Eatdirtzian Geosophy: approaching ethical reading practices.

A dissertation submitted for the award of a Doctorate of Philosophy (English) by Emma Maree Joel

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Statement of Originality

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository**, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Emma Joel
Abstract

Eatdirtzian Geosophy proposes a theoretical position for critical and intersubjective reading practices. Embedded at its core is a reconciling ethic in which critics occupy an a-colonial reading position in their practices, achieving this position through combining a meta-critical reading practice with a focus on geographic knowledges in their readings of texts. The concept of geosophy acknowledges that a multitude of subjective geographic knowledges exist. Eatdirtzian Geosophy suggests thinking about the appearance of these knowledges discursively.

The thesis provides a literature review of geography and arrives at the concept of geosophy as a starting point for thinking discursively about geographic knowledges. This discursive understanding highlights three core dimensions in the construction of geographic knowledges, scale, time, and space, which become the basis for conducting a geosophical analysis of text. Further, this mode of analysis highlights the significance of language and instances of language usage in the communication of geographic knowledges. The theoretical position proposed by Eatdirtzian Geosophy is further developed throughout the thesis with discussions of a reconciling ethic and an a-colonial reading position. The a-colonial reading position and the three core concepts are applied in a critical discussion of a number of Australian literary texts and literary practices throughout the thesis, including the narratives of Anita Heiss, Tom Cho and the film, Lucky Miles. Further, a reading of Bill Neidjie’s Story about Feeling demonstrates the practice of an Eatdirtzian Geosophy theory as a whole, highlighting the ways in which a geosophical discourse could inform critical reading practices.
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***

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And last but absolutely not least, I would like to thank my family and close friends. I want to thank you foremost for your patience and your acceptance that I needed space and to be selfish to finish this thesis, even at the times when you didn’t exactly understand what it is that I spent my time doing. More specifically, thank you for reminding me that sometimes eating ice cream cake, watching Sharknado or Adventure Time, practicing my krumping, coming over for dinner and special dessert night, waiting at Hurricanes for delicious ribs, seeing Salt N Pepa, or hanging on the veranda with pots of tea are more important than school work. Thanks for the cups of tea that magically appeared, thanks for the dinners that I didn’t have to cook, and thanks for letting me be your roomie because I made life choices that privileged being a word nerd over sustainable finances.
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Images of characters (Guard, Geosophy and the Meta-critic) featuring on pages 15, 22, 26, and 61. These images also feature in the maps on pages 28, 62, 100, 132, 188, 232, 287, 288, and 299.
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A note on reading this thesis

The work in this thesis plays with a traditional academic thesis structure and style. As such, this thesis has two components: the chapters which reflect a traditional thesis proper and a narrative that runs concurrently throughout the document. The main narrative component frames the thesis; it begins and ends the thesis through the inclusion of a prologue and epilogue, and it also features between the chapters ensuring that the narrative’s ideas and its characters’ adventures are revisited. The narrative uses images and maps to symbolically trace the emergence of an Eatdirtzian Geosophy through academic terrain, offering an alternative way of telling this theoretical story and an attempt of subverting academic strictures. Additionally, it should be noted that work within the thesis proper chapters draw significantly on narrative as a continuation of this intention and style.

My rationale for using narrative in these ways is two-fold. Firstly, it is embraced as a teaching and learning technique and secondly, it is used as a stylistic choice that reinforces the theoretical ideals explored within these pages. My true passion in life is education. The use of narrative is one of the most effective mediums we have to teach and to learn (Quality Teaching in NSW Public Schools; Yunkaporta "Aboriginal Pedagogies"; Yunkaporta and Kirby). I employ different narrative devices throughout this thesis in order to consolidate my own learning in this research area and as a means to effectively communicate and teach my readers about the ideas, theory, and concepts explored within this thesis. My use of quotes at the beginning of chapters and sections; my use of maps; my use of the main narrative component which traces the adventures of Geosophy and the Meta-critic; my blending of narrative structures and thesis structures; and my use of story through my critical dialogues have all been employed in an attempt to aide comprehension, learning, and critical thinking about my research area. As most teachers know, everyone learns differently. So perhaps some of these devices will appeal to your individual styles of thinking and learning by helping to visualise, relate to and understand. And perhaps, some of these devices will not. As an educator my main goal here is to have a number of different modes of engaging
with the material available, so that everyone can find an access point to explanations and thoughts that are explored here.

In terms of style, one of my favourite writers and biggest influences is Thomas King. His novels play with traditional western narrative structure offering ideas about the palimpsestic and interwoven nature of stories, and the connection or relationship we all have to spaces and times (King *Medicine River*; King *One Good Story*; King *Green Grass*). Engaging with his narratives has been a major step in leading me to my questions and considerations about geosophy and critical reading practices. In addition to his creative pieces, King’s work in the area of literary criticism has been a direct influence on my own writing style and narrative structures. King embraces narrative as an avenue for discussing and elucidating the critical (King *The Truth About Stories*). This style of writing is a feature I attempt to embrace in my own critical musings throughout the thesis proper chapters, drawing on narratives and telling relatable stories that offer a sense of the familiar and comfort as it is interspersed within the densely theoretical and abstract.

And to you, my reader, please allow me to finish on a point of clarification about what Eatdirtzian Geosophy actually is as you are probably hearing of Eatdirtzian Geosophy for the first time. Before you rush over to Google to catch up on what you've been missing out on, let me advise you to save your time. You will find information about the concept of geosophy elsewhere, but the ideas concerning what an Eatdirtzian Geosophy (EDG) is are exclusively in the pages of this thesis. This thesis explains and develops an EDG theory and practice further through theoretical explanation and narrative exploration. However, to help you relax and concentrate as you delve into the nerdy adventure that lies within the pages ahead allow me to clarify EDG before you begin. I am proposing Eatdirtzian Geosophy is a theoretical position that can inform reading practices. Yes the name is taken from the expression “eat dirt”, and pronounced “Eat – dirt – zee -an”. And that's exactly what it requires you to do – eat dirt. Think about the act of eating dirt, as it

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symbolises an actual relationship with the earth: how do you connect with the earth? How does the earth enter your being? How does your connection to earth shape the way you know, think, see, and feel? As a theoretical position EDG proposes individual reconnection to our environments; thinking about our connections on various scales – e.g. locally or globally, politically, culturally or physically; and, exploring various intersections of those various individual reconnections. So, as you read remember to “eat dirt” by reconnecting and intersecting.
Figure 1: The landscape of an Eatdirtzian Geosophy (image created by Gareth Bryan ©2013 Emma Joel)
Prologue – The Geography Saga: an origin story for geosophy

The theoretical approach of Eatdirtzian Geosophy (EDG) allows for multiple individual constructions of geographic knowledge to be reconciled within a critical framework. The framework promotes individual sources of knowledge over traditional approaches to knowledge, which are reductive, such as objective or dichotomous frameworks that can traditionally be found in both scientific and literary disciplines. The need for such a framework is essential to acknowledge the epistemological beliefs embedded within the concept of geosophy, but more importantly our own subjective positions and how they influence the ways we work. In his attempts to understand the geography of knowledge, John Kirtland Wright highlighted that it is critical to engage with the nature and expression of geographical knowledge, its subjective constructions (Wright "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography" 12). Given the subjective nature of those constructions, with all their human and cultural desires, motives, and prejudices, how can we study the subjective objectively? Strict (or restrictive) methods of analysis will not work in this arena; there needs to be a method to study the subjective subjectively. This is where it becomes clear that we require a reconciling method to help negotiate and guide the interactions of subjective positions. Accepting that geosophy occurs as a condition of existence feeds into the epistemological approach of the research in this thesis. This belief in the validity of geographic knowledges from any source and a need to study these knowledges places those studying these knowledge sources at vastly diverse cultural interfaces.

The term geosophy has been understood as both the study of geographic knowledges and the geography of knowledge. The significant notion of the latter is embedded in Charles Redway Dryer’s poetic words about geosophy:

There is a geography of thought, a geography of spirit, geography of psychology, of racial influence, a superphysical geography – in fine a geosophy. We want maps of mind, showing the thought and
culture currents, idea drifts, spiritual isobars, contours of artistic altitudes. (Wright "Communication" 47)

The understanding embedded within these words is pivotal to this story about Eatdirtzian Geosophy. The interdisciplinary use of geographic knowledges in this project is important to acknowledge from the onset, because for too long other disciplines have borrowed from geography without due credit for what the discipline has to offer. As we move towards an intersubjective reading of text that draws on geosophy to focus analyses, I am reminded of Wright’s comment that “the quest for local colour in literature is also a quest for geographical expression” (Wright "Chapter 1: A Plea for the History of Geography” 22).

Eatdirtzian Geosophy refers to an intersubjective reading lens that equips literary critics to address epistemology in their work. The intersubjective reading practice uses a theoretical approach that: attempts to address the ethics concerned with epistemology by requiring critics to occupy an a-colonial reading position, in which they are required to read through their own subjectivities as a means for reconciling multiple knowledges; and draws on geosophy, through the discursive formations of geographic knowledges, as its key mode of textual analysis. It is this interdisciplinary application of geosophy that allows Eatdirtzian Geosophy to be distinguished from previous work on the concept. However, in order to establish an Eatdirtzian Geosophy, we must first revisit geographic knowledges and geosophy’s emergence within them.

What follows here is a short story outlining the origins of Geography both as a discipline and as our protagonist, detailing his rise to interdisciplinary superhero status, being empowered with his academic crime fighting arsenal, and the increasing awareness of his kryptonite. This tale is presented as such, because Geography’s emergence as a discipline is a notably less exciting recount than the narrative of its development as both “discipline and discourse” within the academy (Livingstone 1). However, it is a recount that cannot be ignored, as it
feeds directly into the controversial realm of situating contemporary Geography, its practice and its meaning (R. Jones).

This prologue is presented in three parts, which will end where my story of Eatdirtzian Geosophy begins; I guess you could say it is an academic literature review of sorts. The first part delves into the past, the second embraces a frame for the present, and the third looks towards a possible future for geographic knowledges. It is a story full of colourful (and not-so colourful) characters, of allies and foes, inspiring bouts of unfathomable inner turmoil revealed through a brief spanning of the life and times of our hero to date. It has been composed with the intentions of gaining insight and understanding of this enigmatic protagonist and as such, will be narrated by me in the hope that I may demonstrate a growing understanding as it comes to hand through the omnipotence afforded to me through the power of narration. Enjoy.

The conception and birth of contemporary Geography: An initial (and yet, continuous re-) defining of a discipline

In a time not so long ago existed a rapidly expanding and changing Euro-centric Planet. This spherical mass was called Earth. The Earth had existed for an extremely long time before this story even began, and during this time Geography existed in various shapes and forms. Even back in prehistoric times, times that existed prior to a classical defining of Geography, it existed. Geography existed because there is a “body of knowledge about the world” based on the empirical evidence found in the everyday (Unwin 46-47). An example of this knowledge is the Hindu “OM…”, the calm heartbeat and breath of the earth of which the movements of the ocean are in sync with, and explained through.

1 Please note that for the duration of this prologue I will avoid using the term “place” (or derivatives of, such as “placing”) except for in its role as a geographical concept. The term “place” will be unpacked in chapters of this thesis as a geosophical construct.

2 For all the pedants playing along, geography here is intentionally mentioned as a proper noun, denoting both the name of a character and a discipline.
Another example is Senior Law Man\textsuperscript{3}, Uncle Bill Neidjie’s story about the mortality of moon, which explains the moon cycle:

E can see moon because e’s changing it.
E go dark but e come back new… you got light.
Close on west side e can see new moon.
E go middle of the year, top, middle of the night…e go middle age.
E go low…e getting a little bit old now, grey hair like me.
E go that moon just about daylight and e comes out half-way…
E feeling sick. E say… “Well I nearly finished!”
E getting old now, right down with a walking stick.
Next morning, early, you can’t see…that means e’s finished.
That’s the one e come back… “New moon!” (Neidjie Story 9)

This body of knowledge still exists today and reminds us that all beings (human or otherwise) have, and always will have, an inherent geographic sense which informs their everyday lives (Wright "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography" 14-15). Some of these experiential knowledges would go on to become the basis of a defined Geography, while others would be excluded.

As Time\textsuperscript{4} progressed in a linear fashion (which is something that Time has a tendency to do when considered from particular perspectives), Geography was defined in terms of its name’s meaning in classical Greek, which translates to “earth” “writing” (Unwin 46). This classical conception of Geography during Greek and Roman antiquity led to a greater clarifying of what he would be concerned with and how he may develop. At this stage of his existence, this development could occur through three key traditions: “a topographical tradition

\textsuperscript{3} In Australian Aboriginal cultures Senior Law Men and Women are elders recognised for their knowledge of the traditional laws and spirituality, and are leaders within their communities. Senior Law Men and Women “assume responsibility for sacred objects, spiritual matters and the performance of ritual. The Elders are vested with custodianship of the Law. Their overriding duty is to honour and maintain the Law, and to pass it down to the next generations” Stephanie Fryer-Smith, "Chapter Two: Aspects of Traditional Aboriginal Australia," Aboriginal Benchbook for Western Australian Courts (Carlton, Vic.: The Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration (AIJA), 2002), vol., 2:16.

\textsuperscript{4} For all those pedants still playing along at home, please note that Time is intentionally used here as a proper noun too.
(description of the earth), a mathematical and astronomical tradition (measurement of the earth) and a theological tradition (contemplation as to humans existence on the earth)” (Unwin 46-50). However, we need not be too concerned with the finer details of these times of antiquity in our story, for what we are about to witness is immensely more exciting.5

The real origin of our story begins when the gestation of a more contemporary Geography occurred, and can be placed linearly in the seventeenth century when Bernhard Varenius controversially re-defined Geography as “only being concerned with the earth,” which separated understandings of Geography from more classical or ancient definitions that were also concerned with astrology and cosmology (Unwin 67). Varenius’ definition of Geography suggested that he consisted of two distinguishable parts, “general geography” and “special geography”; which focused on the study of the “earth in general” and the study of specific individual regions respectively (Unwin 67-69). Varenius’ work came about by making connections between geographic knowledge and method to new epistemological works emerging at the time.6

During the latter part of the seventeenth century Immanuel Kant contributed to the gestation of a contemporary Geography. Kant sought to acknowledge human involvement within the realm of physical geography. Kant further clarified ideas about the multi-faceted nature that Geography would possess by identifying five distinctive types of geography as they related to Physical Geography. These types are: Mathematical geography, Moral geography, Political geography, Commercial geography, and Theological geography.7

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5 Although for those interested in Geography’s place in the world prior to our story, I would recommend the following; Tim Unwin, The Place of Geography (Essex: Longman Scientific and Technical, 1992).
6 For instance, the work of Rene Descartes and Galileo Galilei.
7 These five types of geography proposed in Kant’s work can be outlined as:

1. Mathematical geography, in which the shape, size and motion of the earth, and it’s relationships to the solar system in which it is situated, are dealt with.
2. Moral geography, in which the diverse customs and characteristics of people of different regions are told about.
3. Political geography, whereby the political organization of a state is seen as being totally dependent on its physical geography;
Kant’s geographical work embraced his philosophical notions about the nature of metaphysics needing to be both “empirical and rationalist” simultaneously if it is to be of any value (Unwin 71). His work, both philosophical and geographical, can be seen to have influenced modern Geography significantly. The effects of these clarifications were felt in two ways: firstly in the conceptual realm within Geography and secondly, through its practice. Our hero was given a form through this work, a form which after Kant’s clarifications, had been created with a potentially fatal flaw – a predisposition to a condition termed the “Human-Physical Divide.” Kant’s work here, with some minor contributions from the work of Alexander von Humboldt and Carl Ritter (Unwin), marks the key gestation period of modern Geography prior to its experiences within the academy, inducing the birth of our protagonist.

During this epoch of modern geographies, which continued in a linear fashion into the nineteenth century, there were also some notable activities occurring that affected the crucial childhood development of our protagonist. And, as it is deemed appropriate in narrative structure to provide the audience with some form of orientation, allow me to briefly “set a scene”. This was a scene rife with expanding commercial needs, a scene that sought to trade internationally and across previously unfathomable distances. It was a time that reeked of political unrest, and had the threats of war wafting through the air; the same scene in which exploration and topographic writings were romanticised (Heffernan 4-11; Johnston "Geography and the Social Science Tradition"; Unwin 46-47). A scene that would see Geography’s personal traits used by the Powers-That-Be in order to further numerous agendas, to the extent that his existence seemed primarily to serve these agendas. Ah, the usefulness of children. It reminds me of a saying my Grandma always used when justifying why we kids should do chores, “Why have a dog and bark yourself?”

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4. Commercial geography, concerned with trade linking together areas of excess with areas of deprivation; and
5. Theological geography, concerned with the way in which theological principles are transformed due to the differences in the land.

Kant cited in Unwin, *The Place of Geography* 72.
What made our hero so useful, you may wonder? What were these traits, these gifts to the world, which the Powers-That-Be desired so badly? There’s a fairly simple answer; the real gift that Geography, even as a young child possessed, was his ability to combine a few key concepts with his unique way of viewing the world, to interpret and portray it, and to locate people and knowledges within in it. This was a gift that equipped Geography to do certain “chores” for the Powers-That-Be.

Space and Time are the two key traits possessed by our protagonist, and must be considered in conjunction with each other (P. J. Taylor; Johnston "Geography and the Social Science Tradition"). These two concepts function through their relationships to Scale, these relationships enable the existence and study of the three core domains within Geography for understanding the phenomena of earth (Montello). These domains are the spatial, temporal and thematic (or sometimes referred to as “topical”) (Montello; Wright "Preface"). Albeit the thematic is more exclusively concerned with phenomena itself; the thematic functions through scales working to group or link sets of phenomena and deal with the phenomena’s attributes and characteristics. However, the thematic often exists relative to spatial and temporal domains. For instance, local weather patterns that map the climatic trends (the thematic) over a set period of time (the temporal) for a particular suburb (the spatial) or global economic trends where the changes to finances and trade (the thematic) on the international stock market (the spatial) are over a daily, quarterly or annual financial period (the temporal) are monitored and analysed. It is this relative relationship of the three that allows the analysis and synthesis of information to occur within Geography. These concepts of Space, Time, and Scale are therefore central to understanding how our hero functions and views the world.

Space, as a concept, is apparently “poorly defined” by geographers, and quite clearly geographer Martin Kent’s own work is not exempt from this claim (Kent 109). However, what geographers such as Kent are evidently more fluent in
defining is the importance of Space as a concept of Geography and implications of this in conducting their work.

The geographer’s prime interest is in the objects within space and their relative position, which involves the description, explanation and prediction of the distribution of phenomena. The relationship between objects in space is at the core of geography. (Kent 109)

A concept so fundamental to the discipline, there has been an instance of geographers comparing it to sex, and how fundamental sex is to life. Geographers note that within the discipline, Space is treated similar to sex: “it is there, but we don’t talk about it. And if we do, we certainly are not expected to get technical or serious about it” (Hall cited in Barcan and Buchanan 7). Furthering this comparison, they acknowledge that without Space, as with sex, “we would not be here” (Barcan and Buchanan 7).

