a more just and sustainable global order". If we posit Escobar's contentions against the 'erasure of place' into the picture here, using Higgins-Desbiolles' 'justice tourism' the result would be locally contextualised 'visible practices of cultural and ecological difference which could serve as the basis of alternatives'. This, as Higgins-Desbiolles (2010b) points out, is a conscious effort to upset power equations.

Clearly, there is a growing momentum of critical theory moving further away from the consumer-commodity paradigm that perpetuates a Eurocentric objectification of the Other. Additionally, the Culture-Ideology of consumerism and the right to travel without having an obligation to offer anything in return other than money, is under serious critique from far-left analysts of tourist studies. There is a clear body of momentum moving closer to alternative experiences that transform complex relations and meanings exchanged between tourist and host.

Any specific framework of transformation however, would be incorrect to seek. Garth Lean (2012) outlines a transformative traveler as unable to possess a singular typology, or definition. Rather, "as theorists such as Bauman (2000) Clifford (1997) and Urry (2000) illustrate, individuals, societies and cultures are continually traveling". That is, one is constantly either before, during, and after any particular physical travel experience. Lean argues that no particular 'mobility' should be privileged, rather a focus should be placed upon an 'interconnected mobile system' rather than physical travel and tourism (Lean, 2012). It is important to note however, that this transformation flows with the narrative of modernity, seeking progress towards a destination, which Lean invariably addresses in his paper. Further to Lean, Mark Galliford (2010, p. 238) extends the idea to use the word transversality as "a process that is relational and continuous in that transversals are always in a state of 'happening', and always in process with other variables". In redefining the tourist, Pons (2003, p. 58) (cited in: Galliford, 2010) states:

*"By reconfiguring the tourist experience as a relational effect generated by a network of heterogeneous interacting geographical [one must also add political, social, cultural, judicial] processes, the teleological, solitary and all powerful notion of tourist has to be replaced by an open, uncertain, nomadic subject who does not possess an absolute control of his/her destiny".*

Galliford (2012) contends, "transversality" is also important for showing how the term 'transformation', significant in some tourist articles, is actually misleading. Similar to the popular concept of hybridity, associated with the 'Third Space' in postcolonial discourse examined by Bhabha (1994), transformation signifies that something definite has taken place; something has changed from one state to another. "This denotes fixity of terms, of a determinate subject that has changed into another determinate subject and of a process that has taken place and therefore ceased. In general, post-structural theory critiques such definitive determinations, particularly

those concerning individual and national identities, and posits identity and meaning as constantly contested and negotiated sites of engagement” (Galliford, 2010, p. 239).

### **7.1 'Shifts' in Aboriginal tourism discourse: towards new praxis; contentions of export tourism**

Striving for 'transversality' might be one thing when a participant traverses within community immersion experiences such as Camp Coorong (mentioned above), but what about when the mediation of a tourist encounter is mobile, that is, it travels to the tourist? In economic discourse the former might be coined 'import tourism' and the latter 'export tourism'. Here, if we think of the importance of 'place' in Indigenous philosophies, the former might be described as the tourist arriving in a situated Place; 'country' with its own spatio-historical narratives that give meaning to the experience in that place. The latter might be described as 'Place' traveling to the tourist. Obviously the latter exhibits problematic contentions when we consider the potential contradictions in encountering 'situatedness of knowledge' when not actually speaking within 'country'. Therefore, the praxis of a 'tourist' experience should be treated in respect of the differences between these two modes, particularly in relation to position of speech. 'Who' is an 'export' tourist experience actually representing? If it is respect, responsibility, obligation and care linked with a particular 'place' then how might a visual, oral, or some other sensory experience, mediate these qualities when it is exported? A worst case scenario is that complex and dynamic qualities are reduced to fragmented and packaged sign values that can be easily consumed by an audience. Worse still is if these sign values themselves are 'marketed' as representative of a totalised 'Aboriginal culture'. We need only look back at numerous times this has been the case in the search for an exportable, all-encompassing Aboriginal national identity which can be linked to an underlying yearning for groundedness in modern Australian society—part of a larger post-modern anthropocentric search for that ultimate 'discovery' of what it is to be 'man'.