Nigel Thrift, clearly dissatisfied with the lack of definitions of Space, composed his own account of the nature of Space within Human Geography. In this account he reinforces the notion that Space is utterly fundamental to the business of geographers and hence, warrants a thorough defining. He claims his approach is a “relational view of space” in which “space is seen as a co-product of the world’s proceedings” rather than a container for them (Thrift "Chapter 5 - Space: The Fundamental Stuff of Human Geography" 96). Following this, he provides an analysis of the concept of Space defining it in terms of its four key approaches: Empirical Constructions of Space, Unblocking Space, Image Space, and Place Space. These approaches, although studied independently of each other in method, are ultimately interconnected to make the whole and enable thorough insights into the nature of Space, including why and how it is used.

The dimension of Time is “used to measure change” (P. J. Taylor 151). In his work, Peter Taylor differentiates two primary approaches to Time within Geography. The first considers Time as a “physical dimension, something that can be measured precisely” (P. J. Taylor 151). John Thornes adds to this first approach to Time, as it is applied to Physical Geography, by clarifying that Time,
in this sense, is used as a “framework in which geomorphological events are often placed to infer cause-and-effect relationships” (Thornes 131). The application of such a framework can be used to re-construct and de-construct particular events. Further commenting on the nature of Time, Thornes claims that it is “not a variable, nor does it explain outcomes” (Thornes 131).

The second approach, as suggested by Taylor, sees Time as “social change, where the emphasis is upon the content-of-time” (P. J. Taylor 151). As such, this approach to Time focuses on “social processes.” The form of any study in this manner will “depend upon the social theory that is used to define the nature of social change” (P. J. Taylor 151).

A third key concept is that of Scale. For Geography, Scale has several meanings and relates in varying ways to the spatial, temporal and thematic areas of study. Fundamentally though, Scale is Geography’s way of dealing with the issue of size. For Geography, Scale refers to three main sources: Analysis Scale, Cartographic Scale, and Phenomenon Scale.

Cartographic scale refers to the depicted size of a feature on a map relative to its actual size in the world. Analysis scale refers to the size of the unit at which some problem is analysed, such as at the county or state level. Phenomenon scale refers to the size at which human or physical earth structures or processes exist, regardless of how they are studied or represented. (Montello 13501)

Although these three core sources of Scale are often dealt with individually through practical method, the information generated by the three sources of Scale are profoundly interrelated (Montello 13501). This is often noted in the distinguishing of scales which is achieved through the use of comparative binaries (i.e. local and global or macro and micro scales).

One major concern to all three sources of Scale is that of “generalisation,” which acknowledges that the act of representation is inherent within the use of Scale and therefore worries about what information and detail is able to manifest within
these representations (Montello 13503). This is a valid concern, considering the shameless and wanton nature of Representation\(^8\); he is a truly fascinating, yet untrustworthy character indeed. Geography is extremely wise for approaching him with subversive caution.

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Geography has other cognitive and personal traits that are not discussed here. The intentional exclusion of these traits is based on their relevancy to the story and the purposes motivating me, the narrator. Their exclusion should in no way imply that they are insignificant or not necessarily a part of Geography. These concepts, however, are more specific to particular branches of Geography that are connected to specific methods within those branches, and are less commonly seen as being key concepts for the overall discipline.

It is vital to understand our main character, to have inside information as to how he sees the world, so we may better understand his place within it and how he is able to interact with others. These three concepts aim to enable geographers to examine all phenomena occurring within an environment. Therefore, their consideration is especially important given that Geography will share common interests with other disciplines and will eventually be forced to play with them at school.

Although it is not categorised as a geographic concept, the map and practical field of cartography warrants a mention here. Cartography marks significant events in the personal development of Geography, inspiring some of his most monumental interactions with others. This practice of cartography is also a pivotal signifier of the discipline of Geography. A map manages to become representative of the very nature of the discipline by juxtaposing and intertwining the scientific and humanistic sides of modern Geography into a whole. Mike Heffernan’s description of the map and its power is most poignant:

\(^8\) Again, for all those pedants still playing along at home, please note that Representation has been intentionally used here as a proper noun.
the principal geographical “tool” was, of course, the map. By representing the huge complexity of a physical and human landscape in a single image, geographers and cartographers provided the European Imperial project with arguably its most potent device. (Heffernan 11)

Again, I ask you, “why have a dog and bark yourself?” The Powers-That-Be had plenty of practice in manipulating Geography for their economic and political needs, through their escapades with trading, exploratory travels, and colonisation. This practice of cartography allowed the Powers-That-Be to communicate their political and cultural borders and knowledge, through the provision of a physical form (even if it was only representational). Heffernan further acknowledges this manipulation of Geography claiming that: “European exploration and mapping …and the subsequent terrestrial topographic surveying of these vast continents were self-evidently an exercise in imperial authority” (Heffernan 11).

The practices of cartography and topography are semiotic ones. It is important for us, and the story that begins after this one, to consider the semiotics of Geography as important imperialist tools, which can be used in acts of colonisation and exploration, but also in the use of representing other cultures and lands. To better engage with semiotics, there needs to be an application of a geographically savvy critical discourse for visual, written, and spoken geographic communications. Further, it should be noted that such a critical discourse would enable one to move past commonly understood geographic communications to consider less common representations of the geographic. Anyway, let’s continue with this story!

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By the time the world wars broke out in the twentieth century, it was not surprising that Geography was urgently sought after by the Powers-That-Be, as the need for reconstructing political and cultural borders arose in the aftermath of war. In particular, this refers to World War I and World War II, in which the
practice of redefining the borders of countries due to the invasion or pursuit of land were highly prevalent acts. The Powers-That-Be wanted to use Geography for his cartographic knowledge and skills yet again (Johnston "Geography and the Social Science Tradition" 51-53).

It is no wonder that formal geographic knowledge and map-making has so widely endured a Eurocentric monopoly in the academy due to these origins. However, at this early stage of the story, these perceptions are yet to be challenged in the contemporary arena by other cultural knowledges, ideologies, and alternate and new mediums of representation. Our story is yet to see the rise of vigilantes within the academy; Geography is yet to meet his school chums.

The rise of the academy in Europe during the early part of the nineteenth century presupposes the value placed on it and intellectualism at the time. Tim Unwin notes that the society and universities at the time were major contributors to shaping the “institutional structure” that was to be imposed on Geography (Unwin 79). They would indeed prescribe “the role that geographers were to play in society; Geography was the discipline of exploration, and geographers frequently the servants of imperialism” (Felix Driver cited in Unwin 79). This servitude was conducted to the extent that by the later parts of the nineteenth century Geography had “become unquestionably the queen of all imperial sciences…inseparable from the domain of official and unofficial state knowledge” (Richards cited in Heffernan 11).

For his servitude Geography was rewarded by the Powers-That-Be with institutionalisation. Perhaps this reward was a step towards justifying their blatant uses of Geography, by legitimising the young discipline through an academic association.

The troubled school life of an adolescent discipline: Geography meets Restructure and an epistemological quake

~ 13 ~
This inner angst caused by this oppressive regime was starting to affect Geography and his newly personified form. He started to experience changes; both internal and external, physically and mentally, which were only exasperated when he arrived at big school. Here, he was confronted with a rapidly changing system: epistemologically, socially, administratively, and structurally.

At school, Geography found he was learning a lot from all the new not-so-different and not-so-colourful people that he met there. Just like most students, he was exposed to many skills to refine the way he looked at the world and studied it. Some of these skills and people were concerned with developing the scientific nature of Geography’s work, others were more concerned about the feelings associated with personal experiences. Both approaches were valued as “fact”, which confused Geography a great deal. Being flexible by nature and partial to both approaches, he was content with a combination of the two, as they appealed to both the physical and human components of his comprehension. So Geography resigned himself to the notion that perhaps both could work, and that he would let others worry about the finer details. Plus, as Geography started to realise, there were a lot of confused disciplines and people in this place called the academy, so the less hysteria, the better.9

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For us though, in relation to our story’s progression, we should really consider the implications of this scenario. It gives us insight into the nature of our hero. However, what it fails to mention is that by being exposed to both “scientific” and “humanistic” approaches to method and any associated banter about things like qualitative and quantitative practices, Geography’s fatal flaw, the “Human-Physical Divide”, was at risk of being exacerbated. This would have significant

implications for his identity as a discipline. Unwin outlines what constitutes a “discipline” by offering four key ways of identifying disciplines:

1) through the “collective activity of its practitioners”
2) “through reference to their [ a discipline’s] particular objects of study or subject matter”
3) through the definition of “methodology or techniques”
4) and, through a focus on the “questions that disciplines ask, and the way in which these questions are framed” (Unwin 5-7).

As we will soon see, these key descriptors of discipline will be challenged by the duality of Geography’s personified form. This left Geography feeling as though his identity was being negated, a common adolescent experience.

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Figure 2: An academy guard\textsuperscript{10} (image created by Gareth Bryan ©2013 Emma Joel)

One night, one of the guards forgot to lock the gates to the academy when he left for home. It was this same night that a gang broke into the academy, marking their new territory, which crossed a lot of the disciplines’ pre-existing designated areas, or “hangouts” as the kids called them. The gang called themselves the –Isms and

\textsuperscript{10} The inspiration for depicting the Guards of the academy in this story as bricks came from reading Nerida Blair’s doctoral work in which she represents knowledge structures of the western academy as brick walls. For more information see: Nerida Blair, ”Sweet Potatoes, Spiders and Waterlilys: Privileging Australian Indigenous Knowledges / Epistemological Consequence of Knowledge Production,” University of Newcastle, 2008.
they were quite the eclectic and colourful bunch to say the least. Amongst the gang’s leaders was Feminism. She was quite the character, very strong and vocal. She liked to discuss difference and equality, and issues of a notion called “gender”. There was also Marxism, he was European and extremely verbose.¹¹ They enjoyed discussing society and capitalism, and their discussions became highly analytical.

Then there were Colonialism and Post-Colonialism, they would always be seen together, as Post-Colonialism followed Colonialism around. It was quite the sight indeed, as Colonialism was very bossy and liked telling people how to do things in a certain way. Post-Colonialism would follow, always very worried and anxious about the legacy of Colonialism’s bossy behaviour.

Structuralism, clearly obsessed with function, was almost militant in his defence of systems. He had no trouble making friends amongst the disciplines, as they seemed to like his approach. However, some people thought he was somewhat exclusionist in his ways. One of these was Postmodernism (Pomo). Pomo thought that thinking about things in terms of such systems was a bit out-dated, excluding all that she had come to know about society and different cultures. Pomo favoured the consideration of relativism over the rigidity of the systems Structuralism liked to create. There were older characters within the gang too, such as Pragmatism, Rationalism, Empiricism, and Positivism, just to name a few.

As time passed by and the –Isms loitered around the academy, the disciplines and the –Isms were given a chance to interact more profoundly, sharing different ways of thinking and seeing. The –Isms, with their keen eyesight, introduced the disciplines to a variety of spectacles: glasses to help them see things more clearly while they conducted their studies. All the disciplines agreed that wearing the glasses they had been given made reading “text” a great deal easier, resulting in more comprehensive readings, lending their schoolwork a new vitality. The new glasses were quite the novelty, coming in all different shapes, sizes, and colours,

¹¹ For more information about this see David Harvey, Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography (New York: Routledge, 2001).
which enticed the disciplines to use them more. The lenses of Marxism’s reading glasses were shaded a passionate deep red, Structuralism’s glasses bore a sturdy frame that housed one white and one black lens, and Feminism’s glasses were fitted with bi-focal lenses.

Geography was quite eager to wear the glasses on offer. Considering his main interest in his studies was interpreting the world and re-presenting what he had learnt about it. “To see the world as someone else saw it,” Geography thought, “is an opportunity not to be missed.” His keenness was evident in his encouraging behaviours towards the other disciplines to do the same. In a pivotal moment, Geography wore Post-Colonialism’s glasses. That day whilst working on his studies, Geography was able to “critique the western bias of [his] disciplinary stories” and “identify the role of geographical knowledges and practices in production of” location based recounts (Livingstone 2). The significance of this lesson multiplied for Geography, by using Feminism’s bi-focal reading glasses during a history lesson. Here he

…sought to complicate – and compromise – the received history of geography either by uncovering the role of women in the making of geographical knowledge or by subverting the taken-for-granted conceptual structures and methodological obsessions that the discipline has canonised. (Livingstone 2)

A flurry of glasses-wearing studies progressed amongst the disciplines until suddenly, the presence of the –Isms, and the escalated state of turmoil their presence had caused through the introduction of glasses and their overt promiscuity with the disciplines, brought about a massive epistemological quake. The quake, shaking the grounds of the academy so violently, began subverting systems of any ilk and boxes of any strength as far as the eyes could see. And then, even further still, as far as the mind’s eye could comprehend and imagine.

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12 For more information about the deconstruction of colonial discourses in geographic work see Alison Blunt and Cheryl McEwan, eds., Postcolonial Geographies (London: Continuum, 2002).
Now, the disciplines and the –Isms sceptically roamed around the academy grounds that now possessed unsteady foundations. The school grounds became known now as post-structural in the aftermath of the quake. The post-structuralist environment of the academy created a quandary that caused an epistemological crisis. Linda McDowell acknowledges this crisis as the result of the various “critiques of western science” based on how and what the -Isms contributed to the academy. These critiques have challenged the notion of “objective truths” and “have left us in a quagmire of relativism in which different ways of knowing have apparently equal claims to validity” (McDowell 296). One major concern for most disciplines, Geography included, was the effects it had on the theory that underpinned the disciplines. This concern seems of vital import to McDowell as well.

McDowell acknowledged that it is necessary for a theory to not completely discard “old certainties” or ways of knowing, as this clearly is not a “whole-hearted embrace of relativism” (McDowell 296). She went on to suggest that for Geography it is essential to utilise a theory that allows the clarification of diverse ways of knowing, in such a way that it concomitantly affords us the ability to highlight the “significance” in such distinctions and differences (McDowell 296). This should be the ultimate role of geographic theory.

The starting point for approaching such a theory is found in the deconstruction of the “term ‘theory’” and the “privileged position” it has held in the arena of knowledge. McDowell claims that traditionally in Geography “theoretical analysis” consisted of a “rule-governed activity” providing a technical approach based on an assumed “scientific or objective” nature (McDowell 296). She goes on to note that more recently, a de-privileging has occurred by treating “theory” as “text” the result of which has now lead to “analyses of theories themselves, revealing the ideological assumptions in the work; the contradictions, unvoiced assumptions, the limits to the texts’ logic” (McDowell 297-98).
In the progression of our story, another complication has spawned through the implication of McDowell’s deconstruction of theory for our personified hero, Geography, which is a philosophical question of being. If the foundations of all that he believes and understands about the world (i.e. Geography’s theory) are based on limited assumptions, they become extremely unstable. This begs for the questioning of all that has since been built on these potentially dubious foundations. McDowell goes on to ask what happened to “disrupt theoretical confidence in a singular notion of Truth” for Geography? (McDowell 299). The answer is simple: the arrival of the –Isms. It was through their arrival, compounded with an epistemological hangover from a night of drinking Critical Theory with Postmodernism, which made Geography open his eyes blurrily one morning and see that some things had really been taken for granted, some should never have been trusted, whilst others were just outright excluded. “Perhaps,” Geography moaned to himself that morning, “there is a better, or less fallible, way?”

The derailment of theory is substantially problematic in terms of defining and sustaining a discipline (especially in accordance to Unwin’s work that outlines key determinants for what constitutes a discipline). A core role of theory is to inform a “collective” practice, method, technique, and mode of questioning within a discipline. However, if the theory was not valid or sustainable, this collective nature of a discipline’s practice would become fragmented as a result (Unwin 5-7).

Geography, inundated with mental flux and existential crises from attempts to comprehend his role as a discipline during these rapid changes within the academy, was in no position to withstand the forces of his new enemy, Restructure. Restructure, an extremely powerful henchman for the Powers-That-Be, was ruthless. He did not discriminate between disciplines and would

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14 Refer to page 17 of Prologue
reconfigure all that happened to fall onto his path. For this ability, he proved to be an invaluable asset to the Powers-That-Be. They used Restructure to help enforce new ideologies and relationships (and between you and me, there are some motives concerning money there too, but that is a story for someone else to tell).

One particular ideology that Restructure enforced was to increase the value of vocational training (an ideology still active in current Australian politics and tertiary institution’s discussions, actions, and policy); an ideological notion that would undoubtedly take its toll on our now fragile hero. Thrift discussed his concerns for the growing Human-Physical Divide in Geography, noting that “the divergence is growing apace” and part of “the reason is career-oriented” mentality (Thrift "The Future of Geography” 295).

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In Australia, Roy Jones points to “competition from new subject offerings, generally in vocational areas” as detrimental to the discipline of Geography. He continues to suggest, that:

…instrumental rhetoric of governments, the media, parents, careers advisors and many Vice Chancellors is fueling an accelerating drift of students away from the broad-based Arts and Science courses, in which Geography has been traditionally located on both sides of the former binary divide, towards more vocational, or (apparently) employment-orientated programs. (R. Jones 55)

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Jones also notes a decline in numbers of secondary students studying Geography, which is another factor that will effect tertiary cohorts of the discipline (R. Jones 55).

Internationally, the manifestations of ideologies about vocational training are rising to various extents as well, followed by respective implications at the institutional and discipline levels. Johnston acknowledges the role of vocational ideologies as affecting Geography within the United Kingdom, stating that creating and “sustaining a place for geography involved political struggle” (Johnston "Reflections" 422). He also observes that a decline in the number of Geography students exists; claiming that this is due to competition from other subject areas and a decrease in the marketability that Geography once held. He suggests that Geography thrived in “UK universities through much of the twentieth century because it had a ready market for its undergraduate courses” (Johnston "Reflections" 421).

However, in the United States, Geography at both secondary and tertiary levels has always been a much weaker discipline compared to its status in Australia and the United Kingdom. Johnston identifies the two key ways in which Geography is being kept “alive” within the United States. The first is by providing “large introductory courses” in the area with the hope of recruiting students. The second involves “selling the discipline as the one which provides introductory training in a marketable skill” (i.e. GIS, town planning, or environmental studies) (Johnston "Reflections" 423). What is clear from these accounts is that this particular vocational ideology is not only informing Restructures actions, but is simultaneously feeding into both the current Australian, and International, economic bases in reference to the social production of education.

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Restructure went on a calamity spree, changing the nature of big school and identity for so many disciplines. In Australia, he did so under the instruction of the
then Federal Minister for Education, John Dawkins (Holmes 7). It was during this
time that Geography had an unavoidable confrontation with Restructure in 1987,
and he has been tormented by Restructure’s minions ever since. This battle
affected Geography, playing on the predisposition to his fatal flaw, the Human-
Physical Divide. His enemy knew of his kryptonite.

Restructure forced Geography into the Social Sciences, and then continued to
taunt him in a way that enraged the physical side of Geography’s divide. “You’re
so qualitative, and not rigorous,” Restructure would tease. Until one day,
Geography snapped at his tormentor. The physical side of his brain erupted with
rage. As a result, Geography was violently torn into two beings, forcing his
Human-Physical sides to manifest physically through his personified form.

His body split into two separate bodies, joined in the middle, his personified form
morphing into Siamese twins. The bodies had separate heads and limbs. Human
Geography was left limp from the shock of the split, as Physical Geography
consumed all their bodies’ energy through his rage. Physical Geography launched
himself at Restructure, with his arms outstretched, ready for an attack. When
suddenly his chest tightened, and he was pulled towards the direction from where
he had burst, causing him to tumble brutally to the ground. Restructure sniggered
at the sight, and then left Physical Geography to settle in the dust that his eruption had created.

Once his rage had subsided, Physical Geography and Human Geography were able to gauge their new state of being. Physical Geography had a nice respectable short hairstyle; Human Geography was a dang long-haired hippy. Even though the Geographies had separate beings, personalities, and minds, they shared one vital organ, their heart.

After the split, the two were notably distinct in their choices as to which glasses they would wear, from the range of glasses provided by the –Isms. Whilst Human Geography was quite partial to most of the glasses available and liberally swapped and changed as he saw fit, Physical Geography applied a more consistent stricture to his choices. Physical Geography was most often seen wearing the glasses that Positivism and Rationalism had given him.

This split had significant impacts on Geography’s followers, as geographers attempted to reassert and redefine their study and practices within the academy in the wake of the damages and segregation caused by the battle. This was to be expected, given the impact of structural changes within the institution on Geography as a discipline, especially considering Unwin’s work on defining disciplines (5-7). However, despite being an expected and clearly understandable response, it is one that achieves very little to resolve the issues caused by the impact.

Human Geography’s and Physical Geography’s relationships with others began to grow as Restructure had forcibly aligned them with other disciplines, coercing certain relationships onto both Geographies. To the utter fury of those geographers already writing to re-define their position within the academy and keeping Geography pure. Thrift discusses this as a major problem for Geography, only second to the effects of “career-orientated” ideologies discussed previously (Thrift "The Future of Geography" 295). However, Thrift himself is of the opinion
that these new inter-disciplinary relationships were a positive opportunity for the discipline to grow and strengthen “by constantly exposing itself to competition” (Thrift "The Future of Geography" 295).

Restructure, observing that Physical Geography had a logical approach to his studies and a sound grasp of the scientific, used him productively in furthering the vocational ideologies Restructure was sent to enforce. Restructure saw to it that Physical Geography was aligned with emerging subject areas, most of which were occupationally explicit. In an Australian academic context, some of these areas were Surveying, Geology, “Town Planning, Environmental Studies or Tourism Management” (R. Jones 55). These alignments were achieved most commonly through the use of departmental mergers, transfers or faculty-wide restructurings at the institutional level (Holmes). For Physical Geography, survival meant stretching himself thin across numerous areas that gained prominence through their vocational marketability.

For Human Geography, the experiences of Restructure’s force were similar, locating him within the Social Sciences, where he shared his talents with other disciplines such as Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, and Political Science (Blunt; Johnston "Geography and the Social Science Tradition"). There Human Geography found many students who were equipped to nurture his unique knowledges, working with him to explore the humanistic aspects of geography (Blunt).

These inter-disciplinary relationships combined with the segregation of Geography’s new personified form led to profound confusion for our hero. After his identity crisis manifested physically, the competition from his new

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16 Some examples of where this inter-disciplinary approach to humanistic geography has been successful are the works of David Harvey, who uses sociology and geography to explore political issues concerning human geography. Also the works of Steve Pile are another example, as Pile draws on psychoanalysis in his geographical work. For more information, see: David Harvey, “What Kind of Geography for What Kind of Public Policy?,” Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 63 (1974), Harvey, Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography. Steve Pile, The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity (New York: Routledge, 1996).
disciplinary alliances were weakening his personified forms further; his sense of belonging within the academy fluctuating beyond repair. Our story, having reached its climax, leaves our hero in dire need of a resolution.

**Re-defining geography as discourse: empowering our hero for future survival?**

Where do we go from here? It would seem complications have arisen, changing our protagonist. Usually some form of resolution is expected of narratives and now would be the perfect opportunity to provide one. But can we have a resolution or resolutions to these complications? In light of the current state of Geography as a discipline it seems unlikely. Geography’s existential problem of theory, the strength of certain inter-disciplinary relationships, and his personified disciplinary self split into two parts, have resulted in his grasping for survival within the academy. I propose, for his progression, a shift from the disciplinary boundaries and form to a discursive form.

Geosophy refers to the study of geographical knowledges from any source and in any form (Wright "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography"). It believes that geographic knowledges are not held exclusively by geographers, but that all people have geographic knowledges, some universal and some unique to their individual roles and experiences. By engaging with geosophical discourse, we can return to the essence of Geography, before he was shaped by the forms and strictures afforded to him through his schooling. Such a discourse would need to focus on the core dimensions of geographic knowledges: scale, space, time, and thematic. So, with this purpose in mind, we can now move onto that resolution!

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The tension of this new form became too much for Geography. Since they were stretched so thin, amongst numerous areas, a disciplinary form was impractical for the modes in which Human and Physical Geography were now functioning. Human and Physical Geography needed to move freely. Also, the external pressure from other disciplines that they were involved with was adverse to alleviating this pain. Something needed to give. As the pressure built and the tension grew, unbeknownst to Human and Physical Geography, the give was occurring. Slowly, but surely, this new form was bursting. At first, little tears began to appear, until their skin ripped. It ripped right open, freeing their essence from its mortal disciplinary form. A non-corporeal version of the geographic emerged: geosophy.

Figure 4: Geography busting open, transforming into a state of Geosophy (image created by Gareth Bryan ©2013 Emma Joel)
This story leaves us in a transformed academic terrain. The map below provides us with an initial overview of this new terrain, so we are better orientated for where this next story, of Eatdirtzian Geosophy, begins. The maps used throughout this thesis are included as a source of navigation for the terrains covered within it.
Figure 5: Where the story of Eatdirtzian Geosophy begins, a post-structural academy (image created by Gareth Bryan ©2013 Emma Joel)
Introduction

…the wider universe of discourse centers on knowledge and ideas about man and milieu; anyone who inspects the world around him is in some measure a geographer. (Lowenthal "Geography, Experience and Imagination" 242)

It is essential from the onset that I clarify that the core of this thesis is located in literary criticism. A prologue was needed to help cast geography’s role within the story of this thesis. Geographic knowledges give us an interesting access point to texts. In my studies prior to my doctoral thesis, I spent a significant amount of time engaged with ideas of context and representation, and how these allowed us to explore individuals and their identities. However, while I conducted my initial research into geography proper for this thesis, I realised I could not work within the boundaries of geography as a discipline, given that as a discipline it has its own structural and identity problems, which I have attempted to highlight in the prologue. However, I needed a way to harness geographic knowledges so that I might better apply them within practices of literary criticism. This is where I discovered the concept of geosophy.

The goal of this research is to reconsider how literary critics engage with knowledges and subjectivities within texts. This is achieved through the proposal of an ethical approach to reading practice. Geosophy is used within this reading practice as a central access point into texts and this critical discussion. As a by-product of this research goal, the use of geographic knowledges within interdisciplinary reading practice may emerge.

The ‘What’, the ‘How’, and the ‘Why’ of Eatdirtzian Geosophy

The concept of geosophy has been defined as the study of knowledges about the earth as they manifest from any source, imagination, person, perspective or
subjective position (Wright "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography" 12). Etymologically, geosophy has its origins in Greek, where it is “compounded from ge meaning ‘earth’ and sophia meaning ‘knowledge’” (Wright "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography" 11-12).

The intention of John Kirtland Wright (who has been attributed with the deployment of the concept in contemporary geography) was for the term “geosophy” to denote the study of all geographic knowledges. Wright further defines this concept of geosophy as:

\[
\text{the study of geographical knowledge from any or all points of view}
\]
\[
\text{...it deals with the nature and expression of geographical knowledge both past and present ...it covers the geographical ideas, both true and false, of all manner of people... (Wright "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography" 12)}
\]

Wright’s interest extended to the desire to trace the evolution of geographic knowledges, a “geography of knowledge” (Wright "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography" 11). Wright proposed that we could achieve this through two ways: through studying “the geography of any or all forms of knowledge” and/or studying “geographic knowledge from any or all points of view” (Wright "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography" 11).

For Wright, it was of utmost importance to distinguish the geography of knowledge from cultural geography, noting that, although aligned in some ways, knowledge and culture are two very different things. However, their relationship is important. “Knowledge is fluid” and can transcend and infiltrate aspects of culture (Wright "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography" 11). Wright pleaded that too much attention is given to the knowledges that various branches of geographical research produced. Wright’s work focused on the geographic nature of knowledge itself. It is this epistemological focus of Wright’s initial work on the concept of geosophy that I embrace within my
research work. Hence, I composed the idea of an “Eadirtzian Geosophy” which emphasises the importance of the specific nature and location on the earth of the critic’s knowledge allowing them to reconcile their position and reading of texts.

Patrick McGreevy’s work highlights the fact that Wright’s definition of geosophy involves “the study of the world as people conceived of and imagine it” (McGreevy 48). McGreevy builds on this definition by noting William Kirk’s work on behavioural environment, which suggests that “the world people actually inhabit is the world they perceive” (McGreevy 48). This understanding emphasises the subjective and experiential nature of geosophy that was embedded in Wright’s initial accounts of the concept, which is crucial to my appropriation of geosophy as a critical literary approach.

David Lowenthal’s work adds to the growing understanding of geosophy, as he attempts to elucidate the relationship between the outside world and how that is understood inside our minds. He concludes:

> all types of experience, from those most closely linked with our everyday world to those which seem furthest removed, come together to make up our individual picture of reality. The surface of the earth is shaped for each person by refraction through cultural and personal lenses of custom and fancy. We are all artists and landscape architects, creating order and organizing space, time, and causality in accordance with our apperceptions and predilections. The geography of the world is unified only by human logic and optics, by the light and color of artifice, by decorative arrangement, and by ideas of the good, the true, and the beautiful. As agreement on such subjects is never perfect nor permanent, geographers too can expect only partial and evanescent concordance. (Lowenthal "Geography, Experience and Imagination" 260)

Lowenthal’s ideas here are most useful for the implementation of geosophy within a critical reading practice, as they emphasise the dynamic and subjective nature of geographic knowledges. His essay critically discusses personal, cultural, and
universally accepted constructions of geographic knowledges, which is a point of note for my research. Given the variety of sources, how can we address the multiple knowledges produced from various sources concurrently? Further, his work highlights key symbols of geographic knowledge, such as time and space, and concerns for the perception of geographic knowledges, such as relativity, physical, psychological, and biological factors.

So, what’s in a name? I know that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet (Shakespeare 37, Act 2, Scene 2, lines 43-44), but what about Geosophy? Originally, the name “Eatdirtzian Geosophy” developed as a way of identifying my work because Eat Dirt is my personal nickname. This identification allowed me to assign a name to my work so I could make distinctions between what I was doing with the concept of geosophy that was different to previous work on geosophy. However, as my research developed, this simple act of naming grew to have a significant force in shaping the “what”, the “how” and the “why” of Eatdirtzian Geosophy.

The naming of the theory I am developing afforded me an authority over the work at a theoretical level. It allowed me to ensure a reconciling ethic became embedded into the core of the theory and its practices. This ensured that epistemological beliefs and understandings were rooted within the work rather

than just being tacked or “bolted on” later in the process as an afterthought or “box-ticking” exercise. Such an approach allows the beliefs and understandings, which are the basis of the theory, to filter down into the practical uses of it and promote consistency.

Further, upon reflection, the name Eatdirtzian Geosophy is semantically apt. The idea of “dirt” being in the title draws your attention to ideas about earth and the land. Despite the epistemological approach to the research work, the content of the study is focused on just that – ideas about the land and earth. Additionally, the phrase “eat dirt” is used in contemporary slang often referring to taking a fall or being humbled by a challenge. The meaning and tone (or attitude) it carries seems fitting for the work given that Eatdirtzian Geosophy challenges the authority that critics and academic disciplines place on knowledges, so that they can re-value individual knowledges and their sources in academic practices.

It achieves this through an intersubjective reading lens. Intersubjectivity refers to the interactions that take place between different subjectivities (i.e. the state of being a subject, having an internal sense of self), including interactions between the self and the other or between the different positions of the self. Mansfield acknowledges that there are four broad ways in which the “term subject defines our relationship with the world:” the grammatical subject, the philosophical subject, the political-legal subject, and the subject as human (Mansfield 3-5). These interactions are used to shape meaning and realities about who we are and how we fit within the world by reinforcing shared or common understandings between a number of subject positions or by focusing on differences and divergent meanings that construct different subject positions. These interactions reinforce identity and an understanding of our own lives, and can often be mediated through cultural discourses such as those surrounding sexuality or ethnicity (Mansfield). In the case of this thesis, subjective positions will be mediated through geosophical discourse. When critics read a text, they should be vigilant about identifying different subjectivities they encounter in the process of reading through geosophy, including their own. An important contribution of this thesis is
that it provides critics, especially Australian literary critics, with an opportunity to explore their unique subject positions and what they can contribute to their work and the literary work of others.18

Eatdirtzian Geosophy applies the concept of geosophy to the realm of literary criticism. The concept of geosophy affords the theory of Eatdirtzian Geosophy the ability to consider multiple subjective positions and the geographic knowledges held by those positions. It is this concept of geosophy that allows this intersubjective reading to take place. A reconciling ethic is then needed in order to manage all the multiple subjective positions that are exposed through an intersubjective practice in a way that does not further colonise the information accessed from those positions or that is uncritical in its reproduction of any acts of epistemic violence. It allows the knowledge sourced from the multiple positions to be considered concurrently and critically, so as to not privilege one position over another, but instead to let them exist in relationship with each other.

Ultimately, as a by-product of this application of geosophy, Eatdirtzian Geosophy also contributes to the body of work on geosophy by furthering understandings of the geographic nature of knowledges through studying examples of geographic knowledges located in texts and considering how knowledge about the earth develops and can be communicated. This discursive approach involves studying the appearances of scale, time, and space within texts and how these contribute to individual constructions of geographic knowledge. For an Eatdirtzian approach to texts, this involves examining how multiple geosophical positions use and understand the three core concepts of scale, space, and time, and a critical discussion about how these uses and understandings may be different, similar or unexpected. In doing so, not only does the critic gain more insight into these core concepts, but they are also able to conduct a more comprehensive epistemological study of geosophy and what truths it may reveal about the nature of geographic

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18 In light of this discussion, and the discussion that continues throughout this introduction chapter, the term “intersubjective” is used in a descriptive sense throughout this thesis as a means of demonstrating how this understanding of intersubjectivity and subject positions relates to the application of geosophical reading practices.
knowledge and literary practices. In terms of literary practices, it demands that the literary critic establish a critical understanding of their own geosophical position and how that might influence their engagement with texts. Geosophical positions are a combination of an individual’s subjective positions and how they shape or influence the geographic knowledges that they possess. Reading texts in this way privileges the relationship that exists between an individual and their environments which shapes geographic knowledge.

Complex and diverse geosophical, cultural, and epistemological interfaces occur in every act of reading, as critics bring their own subjective positions, and ultimately, geographic knowledges to a text. At these junctures, a number of concerns arise for the study of geosophical discourse and the multitude of epistemologies that underpin it. Two concerns in particular are inter-subjective awareness, and the ethical and consistent assessment of both geographic knowledges and their sources. Understanding and valuing constructions of geographic knowledges presents as a key issue that needs to be addressed within the theory and its implementation. This issue is discussed in more depth throughout Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of the thesis through a focus on establishing meta-critical reading practices, an understanding of how geographic knowledges might be represented in texts and a critical discussion about the problematic nature of language and literacy for literary critics.

Once upon a time someone said to me “when you reach a fork in the road, take it!”19 I am particularly fond of this saying because of its ambiguous use of “it”, what is “it”? Does it refer to which prong of the fork one would or should take? Does “it” refer to both prongs? Because you can move in-between paths, but it would be physically improbable to occupy both prongs concurrently, and seeing as we are talking about world views and epistemologies, is it possible to fully occupy someone else’s world views? Is “it” a reference to the road less travelled? Or does “it” offer some suggestion that one must make one’s own road to an

19 Upon further investigation, this common quote has originated from the work of Yogi Berra. For more information about his works and famous quotes please see: Lawrence Peter (Yogi) Berra, Quotes by Yogi Berra, 2008, LTD Enterprises: A Berra Family Corporation, Available: http://www.yogiberra.com/yogi-isms.html, 14th November 2013.
extent? I am reminded of this saying when I consider the nature of the interfaces literary and cultural critics face in the process of engaging with texts, because there is no exact or clear answer. The negotiation of these diverse interfaces is often as ambiguous and unclear as the “it” in the saying.

As a critic, I would be drawn to the side of the fork that was kinder to, reinforced or supported my own subjective positions rather than pursue the unknown; this decision varies, whether it be subconsciously made, or consciously out of fear of the unknown or an ethical choice as to not misrepresent something other than myself. What decisions do critics make? Are they proactive in their decision making? Are these decisions misrepresented as “objective”? Could there be the provision of some sort of guide for critics when they reach a critical fork in the road, so they may feel confident in pursuing whichever path they choose? Is there a way of negotiating a new path, a bush track which zig-zags back and forth between the two paths perhaps? What happens when a critic reaches a three or more pronged fork in a path? How can the theory of Eadtirtzian Geosophy address this problem? How can it provide critics with some sort of guide for when they reach these critical forks in the road? Could it equip critics with some tricks for the implementation of this theory? A reconciling ethic plays a pivotal role in the theory of Eadtirtzian Geosophy by offering critics a standpoint of acceptance and consideration; in that they can accept that sometimes an exact answer, the “it”, is not clear, and that they can consider the shared and divergent understandings offered by an array of subject positions represented by the various prongs in the path.

The notion of a reconciling ethic allows for an Eadtirtzian reading of text to spread into other readings and interpretations, issues and polices. Eadtirtzian Geosophy draws from these things as part of its reconciling ethic to demonstrate that none of us, nor the work we do, functions in a vacuum, but instead our positions and work are constantly informed by a myriad of contextual factors. The idea of a reconciling ethic is informed in the following ways, as outlined in Figure 1 below.
A reconciling ethic locates critics in a position to reconcile themselves with their subject positions as well as those informing the texts that they study. Emerging from Australian contexts, the theory of a reconciling ethic draws from the political, historical, social and cultural climates of those contexts. The theme of reconciliation is embedded within these contexts. This can be seen most obviously in the recent social movements towards reconciliation between Australia’s Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous communities, such as those promoted by the national organisation, Reconciliation Australia (Australia). This push towards reconciliation marks the first steps needed to start repairing the damages caused by Australia’s colonial history and colonial present by promoting positive changes in the relationships between community groups. Part of this relationship is a clear respect and recognition of the “special place, culture, rights and contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples” (Australia para
2). Further, the most influential part of this movement is the understanding that true reconciliation is about these communities moving forward together, it is not focused on conflict or divisive approaches which will perpetuate further discordance between the groups, nor is it focused on segregation or assimilation in its approach, instead it asks for co-operation between diverse groups. To achieve this level of co-operation, there needs to be reciprocal dialogues that promote understanding about the diverse needs, perspectives, and experiences of all groups. This notion of reciprocal dialogues strongly informs the ways in which the reconciling ethic functions in Earthdzian Geosophy. These dialogues allow us to move through past wrongs or unethical treatment of knowledge and experiences by stepping away from oppressing knowledge or knowledge sources and experiences, and by being open to locating these knowledges and experiences in a way that lets us consider both through open dialogues.