Lattas goes on to critique this as an interiority of Aboriginal consciousness, which constructs a narrative of 'whites' as the true sufferers, (in: Attwood & Arnold, 1992, p. 57). This externalises in conferences, festivals and cultural centres (in: Attwood & Arnold, 1992). In these spaces, resides the alienated and wounded audience yearning to mirror/interiorise an Aboriginal consciousness. This is where Aboriginal dance plays the role of producer for a consuming audience who offer nothing other than their gaze in return.

It is here, for example in front of audiences such as the millions watching the Sydney 2000 Olympics, where the celebrations represent a massive investment of capital by the state in the symbolic production of a (corporate) cultural identity for its citizens. From the perspective of

Pierre Bourdieu (1991) the celebrations can be seen as part of the production of symbolic capital, where the state sought to profit from its investment in the creation and circulation of a culture of nationalism (Lattas, 1997, p. 223).

This is what is at stake when the mediation travels; when ties to obligation situated in 'place' are potentially, if not definitely, severed. The tourist gaze almost becomes hyper-legitimated when observing cultural experiences at national fairs, expos and festivals etc. Urry (1990, p. 152) refers to these spaces as places where "themed environments [are] based on national stereotypes...demonstrated...in packaging aspects of that country's tradition and heritage". In these spaces, tourists have little obligation to reflect on the realities of the origins of these cultural expressions. They have no need to travel worldwide and instead can gaze upon different imported signs conveniently gathered in one location (Urry, 1990). These environments are quite literally a smorgasboard for tourists to gaze upon the signs of different cultures with no obligation to give in return. These situations only serve advancing cultural disintegration into commodified fragments of consumable de-contextualised signs. They are the shopping malls of the Eurocentric gaze as aesthetic appearance, as a spectacle.

Avoiding the above mistakes, especially in relation to 'exporting' experiences, is clearly a project in critical decolonial/design thinking. First, in how one might 'design' a mediating tool; what it looks like, how it functions, what signs are deployed to curb mis-representation, and second, which is indivisible from the former, how one might posit processes in the tool which enable the experience to go on designing—ontologically.

The act of mediating works most effectively when socioculturally situated; as a positive and culturally constructive semiotic deployment via careful and deliberate use of sign functions. The same principles however, can be applied to either an import or export decolonial tourist experience; rejecting dominant Western linear modes of knowing by exposing historical master narratives of colonialism. Put simply, creating alternative histories as options creates sediments for alternative futures. This is a task of culturally constructive (rather than culturally destructive) semiotic and symbolic deployments that trigger a questioning of these master narratives.

Understanding this potential requires further probing into how an exported mediation might be designed to transcend its obvious appearance as 'image'. For all its intents and purposes as a visual communication tool, it should function as a tool for rupturing and restructuring power relations between the coloniser and colonised. The message should not be mistakenly found in the medium, nor the image. The social relations are the topic and message. The relation is the opening of a conversation—a 'thinking-in-action'; a concern with 'our' relationship with the Other. The exported mediation should transcend a 'staged spectacle'. As Oliver Vodeb (2010) advocates, the social relations should appear as the message, and not be over-awed by the

medium and image employed. The message may be a pedagogical exercise in exposing what requires being un-learned in order to learn. Through trigger events, the exported mediation might bring attention to critically thinking about what 'we' are, what 'we' desire, what 'we' value, and how this may compromise a viable future in 'our' localities. A powerful design event, as a decolonial project, would define and engage in problems at an ontological level. It would bring into existence an awareness of, and a drive towards a collective re-thinking of unsustainable Eurocentric ways-of-being in one's own locality.

## *8 Literature Review*

### **8.1 Towards a new praxis**

This preliminary discussion gives voice to alternative frameworks from which to begin to conceptualise how views of cultural expression may be mobilized, beyond the realm of a Eurocentric gaze as aesthetic appearance, as a 'spectacle'.