Nationally, there have been several events that add to the promotion of reconciliation within Australian contexts. Notably, this includes Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd’s 2008 delivery of the Australian Federal Government’s official apology to the Stolen Generation and Indigenous communities for the government practice of removing children from their families as part of the Assimilation Policy introduced in 1937, and the subsequent harmful and intergenerational effects that this act has caused many Indigenous families and communities (Australian Government). Other annual events are the celebration of National Reconciliation Week and the National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week.

Further in terms of political, social, cultural, and historical contexts of Australia, a reconciling ethic is also informed by Australia’s identity as a multicultural nation. Gregory Melleuish explains that multiculturalism is complex with multiple meanings (Melleuish The Packaging of Australia). He attempts to break down the complexity of the concept by identifying the three levels on which multiculturalism commonly operates in three main ways, through:
1) The recognition of cultural diversity, with the main focus being placed on ethnic diversity. This common understanding of multiculturalism is problematic because it focuses on ethnicity at the expense of other factors that determine cultural identities, such as age, sexuality and religion.

2) The development of public policies (i.e. legislation) that address issues of cultural diversity. However, this can include a level of “social engineering,” which has already been demonstrated through Australian Governments’ (both State and Federal) protection and assimilation policies that sought to colonise Indigenous Australians.

3) An implication of a shift or transition from monoculturalism. This shift is often celebrated as having occurred successfully and as being the “new” ideal of Australian life and society. (Melleuish "Multiculturalism" 102-03)

Multiculturalism that focuses on maintaining recognition of diverse social groups or units based on ethnicity operate as an “ethnic straightjacket,” because they keep ethnic groups separated and classified often from the perspective of an Anglo-gaze, which constructs a hierarchy between racial groups. In these approaches, ethnicity is romanticised and Anglo-Australian experiences are demonised, drawing on the cultural myths of Australia as a cultural wasteland (Fiske, Hodge and Turner; Melleuish "Multiculturalism"). Melleuish claims that this is not true; multiculturalism and inter-cultural relationships denote a truer or more realistic notion of multiculturalism. This idea is linked with Marcia Langton’s discussion about intersubjective dialogues which will be discussed later in this chapter (Langton Well, I Heard It).

These classifications based on ethnicity are reductive, as ethnicity is not the only marker of culture. It denies the importance of other cultural markers such as age, religion, sexuality, lifestyle (such as food, recreational activities, and attire), socio-economic class, and geographic location. Choice also becomes a key factor of real lived experiences of multiculturalism and a shift to individuality through a
promotion of individual experiences of multicultural identities (as in the individual may have many cultural identities which are determined by various cultural markers), as opposed to reducing multicultural experiences to ethnic solidarity. Melleuish notes that this shift to individualism is promoted in a post-national context due to internationalisation and the fragmentation of cultural identities (i.e. an understanding that there is not one experience of cultural identity) (Melleuish *The Packaging of Australia*). This shift to individualism is a growing trend given the influences of globalisation has had on the world and the emergence of inter-cultural dialogues.

Historical and political understandings of multiculturalism work from a linear perspective of time – the monocultural past versus the ideal multicultural present – and, in doing so, they create a mythological dichotomy in our collective national identity where the past is the “bad” dystopia and the present symbolises the ideal utopia (Hage "At Home in the Entrails"). These myths about our national identity do not account for the (real) lived experiences of the cultural homogeneity promoted during 1900-1950s to achieve social order (Melleuish *The Packaging of Australia* 47), which treated ethnicity as “frozen cultural divisions,” and the “sameness” of the Australian suburbs. A cultural homogeneity that is still ever present within Australian societies today, which a linear perspective of time denies.

In the 1970s the strict adherence to the White Australia Policy was changed to one that admitted non-Europeans; by the 70s, there was an emerging recognition and promotion of Australian society as multi-cultural, pluralistic, and tolerant. This replaced earlier national mythologies with new ideas of Australian society: privileging plurality, tolerance, and local cultures and practices making one big happy family of a nation. These were especially promoted under the Hawke and Keating Labour governments (from 1984-91 and 1991-96 respectively) (Melleuish *The Packaging of Australia*). In contemporary Australian contexts, our identity as a multicultural nation is being revisited with the different political, racial, and economic rhetoric at play regarding how the country proceeds in
meeting the needs of refugees and asylum seekers arriving at Australian shores. The lived experiences of multicultural Australia and the contexts that inform them and how texts respond to ideas about multicultural Australia are to be considered and reconciled in subsequent chapters of this thesis during readings of Tom Cho’s short stories from his compilation, *Look Who’s Morphing*, and the film, *Lucky Miles*.

Ultimately, these understandings and classifications of multiculturalism are problematic because, as Australian-Lebanese cultural critic Ghassan Hage notes, common understandings of multiculturalism operate from within a paradigm of recognition (McArthur). A paradigm of recognition is problematic because it offers a lip-service approach to diversity. It does not go into the depth and understanding that a more reciprocal dialogue might achieve through the promotion of intersubjectivity, in which experiences and perspectives from individuals’ subject positions are exposed and communicated. Diverse subjective experiences of Australia’s social, political, cultural, and historical contexts inform a reconciling ethic, its need and operation – as we strive to move beyond approaches that limit understandings and experiences of our national identity. A collective understanding about Australian’s national identity needs to start becoming reconciled with the multitude of actual lived experiences of this identity. These ideas are further explored throughout various chapters within this thesis.

The reconciling ethic of this research is further informed by educational contexts too. In particular, the ethics associated with how we treat knowledge, as literary critics, and in our other roles as academics, researchers, and educators. It is unethical to oppress or subjugate knowledges or people; different –isms throughout the evolution of the academy have made this known, and yet we continue to do so through predominantly western modes of research and education. So, how do we address it? The onus should not be placed on what has been othered by traditional approaches within the western academy to attempt to validate its inclusion in an exclusive mode, but rather a focus shift needs to occur
that places the onus on the exclusive mode to unpack its operation. This idea is further developed during Chapter 4 of this thesis, through an EDG analysis of Senior Law Man Bill Neidjie’s *Story About Feeling*.

The reconciling ethic in Eatdirtzian Geosophy is informed by practices of decolonisation and two-way learning education models. Decolonisation is a precarious notion when applied to research methodology, in that to function in an idealised way it really embodies a two part process. However, this does not always happen when applied in academic practices. The first part of decolonisation involves the act of deconstruction, which allows for academics to address the past and current colonial restrictions on their practices and the knowledges they work with. This includes “taking apart the story [and] revealing underlying texts” that privileges western academic knowledges and practices (L. T. Smith 3). However, deconstruction is only the first part of effective decolonisation. The second part involves the establishment or revisiting of modes for operating outside of this deconstruction, this is often where academic practices fail. These modes of operation need to ensure worth and value of academic practices and research for all participants. There has been a push for community involvement in academic practices, ensuring that researchers give back to the communities, however these approaches may be somewhat tokenistic. Linda Tuhiwai Smith suggests modes of operation that promote self-determination and active knowledge sharing. She notes:

> I use the term ‘sharing knowledge’ deliberately, rather than the term ‘sharing information’ because to me the responsibility of researchers and academics is not simply to share surface information (pamphlet knowledge) but to share the theories and analyses which inform the way knowledge and information are constructed and represented. (L. T. Smith 16)

It is this understanding of knowledge sharing that occurs at the second stage of decolonisation that informs the reconciling ethic and meta-critical approach in Eatdirtzian Geosophy. Specifically, that a literary critic is not solely examining other sources of knowledge, but they can also share information about how critics
themselves construct knowledge within and through their practices, in this way a reciprocal dialogue emerges. Additionally, the central focus on geosophy further informs this function of decolonisation because it promotes the communication between academic and lay person; speaking to rhetoric about the real-world value of academic work – that it should not be isolated in an ivory tower.

The idea of mutual learning or shared learning processes are also discussed extensively in Raewyn Connell’s study of social science theories and epistemology, which she brings back to implications for an Australian context. Connell highlights that “Southern Theory…though certainly embodying a view-from-below on a world scale, has a more complex relationship with dominant systems of knowledge. Existing Southern Theory points to a more engaged relationship between knowledge systems, and foreshadows a mutual learning process on a planetary scale” (Connell 222). This is of utmost importance to consider when approaching the concept of a reconciling ethic. For Australian literary critics and academics, there is a need for them to reconcile the influences of epistemologies from the northern hemisphere and their current geosophical position. For Australian literary critics and academics this highlights another aspect of the reciprocal dialogues that must take place, by reconciling their ways of thinking, which have been significantly shaped by global knowledge sources, with their geographical location and local knowledges.

Acknowledging global influences on this reconciling ethic is important too, especially influences that seek to critique or decolonise the ways we think about knowledge. Willie Ermine’s discussion of North American Aboriginal epistemologies critiques western sciences’ approaches, which privilege the objective in the search for knowledge and work at subjugating inward or subjective knowledges. He notes that these approaches lead to the fragmentation of knowledges, a fragmentation which is embedded in Western worldviews and ideologies. Further, it is contrary to the Indigenous worldview that he depicts, which offers a combination of both “inward” and “outward” approaches to understanding and positions the self as a key source of knowledge construction.
“Ideology,” he reminds us, “is one determinant of the quality of research on epistemology” (Ermine 102). The ideology underpinning the reconciling ethic is one of equity.

However, in approaching ideologies of equity, academics must be extremely wary of modes of “inclusivity” that often do more harm than good. In an attempt to move away from tokenistic modes of inclusivity and towards more genuine engagement at cultural interfaces, the reconciling ethic of this project draws on two-way teaching and learning models that are emerging in a number of Australian educational contexts. These models build on this notion of reciprocal dialogues through a focus on reconsidering the positioning of Indigenous students and content within western education systems at policy, curricula, and community engagement levels. Through these focuses, such models aims to integrate Indigenous’ worldviews into the “learning experiences…and…culture” of educational institutions (Purdie, Milgate and Bell xviii).

The concept of two-way learning that underpins these models can be understood as going “both ways” (Purdie, Milgate and Bell xx). This concept is best explained by Nola Purdie, Gina Milgate, and Hannah Rachel Bell, who note that “two ways”:

...infers a partner relationship between First Peoples and Settler cultures in Australia. By extension this means that both cultures have much to learn from each other, and that teaching and learning should occupy neutral, negotiated space in which neither presumes superiority or authoritarian dominance. It is sometimes called the ‘third space’, to imply that, like the littoral zone where land and sea meet, it comprises both, yet is not exclusively, consistently, uniformly or permanently either. In fact this third space is a kind of cultural littoral where the two primary cultures of Australia meet and fuse to create its own either/or/both identity. It is a difficult space to negotiate because it is dynamic and fluid, and its
inhabitants reflect as many variations as a coastline. (Purdie, Milgate and Bell xx)

Building on this poetic definition of two way learning is the practices offered by a number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian educators. These models of two way learning have common features: respect and appreciation, an element of negotiation, collaboration, decolonising of colonial discourses, the development of cross-cultural relationships, the use of story, and draw from local knowledges. One model offered by Tyson Yunkaporta and Melissa Kirby is that of “yarning”, and for my North American audiences, no, this does not have anything to do with knitting or textiles! Yarn is an Australian Aboriginal English word for storytelling (Yunkaporta and Kirby). Yunkaporta and Kirby focus on the use of “yarning” as a research methodology for their study of, and knowledge sharing about Indigenous and western pedagogies that promote two way teaching and learning (Yunkaporta and Kirby).

In this meta-yarn (a yarn about yarning as pedagogy), Yunkaporta and Kirby offer eight key pedagogical approaches: story sharing, learning maps, non-verbal, symbols and images, land links, non-linear, deconstruct-reconstruct, and community links. Yunkaporta claims that it is essential for two-way pedagogy to focus on the “how” of Indigenous culture, not just the “what”; “we’re talking about our ways, not our things. We’re learning through culture, not just about culture. We are studying outsider knowledge using our own ways – not studying our own knowledge using the ways of outsiders” (Yunkaporta and Kirby 206). These eight pedagogical approaches focus on Indigenous knowledges as processes, such a focus is essential because it moves away from the tokenistic ways in which Indigenous knowledges have commonly been treated within western educational institutions (Yunkaporta and Kirby 207). In their discussion of these eight pedagogical approaches, they demonstrate yarning as a research mode. They note that yarning has key features of respect, authenticity, and working from a relationship of trust, and that as an example of story sharing pedagogy it is interrelated with the other seven pedagogical approaches. Yarning
draws on non-verbal communications, symbols, and images. Further, yarns are always located within contexts of land and community; they do not exist in isolation from them. They explain that the pedagogy of deconstruct-reconstruct reinforces holistic approaches to learning and knowledge, which focuses on the whole to gain an understanding of “overall meaning, purpose and structure” before analysing individual components (Yunkaporta and Kirby 208).

In our treatment and study of epistemologies, social justice issues can and will manifest in our work. By locating an informed reconciling ethic at the core of the theoretical position of Eatdirtzian Geosophy I am attempting to embed modes for addressing these issues as they arise. However, I am not naive and understand that such idealistic approaches do not just magically happen. I acknowledge these limitations from a deeply entrenched colonised position and a highly educated privileged position; a position that is both a product of western education systems and a producer of western education systems, through my roles as student, teacher, and academic. Raewyn Connell emphasises that there will always be limitations in theories in her work, Southern Theory, noting that when working in what “Noel Pearson called ‘the space between two systems’ [there is] the continuing need to make an effort for recognition. We should not worry if that recognition is always partial; there are limits to any system” of knowledges (Connell 225). What this suggests however, is that a theory that attempts to work within these spaces needs to be continuing in its efforts and enable commitment. It is an onerous task to educate and retrain our ways of knowing and valuing knowledge and knowledge sources, to reconcile previous power imbalances and oppression in the treatment of knowledges within the western academy. To be successful, we need more than a context-informed ideological position, we also need informed practices that will allow academics, and literary critics in particular, to tangibly commit to, and strive for, such a position. This is the work of the a-colonial reading position and meta-critical reading practice within Eatdirtzian Geosophy.
Every reading of text is undoubtedly selective. However, through a meta-critical process critics may be able to deconstruct how they navigate these contextual restraints and factors that inform a reconciling ethic. It is at this level of deconstruction where writing research like this, reading research like this, and having discussions like this becomes so important. If people are to change the way we think, we need to be aware of what is constantly at play and shaping our ways of thinking so that we can critically reflect and monitor our own behaviours and thinking. By starting there, we may be leaping onto the stepping stones towards bigger changes. In the grand scheme of things and maybe from the idealistic and academic position from which I approach these ideas, these stepping stones do have a place in moving towards equality. As part of an ethical approach, reconciling means if we want to move towards something more like equality, we need to begin by avoiding aggressive and divisive approaches.

So, what is being reconciled in Eatdirtzian Geosophy? Figure 7 below demonstrates the levels on which a reconciling ethic functions in Eatdirtzian Geosophy, at the core is reconciling different or multiple epistemologies via geosophy. The second layer focuses on reconciling the multiplicity of geosophical positions that emerge and interact in acts of reading, this mode of reconciling occurs explicitly between the critic and the text. The outer layers reflect the meta-critical process required to constantly strive for an a-colonial reading position, by reminding us that the critic and the text both need to be reconciled within their own environments. In order to achieve this, a meta-critical process enables the critic to constantly reflect on their own (and the text’s own) geosophical positions as they read. Conceptualising the reconciling ethic functioning at different levels reinforces the geosophical discourse that focuses the reading and the meta-critical approach that needs to be taken in reading practices.
The concept of geosophy extends itself to a combination of both literary and cultural studies. Drawing on the idea that any person, place or thing has, and is a source of, geographic knowledges expands our notion of “text”. It also introduces core ideas from cultural studies, in that studying the text (literary or otherwise) is just as important as studying the cultural moments and contexts in which those texts are received and transmitted. The texts requiring geosophical analysis then
are not just limited to literary sources but, include the critics, people, and contexts involved in cultural moments. And, this is exactly where the work of Eatdirtzian Geosophy needs to begin, ensuring that the epistemologies underpinning the geosophical positions that emerge within the text and the cultural moments and contexts surrounding the study of the text are able to be reconciled. We can achieve this through a layered approach to our reading practices. Beginning with reading a text in the traditional sense through an analysis of geosophical discourse, this reading is then reconciled with the critics’ own geosophical positions. This reconciliation then opens up an intersubjective dialogue between the critic, the text, and their contexts.

This notion drives Chapter 1 of the thesis, in which I discuss the nature of geosophical confluence and conflict. To further elucidate this discussion the chapter offers readings of Dorthea MacKellar’s iconic poem, *My Country*, TZU’s song lyrics *The Horse You Rode In On*, and Ezekiel Kwaymullina and Sally Morgan’s picture book, *My Country*. In exploring different geosophical positions, the first chapter surveys the three core geographic dimensions of scale, time and space. This exploration focuses on scale, unpacking the concept of scale which helps to further develop an understanding of a reconciling ethic and how it functions. Throughout this discussion, the chapter also works to identify what a meta-critical reading practice might look like for Eatdirtzian Geosophy.

Through this meta-critical reading practice, the first chapter demonstrates the ideal of an “a-colonial” reading position that is embedded into the theory of an Eatdirtzian Geosophy. The concept of an a-colonial standpoint was first cited in Tyson Yunkaporta’s doctoral research in Indigenous education. He described the term as being used to “describe a non-oppositional Indigenous standpoint” which he intended to use “as part of the reconciling ethic of [his] research” (Yunkaporta "Aboriginal Pedagogies" v). In order to avoid the misrepresentation of Indigenous people or culture, it should be noted that as a non-Indigenous researcher, I have applied this concept of a-colonialism in my own work in a much broader way. As I cannot provide an Indigenous standpoint and I will be engaging with Indigenous,
non-Indigenous and a range of multicultural texts, I have broadened the concept to cover non-oppositional standpoints, generally, in regards to knowledge. In doing so, it forces me to be meta-critical, so that I can acknowledge and address when I may be colonising an instance of geographic knowledge in my reading practices. It is through the process of occupying an a-colonial reading position as a critic that I hope to demonstrate how one could create a new path that weaves between the paths of the fork in the road. A new path that flows in two-ways, as academics account for their own colonial positions rather than following a path in the one direction of speaking to and objectifying the positions of the colonised.

A reconciling ethic encourages a deeper understanding of knowledges. This prevents the further fragmentation of knowledge by providing another theoretical position from which to operate. In doing so, it challenges epistemological approaches that operate by focusing on dichotomies. This reconciling ethic is significant for those working at cultural interfaces. In avoiding the fragmenting of knowledge, used in “us and them” and “black and white” approaches, such an approach allows for a cross-over of knowledge on particular themes or concepts. For an Eatdirtzian reading this would include a cross-over of knowledge on the geographic concepts of time, space and scale, which will lead to a better understanding of those concepts. Further, this cross-over is significant as it indicates a relatedness within the nature of geographic knowledges. As literary critics, it gives us scope for engaging in both sameness and difference.

The value of a reconciling ethic for Eatdirtzian Geosophy and its consideration of knowledge, especially in Australian contexts, is significant. A reconciling ethic allows for a shift towards deep understanding when working with geographic knowledge and its diverse sources. It does so by drawing attention to similarities or areas of overlap, areas of difference and any “unexpected alternatives”20 that

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20 The concept of “unexpected alternatives” being exposed from the study of conflicting geosorical positions was one that two of my doctoral supervisors, Brooke Collins-Gearing and Caroline Webb, were only too happy to remind me about through the writing stages of my work on scale. Clearly, residing at the bottom of my stormy little tea cup that was the PhD experience, I was unable to see past the clouds to recognise this possibility and include it. Thankfully, their voices were loud enough to be heard over the thunder!
may arise between and from multiple knowledge sources. This is opposed to the treatment of knowledge(s) that we may find in more oppositional stances, which may solely focus on differences or exclude knowledge based on differences. For instance, occupying a post-colonial stance in the treatment of knowledge is problematic because it privileges a particular perspective and perpetuates dominant epistemologies. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes, post-colonial discourses are resisted and viewed by Indigenous intellectuals “as the convenient invention of western intellectuals which reinscribes their power to define the world” (L. T. Smith 14). For me, from an Australia context, I find post-colonial discourses further problematic because they operate from a linear perspective of knowledge construction and experience, denoting that colonisation was an experience of the past. In Australian contexts, this is very dangerous, given that it denies the cyclic impact that acts of colonisation has had on our Indigenous communities and the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Further it excludes the experiences of those who are still actively experiencing colonisation in contemporary contexts for Indigenous, migrant and refugee communities.

Despite being informed by post-colonial theories, colonising and anti-colonising discourses, and decolonising methods at some level, it is through this reconciling ethic that an a-colonial stance offers something that post-colonial and anti-colonial standpoints do not.²¹ Embracing an a-colonial standpoint at a theoretical level in this approach to geosophy provides a consistent scope for re-valuing and assessing geographic knowledge(s) and their sources in a move towards deep understanding of knowledges about the nature of time, space, and scale which are core emergences of geosophy. It allows the critic to move between paths in the pursuit of these geosophical components, rather than strictly subscribing to the one path which may ignore or deny opportunities to study the multitude of examples of geosophical discourse.

²¹ I have included ‘decolonising’ here as it is a tool (or method) rather than a theoretical position, given that sources I have engaged with that discuss decolonising, such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s work, position it as a research methodology.
It is important to acknowledge my use of “standpoint” here. To explain the theory behind the use of this terminology, I draw from Martin Nakata’s work in which he develops a theory for Indigenous standpoint. Similar to Nakata’s work, my use of standpoint is not interchangeable for a perspective or a viewpoint (Nakata *Discipling the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines* 213). The term must be expanded from just experience to include an understanding of knowledge production and the conditioning of knowledge at cultural interfaces. Drawing on the work of Gaile Pohlhaus, Nakata notes that bringing the situation of ourselves as ‘knowers’ into the frame does not make ourselves the focus of the study but will ‘involve investigating the social relations within which we as ‘knowers’ know’. This will involve knowing where to look, and which social relations might be informing our knowledge. (Pohlhaus cited in Nakata *Discipling the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines* 214) Nakata goes on to state that a standpoint “has to be produced” and is more than a “simple reflection of experience” (Nakata *Discipling the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines* 214). Nakata states that it is a distinct form of analysis, and is itself both a discursive construction and an intellectual device to persuade others and elevate what might not have been a focus of attention by others. It is not deterministic of any truth but lays open a basis from which to launch a range of possible arguments for a range of possible purposes. (Nakata *Discipling the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines* 214)

Yunkaporta’s concept of an a-colonial standpoint emerges from the reconceptualisation of standpoint theory within Indigenous research models such as Nakata’s work. He demonstrates this understanding within his work on pedagogy by shifting the focus of Indigenous inclusion in curricula from content for study to processes for studying (Yunkaporta "Aboriginal Pedagogies"; Yunkaporta and Kirby). What is crucial to acknowledge, in terms of applying an a-colonial standpoint in our reading practices, is that this understanding of
standpoint involves this level of analysis. For literary critics to reach an a-colonial standpoint, we must constantly analyse the ways we have come to “know” when working at cultural, literary and geographical interfaces.

However, occupying an a-colonial standpoint as a reading position is not without its problems either, and to overlook these concerns would create another theoretical position with gaps. Yunkaporta notes in further discussion of a-colonialism and a reconciling ethic that:

a-colonialism is an illusion, or a delusion. It doesn’t really exist and cannot exist for a person born into a colony – Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. But it’s something to strive for, and an interesting theoretical position. (Yunkaporta "Personal Communication")

In acknowledging the limitations of a-colonialism, he is also able to highlight its functions, namely, that by occupying (or striving to occupy) an a-colonial position theoretically, one is able to “identify [one’s] own subjectivities” (Yunkaporta "Personal Communication"). This is vital to the implementation of Eatdirtzian Geosophy, as it provides a strategy for the critic to read him/herself. This can occur through a constant negotiation between the text, critic, and cultural moments. A meta-critical process, in which the critic reads through their own subjectivities and colonising practices, will help avoid passive or “objective” approaches to criticism. The implications of this for Eatdirtzian Geosophy is that the non-oppositional tone of a-colonialism as a theoretical position filters into methodological practices where it allows the critic to occupy, accommodate or move between multiple geographic knowledge sources in the pursuit of geosophy.

This is an important contribution to the field of literary criticism. In particular, such a process builds on the work of Marcia Langton and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. In her seminal essay, ‘Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television…’ Marcia Langton critically discusses intersubjective practices and how they create positions of “object” and “subject” for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. In doing so, she highlights three main modes of cultural and textual construction: “the Aboriginal person interacting with other Aboriginal
people in social situations located largely within Aboriginal culture;” the constant use of stereotypes and myths about Aboriginal peoples generated by non-Indigenous Australians removed from dialogues and “substantial first hand contact with Aboriginal people;” and “actual dialogue” that transpires when Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people interact with each other, where “imagined models of each other” are processed and readjusted (Langton Well, I Heard It 34-35). It is this third mode of textual and cultural constructions that my work draws from. A constant process of negotiation and meta-critical reading practice is required to move away from the common processes of objectification in academic and literary practices. The aim of this negotiation is not to objectify, but rather to create a process of subjectification.

Further, this meta-critical reading process that the literary critic engages with draws on the notions of unlearning and deconstruction from Spivak’s work in subaltern studies, where the subject needs to address their unacknowledged privilege and positions. This can be achieved through measuring silences, questioning of the investigator (which decentres their exclusive authority), and shifting the focus, or “object” for investigation, to include the assessment of investigator and ideologies. Further, Spivak’s account of deconstruction underpins my understanding and intentions for the proposed meta-critical process:

deconstruction does not say there is no subject, there is no truth. It simply questions the privileging of identity so that someone is believed to have the truth. It is not the exposure of error. It is constantly and persistently looking into how truths are produced. …Deconstruction, if one wants a formula, is among other things, a persistent critique of what one cannot not want. (Spivak cited in 276)

Through the application of negotiation and a meta-critical reading practice, this research plays a pivotal role in exploring how literary critics might use an a-colonial reading position as a decolonising theoretical position which has been influenced by Spivak and Langton. And, furthermore, if an a-colonial reading position might be a valuable contribution to the field. Within the scope of this
thesis work, as a non-Indigenous researcher, striving for an a-colonial position allows me to constantly address issues concerning misrepresentation and Indigenous subjective positions within my practices.

The theory and use of a reconciling ethic towards understanding geographic knowledge in Eatdirtzian Geosophy addresses the concerns for diversity at a theoretical level that McDowell raises for geography (and other academic disciplines). As previously mentioned, McDowell, in her discussion of the problematic nature of theory in geography, acknowledges that it is necessary for a theory to not completely discard “old certainties” or ways of knowing, as this clearly would not be a “whole-hearted embrace of relativism” (McDowell 297). She suggests, that for geography it is essential to utilise a theory that allows the clarification of diverse ways of knowing, in such a way that it concomitantly affords us the ability to highlight the “significance” in such distinctions and differences (McDowell 297). This should be the ultimate role of geographic theory, and this is the ideology an Eatdirtzian geosophy is purporting in terms of approaches to epistemology and the valuing of knowledge through the use of a reconciling ethic and the a-colonial reading position it facilitates.

The use of geosophy as an access point for texts becomes critical as it promotes a study of diverse ways of knowing as previously discussed by McDowell. A reconciling ethic encourages the comparison and interaction of various geographical understandings, or geosophical positions, as they appear in texts. In doing so, critics are able to subvert dichotomies commonly used in approaches to knowledges, such as some ways of knowing being privileged as objective truth and others discarded as merely subjective. However, this is not to suggest that traditional geography be disregarded as a source of geosophy; instead, a theory that draws on geosophy shifts the focus from traditional geography (the discipline) being the dominant source of knowledge about the earth to a shared focus which is inclusive of a variety of geosophical positions. Further, by highlighting the differences and similarities between geosophical positions in our analysis of texts we are able to learn more about the nature of geosophical
concepts, such as space, time and scale, and the roles that language, identity and geopolitics play within these concepts.

If you refer to the cartoon in figure 8, this text can be used to remind us of the need for this theory. In viewing this text, it is evident that one source of humour is the juxtaposition of disparate world views. Through the use of anthropomorphism, the polar bears are positioned to display what I would take to be human world views. These world views are their apparent concern for knowing what day of the week it is, because from a human perspective we routinely measure and plan our activities through shared understandings of time, such as the days of the week, months and years. The polar bears’ use of calendar time to measure their existence is humorous because from my experience it seems incongruous to the space they occupy within the picture. I cannot help but question their need for such knowledge, given that they are drifting on an iceberg in the middle of the sea; such knowledge appears juxtaposed to their current place.
This juxtaposition emphasises that worldviews and epistemologies are essentially related to cultural moments or contexts; or as one of my colleagues says, “we are all just polar bears floating on our own icebergs” (Personal communication with Brewer). Ultimately, this image alerts us to the need for a theory that allows for an investigation of this relationship between epistemology and these contexts. Eatdirtzian Geosophy provides that theory, in addition to an understanding that the analysis of texts can be useful in making this relationship apparent for investigation. Using a focus on geosophy and geosophical concepts in combination with literary criticism and cultural studies is significant as it gives voice to distinctive voices and knowledges which have not always been heard or dominant.

The work offered in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5 of this thesis set out to measure some of the silences in current literary criticism. Namely, they explore colonising concerns regarding critics’ engagement with ideas about language and literacy in multicultural literature, and constructions of genre in approaches to reading Australian Chick Lit. Drawing on examples from Tom Cho’s *Looking Who’s Morphing* and Meme McDonald and Boori Monty Pryor’s *The Binna Binna Man*, Chapter 2 discusses the problematic nature of literacy and how that influences critics’ engagement with texts that use a variety of languages. In these instances, a critic’s understandings of literacy and a text’s multi- or bi-lingual language usage present as complex intersubjective junctures that an Eatdirtzian approach to reading equips critics to navigate. Chapter 5 focuses on contemporary approaches to reading Australian Chick Lit, with an analysis of Anita Heiss’s novels, *Not Meeting Mr Right* and *Avoiding Mr Right*. In a review of Heiss’s work, the chapter discusses various ways in which generic constructions and readings of the novels are limited and colonising. The chapter further highlights gaps within contemporary literary practices that an Eatdirtzian reading of text explicitly addresses. Both chapters review two distinct current circumstances in literary studies, in order to locate Eatdirtzian Geosophy and offer explicit examples of how critics can approach texts and their practices geosophically.
An Eatdirtzian approach allows for the individual in-text geosophical understandings to be highlighted regardless of whether it might be similar, contrary or subversive to the critics’ geosophical understandings. It allows critics to decentre their perspectives when engaging with texts, in an intersubjective process that ensures that the subjectivity of the critic and the in-text geosophical positions are both acknowledged in striving for an a-colonial stance from which knowledge is examined.

Returning to the image of the polar bears can help locate the concepts of time, space, and scale in the geosophical. Time in texts emerges as a discursive concept of geosophy; from my geosophical position that is informed by contemporary ecological guilt and discussions of global warming, I perceive time as life-span when I engage with this text. I am left wondering how much “time” these bears have left to live as they drift along on their iceberg in the middle of nowhere. However, if we approach the text through an Eatdirtzian lens, we must consider what geosophical positions the text privileges. As critics we can identify that the use of language and humour here works to emphasise the polar bears’ understanding of time. Their concern for time is located in the present moment, as indicated in their lackadaisical discussion of the days of the week. Also, their concern for time indicates a focus on the short term as they attempt the measure the week through days. These focuses on the short term and present moment are distinctly contrasted with my focus on life-span. An Eatdirtzian approach forces the critic to be aware of their own geosophical position when engaging with texts, and in doing so, seeks to place discussions of the ownership and the re-valuing of knowledges that are found within texts into their analysis. This instance of our individual reactions to, thoughts about, and possibly contrasting interpretations of this visual text, is an indication of how Eatdirtzian Geosophy may be useful for decentring reading practices and the epistemological positions that inform them.

Chapter 3 of this thesis offers a continued discussion of the theory behind an Eatdirtzian Geosophy by explicitly considering literary representations of geosophy. The chapter draws on examples from the film, *Lucky Miles*, and short
stories from Tom Cho’s *Look Who’s Morphing* to highlight some of the ways geographic dimensions of time, space and scale appear within literary material through revisiting Wright’s ideas about the geographic imagination. These examples range from discussion of navigation tools and maps to geopolitical examples. In doing so, this chapter attempts to further establish the ways in which critics can approach literary material through a geosophical discourse, while working to ascertain what common emergences of a geosophical discourse entail.

So, why does this link between geography and literary criticism matter? Why is it of value? Why do we need to resort to the theory? Why do we need an Eatdirtzian Geosophy approach for texts? The link between geography and literary criticism is essential. Everyone has a geographic sense, everyone possesses geographic knowledges. Geosophy promotes this recognition and, as opposed to the strict disciplinary bounds of geography, allows us to harness geographic knowledges in a discursive way, which is practical for literary criticism. Applying the unique epistemological approach embedded in geosophy to literary criticism opens up a different way of thinking about texts. Eatdirtzian Geosophy provides a tool for navigating cultural interfaces that we encounter. This is particularly relevant for current Australian contexts, those that reside after the National Apology and promote reconciliation, and that hold onto a myth of harmonious experiences of multiculturalism.

As an educator, in the fields of literary criticism and cultural studies, I see that Eatdirtzian Geosophy has a distinctive educational value. This value lies in striving for an a-colonial position, because in attempting to reach that position we, as educators, are forced into a meta-critical discussion of how we think about knowledge and how we teach our students to think about, assess and value knowledges that they encounter. As an Australian literary critic, I know that Eatdirtzian Geosophy works towards addressing issues in the criticism of Indigenous literature. It provides an alternate mode for engaging with texts to the conflicting (and dichotomous) approaches in contemporary literary criticism that fail to provide a text with artistic and cultural justice in their assessments. Chapter
4 of this thesis demonstrates the contribution of Eatdirtzian Geosophy to this area of Australian literary criticism through an Eatdirtzian reading of Senior Law Man (SLM) Bill Neidjie’s *Story About Feeling*. This reading demonstrates how an Eatdirtzian approach equips critics to approach texts ethically via a culturally safe and academically rigorous way. SLM Neidjie’s text has been selected here as an example of an inaccessible text that focuses on experiences and knowledge specific to Bunitj Clan land and the Kakadu National Park area in the Northern Territory of Australia. Through the analysis of SLM Neidjie’s narratives I work to negotiate the stark cultural interface between myself and the text in order to demonstrate the valuable contributions Eatdirtzian Geosophy can make to critics’ work, academic approaches and Australian literary criticism.

All of the literary texts selected for study within this thesis are Australian. The rationale for this is to demonstrate how the theory of an Eatdirtzian Geosophy may enable Australian critics to reconcile themselves with their Australian environments. There is a significant disconnect between Australian literary critics and academics and their environments because for too long our practices and geographical knowledges have been privileging northern hemisphere geosophical positions and epistemologies. This focus on Australian literary criticism and Australian texts within this thesis is part of the third layer of a reconciling ethic, placing an onus on Australian critics to reconcile their practices with their locations and unique geosophical knowledges when engaging with texts. Beyond this thesis, the theory of an Eatdirtzian Geosophy will ideally be transferable to an array of texts from the local, the global, and everything in between.

However, I encourage readers not to be deterred by the Australian focus of this work. The work here, and in the space of the thesis, draws on Australian specific contexts as a parameter for my doctoral research work. Ideally, the theory and implementation of Eatdirtzian Geosophy can be applied generally to various contexts and texts. The theory of an Eatdirtzian Geosophy expands Wright’s understanding of geosophy and considers how different knowledges are constructed and communicated in texts. The various constructions of geographical
knowledge(s) within texts are then reconciled within a broader, meta-critical framework—an Eatdirtzian Geosophy. This framework attempts to clarify and organise a field of ideas about geosophy, and to debunk epistemological dichotomies embedded within pre-existing theory by providing a stage for individual geosophical positions on which to perform.

Figure 9: So Geosophy and the Meta-critic meet at last (Image created by Gareth Bryan ©2013 Emma Joel)
Figure 10 Geosophy and the Meta-critic contemplate the boundaries of the academy walls (image created by Gareth Bryan ©2013 Emma Joel)
Chapter 1 – Geographic dimensions for an Eatdirtzian lens: considering the geosophical and ethical reading practices

Scale is fundamental.

Scale is pivotal in considering how people work with time and space, because without scale, they could not. Eatdirtzian Geosophy studies the ways people use the core concepts that constitute geosophy – time, space, and scale – and it is imperative to begin such a study with a discussion of scale. Scale provides us with the means to develop understandings of the geographic dimensions of time and space. However, it is rarely acknowledged that scale is a core geographic dimension too. Scale needs attention.

Scale is neglected, especially within practices of literary criticism, which is paradoxical because without scale how can we talk about the dimensions of time or space? Scale helps us shape our understanding of these things. By overlooking scale in our approaches to texts, we overlook how (the means with which) we interpret and communicate our understanding of the world, and the texts we engage with. By acknowledging scale in this capacity, Eatdirtzian Geosophy allows us (the critics, the story tellers, the geographers, whomever) to draw attention to our own modes of “scaling” before we engage with other modes. Engaging with scale in this way is the vital initial step towards occupying an a-colonial position.

This chapter develops an understanding of scale – its nature, its problems, and its functions – so that its appearance in texts and critical practices becomes identifiable. This understanding of scale, in terms of Eatdirtzian Geosophy, will contribute to our study of geosophy and knowledge, and how a reconciling ethic can be utilised within critical reading practices. This understanding of scale is developed through a consideration of key issues including representation, the
formation of frames of reference, the role of language and the relationship between scale and narrative, while moving through Eatdirtzian readings of texts. The core concepts of time and space will also be introduced through this discussion of scale, with considerations about their relationship to scale. This chapter will draw on Dorothea Mackellar’s iconic Australian poem *My Country*, and other texts which appropriate Mackellar’s work including Ezekiel Kwaymullina and Sally Morgan’s picture book by the same title, *My Country*, and Australian hip-hop band, TZU’s lyrics from their song, *The Horse You Rode In On* (THYRIO).

**Geosophical Confluence and Conflict: identifying instances of scale and competing knowledge sources**

On a recent interstate car trip my TomTom\(^{22}\) and I had arguments about directions, akin to that clichéd arguing married couple, his sharp Kiwi accent relentlessly insisting that I follow his directions: “At the next available intersection, perform a u-turn and get back on the motorway”. This insistence suggesting that his directions were “correct”. However, I knew what I was doing and where I was going, despite his objections. I was attempting to manoeuvre my way through traffic, to access a side street and the petrol station that resided there. So I had to stray from the track that he had recalculated for me, big deal!