If one is to delink from a Eurocentric gaze, there is chance to identify what responsibilities and obligations secure existences in Aboriginal culture.

Through the spatial and time universal narratives of modernity, an isolation of bodily perceptions has led to modern society producing a social production of distance that has weakened the pressure of moral responsibility and obligation (Bauman, 1989, p. 199). There has been a weakening of the social body which might be reactivated if one is to make "the effort at learning from the other and the attitude of allowing our own convictions to be fecundated by insight of the other" (Panniker, 1980) (cited in: Mignolo, 2011a, p. 208). Decolonial thinking, when encountering dance, is one type of imperative method that aims to delink from coloniality of knowledge and being (that is, from imperial/colonial subjections of subjectivities through knowledge) and to engage in border decolonial thinking" (Mignolo, 2011a, p. 208).

Tamisari et al. (2010, p. 8) proposes a "performative approach [that] paves the way for a methodological shift in tourism studies that proposes a critique of anthropologists' hermeneutic approaches to guest-host roles, gaze, intentions, expectations and authenticity, to the detriment of a more complex logic that subtly but continuously tests the sensuality of the sensory body of the self through the sensuality of the sensory body of the Other". Her performative approach can otherwise be known as certain fluidness and openness with the Other, which would indicate a shift in proximity.

### **8.2 Proximity**

A new kind of experience inside border thinking is not a simple search for a 'plain English' explanation of IK as per a recent business demand study of Aboriginal tourism mentioned above. It requires a much deeper engagement. It must be experienced without Bauman's 'social

production of difference'. There should be an entirely new significance of Aboriginal cultural expressions outside the realm of the spectacle. This new signification would not be to find facts, but rather to be concerned and alerted, to other modes of existence. It is a proximity aligned with 'care', which does not seek a forward direction, or progress that might be found in IK. It must entirely correct this perception of looking for that, which can justify the primitive modes that might save the modern and take them to new progress. It would resist Enlightenment's repressed proximity to the Other. (Fry, 2012, pp. 41-42)

In articulating this proximity, Levinas' conceptions of face-to-face relations are useful. Past the impossible assumption of difference in viewing the Other, there is recognition that the self no longer participates in the being of the Other, rather derives its being from itself. This is a recognition of the infinity in the Other, as in the self. (Levinas, 1996, p. 166)

In this, there are separate infinities, not a matter of integration of the sum parts to form a whole, so, not a negation or a totalisation. Truth emerges in this mode of 'exteriority', where the presence of the Other does not contradict the self. Instead, it endows the self with a responsible freedom. Responsible, because the separated being can only derive meaning from the way the face of the other is revealed to the self. Signification is derived from the signs in which the Other reveals in speaking about the world. The Other is the signifier – which thematises the world.

So, being-for-the-other, seeking, perceiving, signifying not difference, rather common goodness, is then being responsible to the other. Alternatively, as one might pinpoint in modern hegemonic reason, consciousness relies heavily on hegemonic historical constructions of understanding the Other. So, conflict of interest is based on the presence of a third party always in the proximity of the Other and the self (Levinas, 1996, p. 169). Consequently, it analyses differences. Without this construction of difference, without definitions, one is drawn into the infinity of the being-for-the-other, in the name of peace of proximity. There is no objectification, no master view, only various assemblages.

All there is, in Levinas' proximity, is identification with what is identical to everyone, where diversity is united by a responsibility of what settles, what makes peace, what secures modes of existence (Levinas, 1996, p. 162).

## *9 Recommendations and Discussions*

### **9.1 Ontological Design**

Concerning oneself with Aboriginal cultural expressions, after identifying the presence of historical constructions that act as walls to finding proximity, one can engage in a new proximity of being-for-the-other. Through this, one perceives the gathering of Aboriginal cultural expressions as a 'matter of concern' (Latour, 2008) and they stop being perceived as colonial constructions of 'matters-of-fact'. It is from within this view and understanding that one might

engage in a careful, respectful re-coding of the significance of any cultural experience, along with its articulation and communication.