I had never fought like this with my TomTom (or Kev as I have affectionately named it after the computer generated Kiwi persona, Kevin – complete with accent – that it currently possesses). The experience got me thinking once I was back on the road and Kev’s relentless corrective instructions had finally ceased because we were just heading straight on the Federal Highway for another 200-odd kilometres. The conflict highlighted something key: that Kev and I both

\(^{22}\)TomTom is the name of a brand of Satellite Navigation devices – such as GPS devices for cars. For more information see: Tomtom Homepage, 2010, TomTom International BV. Available: http://www.tomtom.com/, 16th March 2011.
possessed geosophical positions. I started thinking about the implications of this, how it worked, and what happens when geosophical positions meet or interact. I began to question how I could begin to describe these events and analyse them geosophically. Thinking in terms of water at the moment in Australia seems like an apt approach, the physical world reminding us so forcefully of water’s existence – the humidity, the floods, the ongoing rains, and the looming cyclones. As a starting point I would like to describe the phenomena of interactions between a person and GPS receiver device as instances of geosophical confluence, in which I have taken the definition of confluence to mean: “a flowing together: meeting-place, as of rivers: a concourse: the act of meeting together” ("Confluence" 273).

I see these instances as a confluence of two bodies of knowledge meeting, and then negotiating their way around combining with each other. Similar to a confluence of two streams, where the movements of the flowing water from the two streams brings them to a meeting point where a process of combination will occur, forcing a negotiation between the two bodies of water in order for them to travel forward together. This metaphor of confluence for these geosophical instances is key in understanding the concept of a reconciling ethic more concretely because it allows us to recognise that multiple geosophical positions exist and identify (from an a-colonial position) any areas of similarities or difference, and any unexpected alternatives that may arise from these geosophical meeting points. Further, these meeting points can contribute to our understanding of geosophy, its core concepts and approaches to literary criticism.

Additionally, I introduce this concept of confluence to focus our discussion of scale. Understandings of scales will aide our study of multiple geosophical positions and geographic knowledges. In an Eatdirtzian approach to texts, this will help the establishment of a reconciling ethic and shape its use in literary criticism. The attention given to scale and its nature as a geographic dimension will look towards using scale in a way that informs a reconciling framework, by focusing on how we communicate and read through scales, rather than just reading for
scale. It will explore how different understandings and uses of scales have shaped the knowledge of time and space offered from different geosophical positions. Jones’ suggestion that “we should think of scales not as areal units but as networks of interaction” (K. T. Jones 25) in approaches to understanding scales and their functions, which is an important insight for informing approaches to critical reading practices. It does so by informing that the interactions of multiple geographic dimensions, such as time and space, can be measured concurrently through such a network. But, more importantly for critics, it suggests that scale could be the pivotal platform through which multiple understandings of geographic dimensions can interact. The promotion of interaction is valuable in a move away from prescriptive and reductionist modes of reading.

These instances of geosophical confluence involving my GPS receiver device provide a scope for considering the nature of scale. Scale ultimately refers to size and how we comprehend, perceive, and understand size. This discussion of size can either be “relative or absolute” (Montello 13501). Given its key function as a means of measurement, scale becomes connected with other concepts – such as time and space or thematic concerns, such as climate or social attributes. It becomes impossible to separate these concepts and themes when working with scale. This inseparability reflects the interconnected relationship that exists between the core geosophical concepts of scale, space and time.

Comparatively looking at Dorothea Mackellar’s My Country and TZU’s The Horse You Rode In On (THYRIO) demonstrates geosophical confluence within texts. Both texts offer representations of Australia and in doing so, construct particular landscapes, in which I understand “landscape” to mean an aesthetic depiction or textual production of a piece of land or scene, which are not entirely dissimilar. A focus on modes of scaling allows us to facilitate an interaction between the two texts in our reading, which will offer expanded insights into Australian landscapes and experiences. Mackellar’s text draws on contrasts in its construction of Australian landscapes, whereas TZU’s lyrics draw on aggressive language and tones, and explicit political criticism to depict a particular Australian
landscape, in doing so both offer geopolitical measures to communicate their knowledges of Australian landscapes.

The most obvious contrast in Mackellar’s work is that between a European perspective of land and nature compared to an Australian perspective. This is offered in the first two verses of the poem:

The love of field and coppice,
Of green and shaded lanes,
Of ordered woods and gardens
Is running in your veins.
Strong love of grey-blue distance
Brown streams and soft, dim skies –
I know but cannot share it,
My love is otherwise.
I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror –
The wide brown land for me! (Mackellar lines 1-16)

From the onset, Mackellar positions the European perspective as the other through her use of “your veins” before privileging an Australian experience. What is ironic though, for me, is that embedded within the harsh language of the second verse are Anglo-Australian (who predominantly migrated from European countries) colonial mythologies about the Australian land. In particular, the descriptions of the “wide brown land”, the “far horizons”, the “ragged mountain ranges” and the “sweeping plains” reflect colonial myths about the vast unknowable and untameable Australian landscape. Ross Gibson, in his seminal essay *Formative Landscapes*, argues that the Australian continent has been figured as a “paradox”
within the colonial experience. It is “half tamed, yet essentially untameable”; conceding subsistence yet never allowing human dominance, unknowable yet lovable (Gibson 49). This myth about the paradox of Australian landscape helps to explain the inconsistencies of a colonial society: if the land is grand yet unreasonable, marvellous yet flawed, then so too can its inhabitants be accepted as such. For the collective Anglo-Australian colonial psyche, this paradoxical myth was essential for establishing a sense of belonging within this environment that was “new” and “young” to Anglo-Australians (Gibson 45). It is this myth and sense of belonging that has informed the landscape-traditions in non-Indigenous Australian film and literature, and is revisited within an EDG analysis of the film, *Lucky Miles* in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Colonisation is a geopolitical act, experience, and mentality. The geopolitical as a scale (or network for interaction) appears within Mackellar’s work through the colonial myths and experiences embedded in her language use and her use of contrasting Australian and English landscapes. This use of scale provides critics an access point to the text, allowing a geosophical consideration of the geographic knowledges within the text. Further, focusing on scale, as a network for interaction, allows the text to interact with other texts, including a critic’s reading of the text.

In Tzu’s *THYRIO*, the geopolitical measures used to create an Australian landscape are more explicit than MacKellar’s. The song embraces an aggressive tone, which is predominantly established through the “othered” persona of the lyrics speaking back to contemporary Australian politics and culture, this position is established within the opening lyrics: “You’d better go and call for backup / cause this shit’s gonna publicly crash your systems and isms and formulaic flows” (TZU verse 1; lines 3-4). Then reinforced in the second verse through the explicit statement of purpose: “This rap is a kick back from the toes you tread on” (TZU verse 2; line 32). Further, this position of speaking back is consolidated through the consistent use of “you” and “your” throughout the lyrics to ensure the comments are directed explicitly at the object or target of the aggression. This is
particularly robust throughout the chorus, where it is combined with the use of explicit language and most of the statements begin with a harsh and sharp projection of the word “you”:

Fuck you
and your long list of isms
You, and the holes you put pigins
Me, and my own inhibitions
and fuck you and you and in addition
You and your patriotism
You and your religionisms
You and your criticisms
And if you don’t like it then don’t fucking listen. (TZU chorus; lines 21-29)

This voice, the aggressive persona, acts as a mode of scaling. It constructs a network for geopolitical discussion at a local Australian level between the “othered” persona who owns the voice and the political “you” that it speaks to. In the first verse of the song, the lyrics offer a historical overview of an Australian landscape, which locates this discussion and the rationale for the “othered” persona’s aggressive position:

Now I’m no prophet, but the rhymes you vomit
are the uranium deposits and the genocides you closet
Old growth forests, first you go and log it
Then you get your planes and with napalm you bomb it
and in the meantime take an Indigenous culture and rob it
now as a citizen, I’ve asked you to stop it
But you haven’t so now I grab this vocal and just cock it. (TZU verse 1; lines 11-17)

This introduction to place, for me as a contemporary Australian audience, is identifiable because it draws on local knowledge of Australian land use and history, and the political rhetoric associated with these. For instance, the denial of the genocide of Aboriginal peoples through the European governments that colonised Australia doing so by claiming *terra nullius* over the land, and the
subsequent acts that have been committed since that claim. Further, the mining of Australia’s natural resources (coal, gas, and uranium) has been subject to ongoing debates between politicians, the mining industry and communities for as long as I can remember. There is only one discrepancy for me within reading these lyrics, and that is the reference to napalm, which is not commonly known as an Australian experience except for Australian soldiers’ involvement in the Vietnam War. However, upon further consideration it could be a reference to how mining land is treated and mines are prepared within Australia or a reference to nuclear bomb testing by the British Government in the 1950s in the area of Maralinga in South Australia (Green). Napalm is a very sticky substance that cannot simply be washed off. When it comes into contact with someone or something it continues to burn and erode. It is extremely toxic substance, and soldiers who used napalm also experienced later complications with breathing, cancers, and deformities in their children. The idea of the napalm covering, engulfing, and continuously eroding could also be a reference to the impact of colonial ideals in Australia.

Having located the voice, geosophical confluence becomes more apparent as the lyrics move into the end of the second verse of the song, where the lyrics make an intertextual reference to Mackellar’s poem, whose existence precedes this song.

So fuck it, guess what, this rap is about me
I’d rap this sonnet in the senate if I could
If I thought for a second it would do any good
well take a look, take a walk, read a book
let’s burn down the parliament and watch the flag cook
I’m using bogon and I’ll take on all comers
you sexist, racist, homophobic fuckers
the dull, the dumb, the dirty and the dumber
my friend from overseas said this country’s got the dumbest
pull back the covers, read the newspapers
listen to talk back radio, watch Neighbours
talk to a politician or to a cop
Talk to the Pauline in her fish and chip shop
I’m proud I’m Australian, whatever that means,
Probably bad dreams if you’re a refugee
I love a sunburnt country, I love it a lot
It’s just a pity about all the redneck fucks! (TZU verse 2; lines 45-61)

The reference to Mackellar’s sunburnt country is interesting here, because it expands on the physical and colonial Australian landscape portrayed in Mackellar’s text. The TZU lyrics bring a human geography approach to their portrayal of Australian landscapes, which includes a focus on the people who use that space and their influences on it. TZU’s lyrics here question the understanding of what a contemporary “Australian” identity is, expanding that colonial experience in Mackellar’s work to reflect a diversified identity shaped by politics and history. The text offers a depiction of Australia as a landscape affected by colonialism, and shaped by people’s ignorance and politics.

Bringing the discussion of these texts back to geosophical confluence, we see that the two portrayals of Australian landscapes can give the critic a greater experience of the geopolitical as it relates to Australian contexts by drawing from multiple geosophical positions, allowing them to merge together and present a more thorough perspective. Negotiating those geosophical positions through my reading, and reflecting on my reading, is enabled through a focus on scales as networks for interaction of geographic knowledges and phenomena. Through these geopolitical modes of scaling, the texts both offer an understanding of nationhood or national identity from their geosophical positions. However, in a shift to the meta-critical, it is now my turn to reflect on critical reading within this network of interaction. For me, I am making a connection between what they aim to represent and my own experiences of these landscapes. As a reader, I take the representations of Australian environments in these texts to offer an understanding of Australian national identity. This could be a result of my location within the contexts about which both of the artists write. I am exposed to contemporary
Australian politics that affect our land, and I’ve grown up within an Anglo-Australian colonial tradition, both culturally and mentally.

Further, for full meta-critical disclosure, I am a scholar of Australian culture and literature. For me, representations and discussions of national identity are a personal scholarly point of interest. However, the meta-critic in my reading practice needs to address this bias. For another reader of these texts, who might also be focusing on geopolitical scales, national identity may not present as a strong geographic theme within these two texts. This is because a national identity or understanding of nationhood can only exist if the reader subscribes to that national identity or understanding of nationhood. As Benedict Anderson reminds us, the very construct of a national identity only comes into fruition if those within the community agree upon and accept a common image or myth about the nation (Anderson). I clearly am adhering to certain imagined Australian identities, whereas another critic may not subscribe to such mythologies. So, an understanding of national identity may not manifest in another critic’s reading of these texts.

Another reading of these texts might provide scope for exploring conflict within the notion of geosophical confluence, especially when focusing on ideas about national identity, nationhood, and the geopolitical. What happens when there is a clash between the two sources of water? How do they negotiate a space for their differences to interact? Taking this example of these two texts further, a migrant or Indigenous Australian or an international audience may find another geographic theme within the representations offered in these two texts or respond to ideas about nationhood from a different geosophical position. A reading of these texts that privileges Indigenous Australian perspectives may question the use of the term “country” and how that phrase could be used to depict more than an artistic representation of land via observation or viewed through a particular political contextual lens. By bringing Ezekiel Kwaymullina’s and Sally Morgan’s picture book, My Country into this discussion, which offers an Indigenous
perspective about relationship to land, we can problematize MacKellar’s work and explore this idea of geosophical conflict.

Applying the reconciling approach of an EDG to MacKellar’s work, its contexts, and with its reader’s contexts would allow a critic to explore this conflict further, negotiating a space for multiple ideas surrounding the text and the notion of country to engage with each other. In order to achieve this, critics need to be aware of the dominance of their own subjectivities within reading practices. As a non-Indigenous critic, I need to shift the dominance of my own subjective positions as reader as part of my striving for an a-colonial reading position here. The idea of shifting centres to deconstruct dominance of any one subjective position (the critic’s or the text’s) is an important strategy in paradigms of negotiating and establishing a platform for multiple subjective positions to interact. By facilitating a reading between the three texts, which are representative of geosophical positions within the scope of this example, I can expand my approach through a focus on scales. This, in turn, allows me to focus on how time and space have been communicated within the texts, revealing the unique geosophical positions embedded within the three texts, and expanding an understanding of the concept of country in Australia through reconciling multiple Australian geosophical positions.

The inclusion of Kwaymullina and Morgan’s text offers an Indigenous geosophical position to the discussion. Its inclusion establishes a point of conflict should my dominant non-Indigenous reading, or MacKellar’s non-Indigenous experiences of country, hold steadfast. The inclusion of Kwaymullina and Morgan’s text complicates my reading of the geopolitical and examples of nationhood, which I can now position as limited. Given this conflict of scales within the texts and my readings of them, I need to strive for a state of confluence, in which the different geosophical positions can interact. I can do this through focusing on similarities and differences, and examining the ways in which the scales in the text offer ideas about space and time.
Similar to MacKellar’s poem, Kwaymullina and Morgan’s text establishes an element of the emotive in the concept of country. The narrative begins with a dedication to their grandmothers, “who carried their country in their hearts” (Kwaymullina and Morgan i) and finishes with the statement “I love my country” (Kwaymullina and Morgan 23). Both texts suggest an element of love or deep connection to the landscape. However, a key difference in the texts is their portrayal of the landscapes and the narrators’ interactions with it.

MacKellar’s sentiments of endearment suggest using, and interacting with the land for profit with references to cattle and mining; “An opal-hearted country” (Mackellar lines 41). Further, her sentiments suggest that she loves the country despite its “terror” and harshness (Mackellar lines 15-16). MacKellar’s poem offers an element of trust in her relationship to the land, because of an understanding that the landscape and climate fluctuate to extremes; “Land of Rainbow Gold, / For flood and fire and famine, / She pays us back three-fold” (Mackellar lines 34-36). This depiction of trust constructs a representation of the landscape framed through cycles, with the changing of seasons, and as such offers a perspective of the landscape as understood through time.

MacKellar’s use of colour schemes to depict the land, “brown,” “grey,” and “sunburnt,” are hard colours compared to the soft ones used to describe European lands, “green”, and “grey-blue” (Mackellar lines 2, 5, 9, 16 and 29). Opposing MacKellar’s harsh and dark depiction of Australian landscapes, Kwaymullina and Morgan’s words and illustrations offer a vibrant engagement with a lively and colourful landscape who uses an array of bright purples, oranges, yellows and blues contrasted with earthly bronzes and reds. The images within the text show Australian animals who are friendly and interact with the child narrator. The images also depict rivers, the sun, clouds, stars, and the earth as being alive, active and colourful, with smiling faces. The use of minimal dialogue that accompanies the images also reinforces the active essence of nature and personifies elements of the country; the earth sings, “the red desert dust” flies, and “the lightning clouds” dance (Kwaymullina and Morgan 3-10).
In terms of time, Kwaymullina and Morgan’s narrative and spaces depicted within it seem almost timeless, which is comparable to MacKellar’s use of cyclic or seasonal understandings of time as they interact with the landscape. Two key examples suggest this state of timelessness. The first is image of the narrator swimming in the river, which is made out of a rainbow, and accompanied with the words “(In my country I…) slide down the river snake’s rainbow” (Kwaymullina and Morgan 11-12). This example offers ideas about how time and space in Australia are addressed from an Indigenous point of view. In this case, it could be presumed (because I am unfamiliar with the landscape that this text refers to) that this scene offers a reference to the creation of the river which is timeless, in that the story about how that river was created will exist for as long as the river does; it is a part of the landscape, it is embedded in it.

The second example of timelessness is in the second last scene of the narrative, where the narrator is sleeping which is accompanied by the text, “(In my country I…) dream about my friends” (Kwaymullina and Morgan 21-22). The narrator is surrounded by all the lively animals, stars, suns, clouds, and landscape features from the previous pages. This depiction of country offers ideas about time and space as informed by Indigenous Australian’s spiritual concept of Dreaming, in that connection to, and creation of, country is an ever-present timeless constant.

These understandings of time and time’s relationship to spaces are important in understanding the nature of time geosophically. Martin Heidegger reminds us that only when time is treated as uniform can it be “measurable” (Heidegger 4e-5e).
However, time is rarely perceived or used homogenously; and therefore we cannot guarantee an exact means of measuring it universally. Reductionist, colonising or homogenous approaches to the concepts of time and space are unhelpful. Scales therefore become a central mode for accessing the various discursive manifestations of geographic knowledges about time and space, and how these concepts have been shaped and interact.

The scales we read through will impact what discussion occurs around the texts we engage with. It is important to acknowledge that within the meta-critical process it would be impossible to address all possible readings of a text, but looking for confluence and conflicts when engaging with texts establishes a starting point for critical discussion that moves us towards an a-colonial and reconciling practice. An essential part of this movement is for critics to acknowledge their own biases when reading and to also ensure that other readings of texts are not denied or excluded.

The two conflicting geosophical positions presented in the scenario of using a GPS whilst driving (in this case, mine and Kev’s) allow us to study geosophy by considering the appearance of scale comparatively. How do we measure and comprehend the landscape unravelling before us and communicate our understanding of this measurement? And how do we consider the interactions between these measurements and other geosophical concepts? The modes in which we come to understand, read, and survey the forthcoming landscape are quite distinct and affect how we come to communicate our use and understanding of scales. My understanding of the landscape is drawn from my memories of it and previous experiences of travelling and moving through it. Other times, I understand landscape in the moment by being observant of my surroundings as I move, taking note of what is coming up over the horizon, thus being immersed within the landscape during physical real time. Personally, I find my key way of navigating is through the use of recognisable landmarks. For instance, I know when I pass a particular sign on an extremely curvaceous stretch of highway on
my drive home every day that it is time to move into the right lane, so I can make the turn off into my suburb.

Paul Dudchenko, a behavioural neuroscientist, describes the phenomena of spatial cognition in his work *Why People Get Lost*. In this description, Dudchenko notes that the use of recognisable or distinctive landmarks, whether they are man-made or formed within nature, is a common feature of way-finding for humans because we use these landmarks as orientation cues to navigate our way (Dudchenko 1-7). In practices of way-finding, the consideration of reference points is essential. By using landmarks in this way, we define our position by “the location of things relative to ourselves,” this is called “egocentric space” (Dudchenko 6). However, Kev (or GPS devices) way-find by using “allocentric space” which draws on absolute space as a reference point “where we are located relative to other objects in our surroundings” (Dudchenko 6). In doing so, a GPS device would be able to ascertain particular “absolute, or allocentric” co-ordinates for your exact location on the planet (Dudchenko 6).

It is clear then that the human modes of measuring, and reading, the landscapes that I use are comparable to Kev’s topographical modes. As a GPS receiver, Kev gains an understanding through a remote assessment of the landscape, by corresponding with at least three satellites and then processing this information through a series of software (Tsui). Kev then communicates this reading of the landscape in order to instruct its user in navigating their current landscape.

Global Positioning Systems have a history of being developed to be used as a navigational tool (Tsui) with their development dating back to 1970s (El-Rabbany; National Air and Space Museum). The system refers to a series of satellites in operation (a constellation of 24 satellites) that communicate signals to GPS receivers (devices such as satellite navigation systems and radios). This is a one-way process: receivers cannot send signals to satellites, only the satellites can send the signals to the receivers. The calculation of co-ordinates occurs through the use of simultaneous equations based on information received via a number of
satellites (usually three or four) about the receiver’s location and the satellites’ own positions. The system is able to pinpoint the user of the GPS receiver, within a ten to twenty (or thirty in some cases) metre accuracy. These co-ordinates are calculated through a twostep process: the first is a Cartesian approach (think flat number axis) and then once these have been calculated, this information is shifted to a spherical approach (think shape of the earth) where the co-ordinates act as radii for three or four overlapping circles. This overlap becomes the location of the receiver. This process is designed to take minutes, so there may be some delay in the process and communicating of signals within the system (National Air and Space Museum; Tsui; El-Rabbany).

In both these scenarios, we witness an interaction between time and scale in order to comprehend the landscape (which is representative of the concept of space here). These interactions obviously present a relationship of interconnection between the concept of scale and time. From my recount, the use of “memory” and the use of the “moment”, reveal how time has helped shape the scales I use to interact with space – by drawing on the past and the present. What is interesting to note while I reflect on time here, is that in an original draft of this recount I had used the term “instant” instead of “moment”. I altered my use of words after my writing was reviewed by one of my research supervisors, who suggested I use the word “moment” instead. My choice to make this alteration was based purely on what I trusted to be sound aesthetic advice from my supervisor; it was not until later that I pondered the implications of this change. I originally used the term instant, because I felt it embodied the urgency, the fleeting present of the landscape that I feel while driving, because as I move through spaces while driving, they feel very brief and my ability for comprehending them is indeed, literally, fleeting. I guess I had originally avoided using moment as a scale which describes this relationship between time and space while driving because as a measurement of time, “moment” does not hold strict parameters like an instant. However, while discussing my understandings of the instant versus the moment while driving with a friend, he queried “couldn’t both be applicable?” He noted that while driving, especially in open areas or countryside such as the Hunter
Valley, he has the instant engagement with the space which he passes through, but he also engages with the open space which lies ahead for an indeterminate amount of time – being the moment (Personal Communication with Howell).

Reflecting on the writing process though, my supervisor, Wendy, and I did not realise it at the time (nor did my other supervisors), but her geosophical position and perception of time influenced how I was communicating my comprehension of space and time. I offer this note to remind us how, as critics, we unknowingly impose our positions and understandings on even the most basic readings of texts and how striving to occupy an a-colonial position is not only needed in this process, but will involve an ongoing process of critical reflection. Additionally, this incident highlights a key feature of the relationships between scale, time and space that underpin geosophy: they are unstable, they will be constantly changing. This instability is even more significant given that commonly people’s geosophical positions are embedded and communicated through language, which is problematic given nuances, connotations and all the lovely semantic and pragmatic aspects of language usage.

In the geosophical position offered by Kev, we see once again an interconnected relationship between time, space and scale being used in the development of geographic knowledge and then in its communication. In the process of sending signals, connecting to the satellites, and software used by GPS receivers, there is always a delay in information, as the devices need time to connect and communicate in order to register and navigate the current landscape. Here we see a filtered down approach to geosophical development as spaces are used in order to construct a scale from which to assess and articulate a more accurate perception of space. Clearly, a recurring feature of geosophy is that the three concepts of scale, time and space cannot be divorced or considered in insolation from one another.

When I regale others with stories of these interactions I have with Kev, I am always inundated with tales of others’ experiences of driving, travels, and
confessions as people start thinking about how it is they interpret and interact with the world during their daily travels. More often than not, these tale tellers are surprised at just how little they actually consider their driving (and their bike riding, bus trips, train catching, walking, and shopping trolley pushing) and how it is that they actually navigate landscapes and travels through their understandings of time, space, and use of scales.

The difference between knowing and understanding: the problem with scale

Kev states his order, “Turn left in 125 metres.” Emma, frantically studies the small screen of the Tomtom before shifting her eyes up to the windscreen to assess the road that lies before the car. Questioning Kev’s directions, she exclaims in a panic “Where the hell is 125 metres? Is it this left here? Or that next street? Eek…” Emma continues driving to the next street, reassuring herself that she knows how big a metre is, and the distance between the car and that next street is clearly 125 of them. Finally, Kev calmly responds to her questions, “You have missed your exit. At the next available intersection, perform a U-turn.”

Clearly, the GPS receivers like to mimic the one-way process used within Global Positioning Systems when they themselves are being used. They create little microcosms of this global system they are a part of, where they, like the satellites, become central to the system - sending their signals to me, the receiver. However, do not dare try send a signal back to them. Oh no, do not ask questions. Just use your internal software to decode their signal. This response of the GPS receiver device is an example of geosophical conflict, rather than one of confluence. As an educated woman, familiar with the metric system, I know what 125 metres is. But

23 Thanks Wendy for your narrative that reminded me how different UNDERSTANDING is to KNOWING, and how applicable this would be for my considerations here. I think your use of narrative, as an educator, will definitely be making appearances in my discussions of scale and story! (Miller “Wendy’s Story from January Supervisor Meeting - Knowing and Understanding”)
when my frame of reference is one that is in motion, trying to comprehend directions that include someone else’s understanding of 125 metres, understanding the space myself becomes quite the task to say the least. Given my personal penchant for landmark directions, this communication of directions through the use of specific distances rather than landmarks creates a communication barrier. As Dudchenko notes, when humans are unable to use landmarks for navigation “we must rely on…[our abilities to]…monitor the distances and directions we’ve travelled. …our capacity for doing so is quite limited” (Dudchenko 5). This example reminds us, again, of the need for an a-colonial standpoint as a means for negotiating such barriers and exploring instances of geosophical conflict.

Scale, in itself is a dicey concept at the best of times. There is ongoing contestation about its nature and application in the various fields of geography – and this doesn’t always factor in the everyday uses, or appearances, of scale. So, from where does the controversy and confusion regarding scale originate? Representation.

Scale is essentially plagued with issues of representation – whether it’s being used in human geography to analyse political issues, or in physical geography for cartographic practices, or as a means of constructing areal units for the study of social or architectural phenomena – representation complicates the nature of scale, how and why it is used, and our understanding of this. Contributing to the problematic nature of scale is that it is both an object and action – both noun and verb. As an action word, scale pertains to the process of scaling, measuring, sizing, and representing, that we all actively participate in, through various means. However, scale also encompasses the actual unit of measurement or representation too, the structure itself. As an object scale often reflects our process of scaling. For instance, think about the key of a map or recall the story I told about my supervisor and me, and our uses of “moment” and “instant” to measure the phenomena of interacting with space whilst driving. Both of these are examples of scale operating as an object. However, underlying that object is someone’s use of scaling and an understanding of the interaction between time and space. When we
position scale as an object, these are our attempts to communicate our geosophical positions and geographic processes to others – we are sharing how we have come to a particular representation or understanding, which we often do so, uncritically. This use of scale as a structural object alludes to a meta-cognitive practice in which we are acutely aware of our own geosophical positions. Scale as structure or units can be used to inform and shape our use of scale as a process.

Our uses of scales can be linked back to our ability to represent, infer, and communicate information. What is vital to note in any discussion of scale, is that we interact with other geographic dimensions (such as time and space) through scales. As Jones suggested, we can think of scale as a “network for interaction” (K. T. Jones 25) not just as a unit for study or measurement. Thinking of scale in this way, as a network or framework of interaction, reinforces its nature as a process or action. Further, it reinforces the notion that we need scale. We need scale because it becomes the lens through which we interpret, understand, view, recognise, and communicate the temporal and spatial dimensions of our world. Scale as a framework allows an internal processing of this information. It provides us with a means for communicating our understanding of these features externally – either to others or through how we function in our external surrounds. Scale is similar to language in that it can be taken for granted or overlooked as innate; we use it constantly without acknowledging its existence, our knowledge of it, how it functions, and just how vital it is. Acknowledging this highlights a need to consider how we engage with scale and the various processes and structures we use for measuring, interpreting and communicating our world.

**The role of language in scale**

Language plays a significant role in our acts of scaling and representing, and as such it needs to be considered centrally when approaching texts and acts of reading geosophically. Language, in all its forms, is central to our modes of communicating geographic knowledges. It also plays a vital part in our meta-
critical practice of an EDG approach because it offers a pre-existing framework through which we work and act. Critics need to be aware about their own assumptions about language and languagelessness. Susan Schaller’s work as an educator of languageless adults is a staunch reminder of the reasons why we need to consider language as a mode of scaling as it allows us to focus on it as content in reading, but also reflect upon in our critical practices.

In her book, *A Man Without Words*, Susan Schaller recounts stories of her experiences teaching deaf and languageless adults. Schaller offers a commentary on the work of Roger Shattuck’s *The Forbidden Experiment*, in which he recounts the story of a young wild boy, Victor, who emerged from the woods one day and was languageless and reflects upon how Shattuck’s observations can be used in understanding her own work as an educator:

(Shattuck’s) observations include reactions of people today. He notes: when adults hear about the case of the Wild Child, they usually ask how he turned out. They want to know…if he grew up to live some kind of useful and happy life. Children, when told about the boy, ask what he was really like and, above all, how he managed to live in the woods all by himself…But they often ask another, more searching question: What right did anyone have to capture him? These different responses reminded me of my own mixed reactions upon meeting Ildefonso and his languageless world. On one hand, I immediately wanted to teach him language and make him a part of my world, assuming that this was the path to a ‘useful and happy life’. On the other hand, I admired him for his ability to survive and create a life for himself, recognized the uniqueness of his languageless thoughts and perspective, and wondered about my right to try to change him to be more like me, especially if I failed and communicated to him only that he was deficient in some way. Education may always include the message that the student needs to become more like the teacher, thereby
implying that the student or the student’s thinking is inferior.

(Schaller 151-52)

Schaller’s ideas about language and learning here provide a useful commentary for our thinking about language as a mode of scaling within the reconciling framework of an EDG approach. Namely, it highlights the nature of language as a normalising and colonising tool. Language is positioned as a mode of scaling within an EDG approach, it is essential that critics are critically aware of the linguistically relative nature of language and how that affects the construction and communication of geographic knowledges.

Linguistic relativity suggests that language influences the ways we think and experience realities. The controversial Sapir-Whorf hypothesis explains that linguistic relativity involves the ways that “structural differences between languages are paralleled by non-linguistic cognitive differences” (Kay and Kempton slide 7); that essentially our access to language affects the ways in which we think about phenomena (Lucy). Language and language usage cannot be separated from their socio-historical, cultural, and geographic contexts. Through these connections language shapes reality and reality shapes language. Further, within the context of a geosophical discourse, studying these connections may help in elucidating how geographic ways of knowing are reproduced in language.

As Deutscher suggests: “languages impose on their speakers a picture of reality that is totally different from ours, so their speakers would simply not be able to understand some of our most basic concepts, like the flow of time or the distinction between objects…and actions” (Deutscher 1). This is not to suggest that particular knowledges are absent or dissimilar amongst different language users, but individual languages provide different parameters for thinking about those knowledges. “The habits of mind that our culture has instilled in us from infancy shape our orientation to the world” (Deutscher 9). Common ways of exploring the idea of linguistic relativity is by comparing languages’ ability to shape the way the languages’ users can interpret and describe the colours of a
rainbow given the scope of the words for colour or the Inuit’s’ various ways they can discuss and know about snow, which are much deeper and more sophisticated than the scope of words in Standard English that refer to the same phenomena (Kay and Kempton). As such, language affects and shapes the processing of information through individuals’ use of cartographic and phenomena scales. In an EDG approach, a consideration of linguistic relativity is vital in achieving a meta-critical practice as it destabilises the mother tongue of the critic as dominant in their interactions with texts. Furthermore, it provides a scope for critics to think about the modes of thinking constructed in their own language.

Linguistic relativity determines that language becomes a central and recurring part of a study of the geosaphical of text. Language informs our practice, both in reading for discursive emergences of scale and in deconstructing the scales we read through. The use of, and engagement with, language is an integral point for self-analysis in our attempts to occupy an a-colonial reading position.

In Eatdirtzian Geosophy scale is used in two ways – as a starting point for a critical reading of geosaphical discourse in text and by providing our meta-critical practice with a network for reconciling our approaches to knowledges (ethical practice). In striving for the a-colonial position that the theory of an Eatdirtzian Geosophy warrants, it is important for us to indulge these ideas about scale and how they may assist in establishing a reconciling ethic for our epistemological considerations as critics. This indulgence calls for a meta-critical approach to scale that considers language and its role in processes and structures of scale. This meta-critical approach should extend to an examination of frames of reference, as a study of the formation and effects of frames of reference will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the nature of scale, and how it is used as a process and structure. A consideration of frames of reference should also inform our access to geosaphical positions located in texts. Studying frames of reference in these ways will expose the need for establishing a reconciling ethic in our assessing of knowledges within texts.
Another problem complicating scale in contemporary geographic theory, is that as a concept, scale is being reduced and then combined with other geographic dimensions (such as spatial ones). As Neil Brenner notes there is a recent trend of addressing scale through its role with the social and spatial, rather than “viewing scale as a self-evident or pre-given platform for geographical processes” (Brenner 592). This practice becomes concerning as scale is not being given its due consideration as a key geographic dimension. Studying scale as a core concept, geosophically through this meta-critical approach, allows us to consider the nature of scale by itself and then consider its relationship with other geographic dimensions such as spatial, temporal or thematic ones. A shift to the literary throughout this meta-critical approach will help develop our discussion and comprehension of scale.

**Representation**

...In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast Map was Useless, and not without some Pitiessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters... (Borges 235)

Representation is the process of using symbols or signs to stand for something else. It is a means of conveying and expressing information or images symbolically. The meanings attached to these symbols are influenced through
social and cultural factors, making the process of conveying an image and comprehending information from said image highly subjective. Scale, in both its forms as a process and structure, is not exempt from these characteristics of representation. Further, it opens up opportunities for conflict and contestation – for similarities, differences, and unexpected alternatives to emerge:

the construction of scale proceed through representational practices - scale may thus be understood as situated relationally within a community of producers and readers who give the practice of scale meaning...this construction is continually contested – in fact, scale is the result of contestation, and how it is resolved at one moment may be quite different from how it is resolved at some later time... (K. T. Jones 26-27).

As a structure, when scale is used as an unit for examination of phenomena, scale is not an objective tool; it is, as Jones suggests, “areal” (K. T. Jones 25). The establishment of units or scales for examining phenomena of any ilk is arbitrary. Whether a process or a structure, scales are subjective and relative. Marston notes:

...scale is not necessarily a preordained hierarchical framework for ordering the world – local, regional, national and global. It is instead a contingent outcome of the tensions that exist between structural forces and the practices of human agents. (Marston 220)

Scale is not a neutral concept. It is not absolute. It is relational. It is a complex concept. The complexity of scale can be partly attributed to the construction of scale, in particular the social, political, and economic forces underlying particular constructions that have material consequences for scale, including reducing the concept or limiting it (Brenner; Marston; Marston and Smith). Further contributing to the complex nature of scale is how it is positioned and understood in relation to space, as often the two are conflated (Marston and Smith). Knowing about the problematic nature of scale and how it functions (i.e. as a relative framework for interacting with temporal and spatial dimensions) reminds us of the value of an a-colonial position at the theoretical level. Namely, that an a-colonial position is not a traditional polarising or narrowing approach. It allows for the
facilitation of an intersubjective practice where multiple modes of scaling can be considered concurrently. A reconciling ethic and an a-colonial approach are valuable here because it allows us to negotiate and explore the forces that produce individual instances of scale construction without contributing to, or imposing further restrictions on these productions.

Attached to representation is the notion of gauging its success – against the real, or the object that is being represented – Borges’ fable reminds us of this. This notion is something to keep in mind when we are working with geosophical positions, because we are essentially studying individual representations and comprehensions of the world. This notion of success becomes problematic whilst working with geosophy because it introduces a value-system that is contradictory to the a-colonial theoretical position Eatdirtzian Geosophy calls for. It needs to be clarified from the onset that by occupying this theoretical position, this work is not attempting to measure the success of individual representations, but rather opens up a framework for these individual representations to be considered in conjunction with one another.

In further exploration of the complicated relationship between representation and scale, Paul Hegarty’s discussion of Jean Baudrillard’s work reminds us about a key feature of representation:

representation cannot function by itself, so we cannot talk of a fundamental, qualitative difference between the real and representation. If at any stage such a point is reached, then the realness of the real at all other points has to be called into question.

(Hegarty 52)

What Hegarty emphasises here is the symbiotic relationship that exists between the real and the representation. All representations have some connection to the real. Representations have to come from somewhere; they all link back to some universal kind of “truth” or experience of the world. This is important when considering the work of Eatdirtzian Geosophy, and the study of how various geosophical positions are communicated and what they communicate.
Acknowledging that modes of scale can be absolute or relative is a sound starting point to continue our discussion of the fluid relationship between scale, time, and space, and how this relationship is embedded within individual and universal comprehensions and studies of the earth. It is also an interesting position to consider when discussing a reconciling ethic in approaches to knowledge, values and geosophy.

Reflecting on Baudrillard’s work regarding the orders of simulacra, we see this notion of gauging success embedded within the differentiation of simulations. This hierarchy offers three levels of simulacra in which the real can be simulated. The first level offers a copy, a representation of the real, in which it still remains apparent what is the real and what is the simulation. An example of this would be a photograph of a real life object. The second level of simulacra is one of representation, where the lines between the real and the representation are blurred (Lane 86). The real becomes masked by representations, as signs refer to systems or series of signs – a reproduction of signs (Horrocks and Jevtic 107; Baudrillard Simulacra and Simulation). It can manifest as something “more real than real” such as the castle at Disney Land (Lane 89). The third level of simulation refers to the hyperreal. In this order of simulacrum that pertains to the hyperreal, there appears to be an absence of this measurement of success. There is no requirement for a judgement about true or false representations to be made, because the image has not originated through a process of reproduction of the real or of signs. In this order of simulacra, there is a “detachment” from both the real and the representation and is instead measured by its performance: “how well does it work or operate?” (Lane 86). In an example of the hyperreal, a reversal in the order of origin exists, for instance the “map that precedes the territory” or the computer code that writes a program (Lane 86).