This would be a recoding of the perception of Aboriginal cultural expressions to allow for other significations, not as appearance or spectacle, but as social relations to be concerned with. Of concern, is that Aboriginal cultural expressions are mediators of exchange, of mutual and moral responsibility and of a gathering of the resistance and oppression of colonialism.

It would be of continual concern that Aboriginal Dance has a certain 'quality', that is, how it continues to perform ontologically. In this, its direction would be a continual concern with how colonialism directs Aboriginal Dance ontologically, and importantly how one might re-design this direction ontologically, towards a delinking of colonialism.

## **9.2 Abandoning and Becoming**

What has been framed thus far is the importance of a dramatically different perception needed in encountering Aboriginal cultural expressions. So what might the nature of this new perception be? Tamisari et al. (2010) notes that as Fullagar (cited in: Tamisari et al., 2010) reminds us, with reference to Lingis's travel narrative, "Travel as an ethical encounter requires an openness to the affect of the other, at the risk of decentering the self". It requires an abandoning and a becoming. As Galliford (2012) also identified, Deleuze's 'line of flight' is potentially useful for this, most significantly illustrated in his question: "Why are there so many becomings of man, but no becoming-man?" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 283). In abandoning the master narrative of becoming a finality, becoming is ever locked in becoming-minor, always interested in concerns, always 'between' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 277). This is not towards a distinction of becoming Aboriginal (in abandoning 'Western' modes, the Other is not, and never will be a commensurable body to acquire and define). It is not towards finality, or a 'matter of fact', but towards being in a constant state of a 'matter of concern' (see: Latour, 2008). From within this line of flight is a constant ego in check for peace—for moral and mutual respect and responsibility. It's the site of concern about the significance of transversality from one to another. A constant concern of flushing out hegemony—a constant becoming-minor. These transversal lines are places where power is sidelined, exposed, reconsidered, displaced—de-territorialised. Where ego/theo politics are merely options among geo/body politics that are equally recognised. Bruno Latour would remind us this is indeed an abandoning of the notion of being 'modern' (1993). In his critique of what he calls 'nature-culture', Latour colludes with a deconstruction of Eurocentric reason, which forms part of a larger discourse, that throughout the 20th century has been undermined by several intellectuals who have critiqued the 'human sciences' as anthropocentric; in Michel Foucault's words, as it takes as its object man as an empirical entity (Foucault, 1970, pp. 344-348). The hypothesis outlined in Latour's essay *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993) is the 'modern critical stance' is that of purification; where nature/non-humans

and culture/humans are two entirely distinct ontological zones. The second practice he calls translation; involving hybrid mixtures, networks of nature and culture. The crux of his thesis is as such:

*“So long as we consider these two practices of translation and purification separately, we are truly modern – that is, we willingly subscribe to the (modern critical stance), even though the project is developed only through the proliferation of hybrids...as soon as we direct our attention simultaneously to the work of purification and the work of hybridization, we immediately stop being wholly modern, and our future begins to change. At the same time we stop having been modern, become retrospectively aware that that these two sets of practices have always already been at work in the historical period that is ending (modernity). Our past begins to change. Finally, if we have never been modern – at least in the way criticism tells the story – the torturous relations that we have maintained with the other nature-cultures would also be transformed. Relativism, domination, imperialism, false consciousness, syncretism – all the problems that anthropologists summarize under the loose expression of ‘great divide’ – would be explained differently” (Latour, 1993, pp. 11-12).*

In this act of cultural transversality, in the context of respect, concern and responsibility mediated through cultural expressions, such as singing and dance, the relationship between tourists and hosts would be a mutual and equitable intersubjective experience. These cultural expressions are ‘giving’, mediating signification of Indigenous Knowledge, and it is up to observers to ‘give’ in return. The nature of this mutual and equitable exchange can be thought of as a Latour’s matters of concern, where a constant enveloping and enfolding of matters inculcates ontological shifts in consciousness—shifts concerned with peace, sameness and care, not difference. It is here, in this betweenness, where participants might leave an experience and take with them a decolonised mind. Seldom is tourism understood with such complexity, yet urgently begs engagement at this level for cultural destruction to cease.

Further theoretical study, or prefiguring of any practical application specifically, would benefit from being oriented towards opening further conversation with Aboriginal people situated in those places of intercultural encounters. What are their perspectives and perceptions? Importantly, one might benefit by entering into engagement, having already been confronted with their own colonial constructions of the significance of Aboriginal cultural expressions. Then, the re-designing of a relation of transversality may, or may not, arrive from within this situated proximity. In this engagement, the dominant narrative of perceiving oneself as dominant over the Other is the danger that for now, continues to remain.

### **9.3 Gift Economy**

Pivotal to gift philosophy, is Marcel Mauss (1967) . It is widely understood that Indigenous cultures across the world have practiced (and still do when not contested) reciprocal and



obligatory gift exchange relations. Nakata (2007, p. 206) notes, Islanders in the Torres Strait 'pass down' traditional knowledge as a 'gift'. Aboriginal people seeking conciliations with colonial subjects have often attempted this reciprocal and obligatory exchange. A prominent example is the story told by Richard Gundhawuy in relation to the then Australian Prime Minister John Howard visiting his country, where reciprocal exchange went unnoticed. With their lands at stake over a native title claim, The Yolngu men had actively sought to position John Howard in a conditional cycle of demand and obligatory reciprocity using ritual, enacting a dance of symbolic equivalence to a western courtroom. Howard mis-recognised the symbolic power of peace proximity and instead adhered to his own colonial symbolic power of the dominant state (Magowan, 2000, p. 11).

A proximity of reciprocal exchange under discussion here, would find such an asymmetrical relation incommensurable. The gift economy in becoming-minor is a continual equitable passing between, a void of power relations which would render Howard's dominant symbolic power obsolete. In this line of flight it is a constant place of negotiated engagement with the other as signifier, with an ego in check for peace—for moral responsibility. It's the site of concern about the significance of transversality from one to another, a constant concern of flushing out hegemony—a constant becoming-minor. These transversal lines are places where power is sidelined, exposed, reconsidered, displaced—de-territorialised. Aboriginal cultural expressions are 'giving', it is up to observers, participants, to 'give' in return. In this giving and receiving via being-for-the-other, there is a much more yet to be understood.

#### ***9.4 From Where it Begins***

If there is a prefigured practical application, there is surely only one suitable position from which this could be born. That is simply by commencing an open, mutual and moral conversation with those Aboriginal people one wishes to relate with. Action research methodology would name this engagement and immersion. Importantly, one might benefit by entering into engagement once already competent in their understanding of Levinas' conception of facing the Other, and in their illusions of searching for direction. Then, the re-designing of a relation of transversality may, or may not arrive from within this new proximity. An equitable relation of exchange might be found where a possible framework for an ontological shift in cultural experience may begin (It is noted that key theorist, Ivan Illich (1973) might offer support for future studies in relation to his 'tools for conviviality'). Danger lies in falling back into an asymmetrical relation of exchange, perceiving oneself as dominant over the Other, which would slide a transaction back to consumer-commodity paradigm (see Cliffords' (1988) 'art-culture commodity paradigm').

#### ***9.5 Disseminating Communication***

As Tamisari et al. (2010, p. 4) reminds us, "cross-cultural (mis)understanding(s) lie in the complex performances and mediation of tourist encounters". She introduces another aspect that

increasingly influences her 'performance space' in the tourist encounter, namely the mediation of the World Wide Web. "The interpretive gap between production and reception is particularly significant when interaction takes place in virtual space. Interpretation of the meaning of a performance becomes more erratic and is extended over time when it takes place on the web" (Tamisari et al., 2010, p. 7). Most significantly, the homogenized place (on one's computer screen) and time (at one's own discretion), in the virtual mobility of a web experience often disregards "alternative places and times that matter to locals living in the area" (Tamisari et al., 2010, p. 7). This is what is at stake. However, presuming there is a mutual agreement for exploration of practical applications of any specific experience in any specific location, the next logical step is to disseminate the information regarding what is offered through mediated modes of communication. It is questionable whether forms of attachment to the cultural experience can occur online. What is most important to understand is that what happening in these mediations is a detachment of the symbolic from its presence in space and time, which in regards to Aboriginal cultural expressions removes the corporeal proximity that is so culturally important. Therefore, one could easily regard online applications as everything upon which the above framing of the current condition has worked to expose as problematic. But, to take a critical opposition here would be indivisible with all varying mediating communication tools – they are all problematic. However, this is stating the obvious and not providing a solution, as (Healy, 2008, p. 176) reminds us:

*"People imagine, understand, encounter or consume Aboriginal Cultural tourism first in the storytelling of advertising, guidebooks, and newspaper and magazine travel writing; in the images of postcards, photographs and luscious advertisements; in the moving images of television travel shows, documentaries and film; in the websites, of destinations and travel agencies, Tourism Australia...and certainly in the diffuse circulation of travel-talk among friends and acquaintances. To suggest these signs are important in organizing and interpreting travel before the event is merely to state a truism".*

Certainly in all these mediations the face-to-face proximity experience is lost. On top of this, the typology of the Internet bears absolutely no relation to a knowledge production, or form of pedagogy through bodily proximity in place. It is in these mediations that control of meaning is lost. At best, there can be a fragmented sense of the relations of exchange, or at worst, it is a glossy appearance of slogans and images that promote a spectacle.

The crucial question is, how does one maintain a reciprocal, mutual and equitable exchange online, when the viewer can peruse, or gaze (literally) at signs of dozens of different cultures at the touch of a button. In 2007, a book called *Information Technology and Indigenous People* was published, which holds a remarkable collection of small essays and case studies (Neidig & Goldberg, 2007). The book rightly acknowledges that short form essays are most suitable for

such a new field of technology where capacities are changing on a daily basis. It acknowledges, “it is impossible to predict accurately what technologies will be available to people in the coming years”. It makes the claim that “the integration of graphics, sound, video and animation in multimedia applications has an enormous potential for indigenous peoples, whose cultures are rooted in ceremony, dance, music, art and oral language traditions”. Claiming this “will allow Indigenous people to revitalise their cultures and redefine themselves in the 21st century...by residing in their communities but linked to the outside world” (Neidig & Goldberg, 2007, p. 314). Although the authors’ intentions are sound, any critique of the technology’s ability to destroy cultural productions of knowledge is absent. This is extremely worrying, for we know the evolution of technology far surpasses our ability to provide an ethical framing to go with it. On this note, this discussion will not attempt to summarise any case studies or analysis further than this on the televisual/digital and online realm. It deserves more time and space than what is available here. This chapter provides bedrock upon which one might engage in such a task.

## **10. Conclusion**

Aboriginal cultural expressions are a domain of complexity, of which their significance has been heavily compromised by colonial displacement. Furthermore, the colonial constructions of the significance of Aboriginal cultural expressions have continually left Aboriginal people with few options but to participate in dominant narratives of the meaning of these expressions. These constructions have been underpinned by a Eurocentric gaze, which carries the legacy of logocentrism, which has repeatedly delegitimised the validity of non-phonetic-alphabetic cultural expressions as an alternative form of knowledge construction. Furthermore, cultural commodity in the interests of cultural capital-raising has been deliberately defined, constructed, projected and celebrated as part of Australia’s national identity. This search for identity has been indivisible with a search for groundedness in a post-modern society of imported, fragmented and floating signs. At the expense of Aboriginal culture, it has been a one-way exchange of taking that which is palatable to the Australian modern normative discourse, and leaving out what does not fit. Therefore, the meaning of Aboriginal cultural expressions must be re-coded. The Eurocentric gaze must be replaced with a new perception. This new perception needs to be understood, communicated and embodied by participants (tourists) when observing and/or experiencing Aboriginal cultural expressions. What is to be engaged in is an abandoning, an unlearning of a colonised mind; a decolonising. In this, abandoning is a constant becoming. The experience is not finite, is an everlasting ontological shift that one takes back to their localities – in order to see what creates and what destroys in their local histories.

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