Baudrillard reminds us that semiotics and “the sign” are a means of simulation. His critiques reveal the nature of representation and how ingrained it is in forms of communication. However, traditional methods of study, such as linguistics and
psychoanalysis, are insufficient when we move beyond reality and representation (Baudrillard *The Ecstasy of Communication* 57-62). In a shift to the hyperreal where traditional signs (especially signs created through binary or opposition) used for representation become destabilised as there is a focus on the performative (Baudrillard *The Ecstasy of Communication* 74-78). However, by defining this order of simulacra as the “hyper-real,” the notion of gauging success and the hierarchy of the real, arises again. Ultimately, what Baudrillard’s work reminds us is that a problematic relationship between representation and ideology exists on all levels of simulation. How are levels of the performative determined in the hyperreal? How do representations measure up against the real in all levels of simulacra?

Meaning is not always connected to an object’s actual function but some imagined worth. Representation, on all levels, is affected by ideology, and therefore highly subjective and relative. Representations and the signs and symbols used in their production are being shaped by subjectivities. So too, are our interactions with representations and their signs and symbols. This is not untrue for scale and its discursive appearance. Further, it is something we must confront given our work as critics. What is the role of the critic or producer of a representation in establishing determinants of performance or gauging success?

Unfortunately, Baudrillard’s approach has an echo of a dichotomous /dualistic framework (good/bad, right/wrong, true/false, real/unreal, original/representation) and a value-system embedded within it. A shift to an Eatdirtzian Geosophy approach that allows for a reconciling ethic and a-colonial reading position is an attempt to move away from this type of value-laden and narrow thinking. It does so by approaching the subjectivities and ideologies associated with representations and interactions with representations via a network of interactions (i.e. scales). In such a network, multiple representations would not need to be classified in terms of their order of production or how well they measure up to some notion of “truth” or worth. Instead they could co-exist to provide a more thorough and deeper understanding of what is being represented.
Further, Baudrillard’s work is not completely amiss in aiding our comprehension of the concept of geosophy; we can draw on Baudrillard’s concept of the hyperreal and the idea that these realities can start “elsewhere”, or hyperreality as “a world without a real origin” (Lane 86). This directs our thoughts to where our understandings come from, where they originate, which is important to clarify as part of an Eatdirtzian reading of text. This elsewhere potentially involves the geographic, cognitive and social-cultural processes that enable a multitude of geosophical positions to develop.

There are cognitive processes that enable geosophy, as such our brains become the “elsewhere” in which these realities emerge. The hippocampus of our brains functions in comprehending geographic information. Jonah Lehrer, a science writer specialising in psychology and neuroscience, claims that the brain’s ability to prevent us from getting lost and to successfully navigate our environments on a daily basis is a “talent we completely take for granted”, further describing the ways in which our brains function as “sophisticated software” (Jonah Lehrer cited in "Season 9, Episode 2: Lost and Found"). Lehrer explains that our brains are able to make maps of our surroundings using a variety of cells: grid cells, that act as surveyors and offer a matrix-style grid made of triangles; border cells, which respond to physical limits in our surroundings such as edges or walls; head directions cells, which are neurons that trigger when we change direction, these keep us orientated so we know where we are within the matrix constructed by the grid cells; and, place cells, which locate us as we move through a space acknowledging our arrival at a particular site, for instance if we were moving through the house they might trigger to say “I’m here! At the coffee table” or “I’m here! At the front door” (Jonah Lehrer cited in "Season 9, Episode 2: Lost and Found"). The action between these cells creates electricity that translates into an idea or comprehension of a space. To revisit Paul Dudchenko’s work on spatial cognition and the brain, he highlight’s that “the outside world isn’t simply a construct of our minds” (Dudchenko 6-7). However, our brains work in scaling
the “absolute space that surrounds us” (Dudchenko 7). There are relative and absolute natures of the information involved in these processes.

These ideas can be seen within the stories of me using the GPS navigation device. In those scenarios, the machinery of representation used to produce and represent our understandings of the space and time that we are located in are my brain and the (more literal) machinery employed by the GPS device such as the satellite technology, software and computer programing.

However, the situation with the GPS Receiver becomes complicated for analysing scale as we also need to consider the use of scale and its relationship with time and space – given that both geosophical positions (mine and Kev’s) are in a moving vehicle. This brings us back to the idea of confluence – it’s not just that we have differing geosophical positions that are trying to negotiate a common understanding – we are like those two rivers quickly mixing together while we are being carried away down-stream as one. This physical movement highlights another key factor that needs to be considered in our examination of texts, frames of reference.

Frames of reference – understanding how factors such as geopolitics, technology, media, and culture influence scales – an initial step in the process of deconstruction?

…My girls grew up with the idea that birds fly south for the winter. And that is such a North American thing. We don’t talk about birds flying north for the winter because our climate is okay. So, they thought that that must happen everywhere, because there was never an alternate. There was something about the scale and direction and perception…that made me think about how media
influences that… (Miller "Personal Communication - February Meeting").

Wendy’s reflection reminds us of a need to consider how our scales and perceptions are shaped or influenced. In order to achieve that within an Eatdirtzian approach to texts, critics need to consider the frames of reference that appear when interacting with texts. Frames of reference refer to those influences that shape how we see, interpret, experience, and know geographic phenomena. Our different frames of reference inform our various and individual geosophical positions. Within an Eatdirtzian approach to literary criticism, these frames of references need to be addressed critically and ethically. Occupying an a-colonial position through meta-critical reading practices and embracing a reconciling ethic are essential in achieving this.

The reconciling ethic is useful here for combating some of the issues that keep plaguing scale, because of its relationship with representation. In particular, the reconciling ethic provides us a non-prescriptive position (or approach) that allows us to consider and deconstruct any potential aspect contributing to referential frames. Privileging scale over other geographic dimensions is vital here, because it affords us a means to focus on the individual source of knowledge and deconstruct the lenses through which individual sources of knowledge are constructed, viewed, and comprehended through other geographic dimensions.

Maps are a useful way to further explore the notion of frames of reference. For instance, consider the various projections used for world maps, the Mercator and Peters projections are two of the most common. A Peters projection map aims to be area-accurate in its scaling of the world, whereas a Mercator projection map distorts the actual area size of countries, continents, and oceans. It does so because it is based on a cylindrical design, drawing on mathematical formula to represent the world. However, given that I have an Australian-centric view of the world, a McArthur’s corrective map might be more preferable. This map reverses the Eurocentric world map projected in Mercator and Peters maps, placing the

24 Upon revision of my thesis work, Wendy commented: “Bugger, I must have missed my own points that for us, birds would fly north for the winter towards the equator!”

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southern hemisphere of the world on top of the northern hemisphere. It is colloquially referred to as an “upside down” world map, the colloquial reference itself revealing how certain geosophical positions view the world. All maps become problematic given they try to represent a spherical mass on a flat surface, and they are subject to criticism based on their projections and modes for representing.

The frames of reference that influence the different projections of the world are important to assess when considering geosophical positions and the representations they offer. We see mathematics functioning as a frame of reference here in that it shapes these projections in two ways: through an accurate representation of size and through the use of geometry in calculating the spherical shape of the world. Furthermore, the language associated with these projections reveals the frames of references from which they are offered. The use of “northern” and “southern” as descriptors for the hemispheres of the earth (which, the hemispheres themselves, are a way in which my scale/measure parts of the earth) reveal the application of position-centric frames of reference to how people talk about and describe the earth, because we place a common understanding of relational directions onto those parts of the earth (i.e. north, south, east, west). When in absolute reality, because of the way the earth moves and rotates, it is arbitrary as to which part of the earth is on top (or towards the “north”) and which is on the bottom (or towards the “south”) at any given time.

Even within an Australian-centric view, things can get complicated. Take contemporary maps of Australia for example, two common ones are the post-federation map of Australia and the Aboriginal language group map of Australia.25 The federation map of Australia tracks the territorial and political

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25 The Indigenous Language Map is the work of David R. Horton, *Indigenous Language Map* (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1996). To view an online interactive version of the map, please visit the following website: [ABC Online Indigenous Language Map - Interactive](http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/), Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Available: http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/, 4th November, 2013. For more information about the evolution of the Australian federation map, including visual examples of these maps, please see:
evolution of Australia that began with European colonisation. The map currently outlines the country based on the borders of the eight states and territories that contribute to the political federation of Australia. Whereas an Aboriginal language map shows the same land mass as in the federation map, however the land outlines the various language and tribal areas of Aboriginal communities and groups. In doing so, it offers a general representation of these areas by using colour codes for individual areas rather than offering definitive or exact boundaries throughout the map.

The frames of references underpinning these maps are very different. We see a European experience of the land whose frame of reference is geopolitical. The land is scaled, or measured, through a relationship with political experience, namely the gradual colonisation of Australia from the east coast to the west, until it has reached the current political shape of Australia. Further, the use of exact political borders to outline the individual states and territories demonstrates that our imaginations affect geosophical positions too. In this case, a collective national imagination that accepts that these imagined lines, or borders, are real and treats them as such. The Aboriginal experiences which shape the frames of references used in the Aboriginal language maps both precedes and proceeds European colonisation of Australia and the geopolitical landscape represented by that event. In this way, the map offers a palimpsestic frame of reference, in that it rewrites the landscape from Indigenous experiences and understandings of country. The notion of country acts as a way of scaling or constructing landscape in that reveals a relationship of between time and space in that country and kinship will always remain embedded in those spaces regardless of what historical time period it is, or what Europeans build over that space. In viewing these two maps concurrently, we can see that an understanding of the land has been shaped by time and the modes of scaling have been shaped by culture.

Various maps and their projections reminds us of two key things to consider in our approaches to Eatdirtzian Geosophy; the nature of representation which we

have been discussing and notions of literacy. The notion of literacy is useful in our understanding of frames of reference when engaging with texts because it relies on an element of comprehension to denote its success. One of the key features of literacy is that one is able to comprehend. As part of a meta-critical reading process, critics need to unpack the notion of literacy within the very instances in which they are engaged with reading. Additionally, critics need to be savvy about how notions of literacy are determined and shaped by our various points of reference.

These issues regarding literacy and frames of reference are apparent in our experiences while driving, and how we navigate: GPS perception versus a human perception or paper maps versus electronic ones provided by a GPS device. These are then comparable to road signs and the newer electronic billboards being built on Australian freeways and highways that give a destination and an ETA (time) as a source of navigation and information. Why do they measure space through distance or time rather than purely spatial measurements? How do literacies function as a frame of reference for shaping those modes of measuring?

Differences and similarities emerge in comprehension for a number of reasons. Think back to my use of the GPS device while driving, it becomes complicated when the GPS and I are both traveling in the same car to our destination. The movement affects my ability to be literate and effectively navigate that landscape more than it does Kev’s, the GPS device. Sometimes the GPS is affected by the movement and he needs to recalculate the current route or there is a delay and its navigational information arrives too late for me to use. Kev struggles to comprehend the landscape or provide an accurate understanding of the route when unexpected situations arise along our journey, such as having to stop for petrol, negotiate traffic, or detour due to road works. There is an element of trust that exists within this unique relationship. Sometimes, I use Kev with the hope that he will teach me a new way that is more efficient than the way I had previously been using. I instil faith in him, knowing that Kev will just know, that he will figure out the way – whether it be out of ignorance or laziness, I trust that he will get me
somewhere safely, efficiently, and teach me a new path. By working together, by
drawing on both of our abilities to comprehend the landscape we gain a better
picture of the landscape, a deeper knowledge of it and can navigate it wholly, and
successfully. This works, because we arrive at the destination together.

These scenarios link back to the reconciling ethic embraced in the theoretical
stance of Eatdirtzian Geosophy. By studying geosophical positions in conjunction
with each other, critics are able to subvert limited approaches to accessing and
assessing knowledges by examining them in a shared network of scales. An
understanding and awareness of frames of reference is vital before conducting an
Eatdirtzian reading of a text so that the critic is aware of how scale as a concept
might appear discursively within a text and within our reading of a text such as
understandings of literacy. In transition into an Eatdirtzian reading of scale within
text we also need a firm comprehension of scale as a network (or framework)
through which we communicate. This comprehension will equip us to recognise
and address potential frames of reference within reading practices. Frames of
reference may manifest as geographic phenomena (human or physical) or in the
thematic, which impact the construction of particular geosophical positions and
their interactions, in particular, how these influence our modes for representing
geographic knowledge and understandings about our environments.

These frames of reference will be explored in more depth in Chapter 3 through the
analysis of cross-cultural literary texts. The focus on frames of reference helps in
accessing discursive appearances of geosophy. Upon reading texts, a starting point
is to consider the frames of reference offered in order to access geosophical
positions. To do this, I will be looking towards human geography and historical,
social, and cultural aspects located within it, namely literacy, language,
geopolitical, culture, media, and contexts. This could include analysing any
metanarratives or grandnarratives influencing the text or moments of engagement
with the text. It could also include geopolitical implications and how they
influence representations, or the role and construction of contexts. For instance,
the use of particular technologies might provide insight into globalisation’s effects on knowledge construction, representation and communication.

**Conclusion: Scale, representation, frames of references and narratives**

Modes of representation, frames of reference, and engagement with language will impact how critics “scale” (think about, measure, value, size-up) narratives. Scales that we read through, write through, and comprehend the world through can seriously impact the ways in which we engage with the literary. The various scales through which we all operate and interact shape our understandings of time and space. The running narrative of my interactions with my GPS device, Kev, works as a reminder of the pluralistic and complicated nature of scale. Further, this narrative highlights how critics can study the interactions between two units of scale currently, with myself representing a local or relative mode of scaling and Kev representing a global or absolute mode of scaling.

The concept of geosophical confluence provides a scope for thinking about scales as a network for interaction, and the ideals of a paradigm of negotiation. As such, it provides a foundation for thinking about the ways in which we can manage geosophical conflicts that we encounter in our reading practices, including our attempts to occupy an a-colonial reading position and exercise a reconciling ethic. For instance, a central geosophical conflict arises between MacKellar’s *My Country* and Kwaymullina’s and Morgan’s *My Country* as the texts’ uses of colours and sentiments portray two very different relationships with land: a colonial treasured sentiment of place from a European perspective and the lively interaction of a child living in, and with aspects of, country from an Indigenous perspective. By negotiating similarities and differences surrounding ideas about space and time offered through different scales within texts I was able to work towards a state of geosophical confluence, negotiating a means for interaction between the texts.
The theoretical discussions of scale here are not only a means of establishing the nature of scale and its discursive appearances and functions, but are also a foundational step in establishing a critical awareness that epistemologies underpin narratives. This theoretical discussion of scale illuminates issues surrounding representation and ethical approaches to literary criticism that arise from scales. By focusing on the geosophical as an access point for engaging with narratives we can move forward and act upon this critical awareness in a way that privileges the individual geosophical positions embedded within narratives.
Figure 11: Down by the river, Geosophy and the Meta-critic contemplate the nature of confluence (image created by Gareth Bryan ©2013 Emma Joel)
Chapter 2 – Considerations for meta-critical reading practices: reconsidering languages and literacies in geosophical approaches to multi-cultural texts

A consideration of language is important for the study of geographic knowledges, because it is representative of communication and communication is a core part of an individual’s geographic sense of survival. Understandings of time and space are embedded within, and communicated through, languages and linguistic practices. With an EDG reading, critics can examine how the use of different languages and literacies used within texts carry geographical knowledges. This chapter offers a close reading of two texts: Tom Cho’s Look Who’s Morphing and Meme McDonald and Boori Monty Pryor’s The Binna Binna Man. In these two texts, language is a recurring concern presented through bilingual and multilingual characters, examples of code-switching, and explorations of how language is learnt and deployed. These readings highlight, from a geosophical perspective, issues of language and literacy that literary critics need to address when engaging with texts. Further, this discussion explores the role language and literacy play as scales which shape individual understandings of time and space.

Literacy is often understood as the ability to read and write, an ability which encompasses the comprehension of and, therefore successful, participation in acts of communication. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO] in a recent report on literacy (2004) noted that literacy was “primarily understood as a set of technical skills: reading, writing and calculating” (UNESCO 8). In their discussion of Multiple Literacies Theory, Masny and Cole state that the “concept of literacy has been much debated, and is a synthetic term that has come to encompass reading, writing, speaking and listening practices” (1). Efforts to define literacy often provide an understanding by positioning it functionally.26 However, the defining of literacy is a difficult task.

given the dynamic nature and various determinants of the concept. A consideration of some recent theoretical literature on the concept of literacy demonstrates just how difficult this task of defining literacy is by highlighting, further, the problematic nature of this concept.

There are a number of theories that attempt to address the dynamic nature of literacy, such as Multiple Literacies Theory and Multiliteracies. Masny and Cole state that new work on literacy needs to make the shift from researching the processes of literacy and move towards work that combines “data with a theoretical framework that makes sense of the diverse literacy practices and complex demographics of populations through which literacy is now apparent” (1). In light of this they offer Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT), a theory that takes a “philosophical position that designates multiplicity as an operating principle for the practices” of literate communication (Masny and Cole 1). This philosophical position that focuses on multiplicities is formed by combining the philosophical work of Deleuze with the work conducted by Deleuze and Guattari on social theory, and the pretext for doing so is an attempt to investigate “how literacy is presently constructed” (Masny and Cole 3).

The New London Group (Cazden et al.) provides us with Multiliteracies, a pedagogical theory that expands understandings and processes of literacy to account for the linguistic diversity and textual diversity in education systems. The theory acknowledges the role of globalisation in creating “the question of differences” through changes to forms of communication and texts with the continuous development of information technologies and the establishment of “culturally and linguistically diverse…globalized [sic] societies” (Cazden et al. 61). This “question of differences” is essentially what needs to be addressed when dealing with the radically dynamic nature of literacy.

Instances of the dynamic nature of literacy become problematic through the positioning of an understanding of literacy as dominant within a particular context. Such dominance causes other literacies to be positioned as non-dominant
within the same context; this act constructs normative expectations and hierarchies that seek to govern the concept of literacy and the functions that are within its scope, such as language usage, communication and comprehension. As literary critics, our own standards and expectations of literacy should not be positioned as dominant when engaging with texts. In an Australian literary context the application of a dominant literacy gaze is highly problematic and forces many texts into a realm of the “literacy-other” including bilingual, multilingual, migrant, refugee, and Aboriginal literature.

The application of an Eatdirtzian lens to this work on literacy can offer a decolonising examination of this recent inclusive positioning of literacy and a deconstruction of dichotomies that develop within these dialogues. It is the business of an Eatdirtzian geosophical discourse to subvert dichotomies that privilege subjective and objective positions of knowledges over individual ones. There are dichotomies that become apparent through determinations of, and dialogues on, literacy that need to be addressed to better equip the literary critic. Two of these are oral versus print literacy, and literacy versus illiteracy. A dominant perception of literacy is understood to be the one “transmitted through” official policies and practices of a state and its institutions, which is compared with subordinate notions of literacy where “individuals and groups in subordinate positions may construct their own forms of literacy in their own languages, articulating their own – officially unacknowledged – meanings, knowledge and identity” (UNESCO 13-14). This is where the work of MLT could be useful through its Deleuzian focus on multiplicities as a means for deconstructing such dichotomies (Masny and Cole 2-3).

The work of UNESCO attempts to address these hierarchies of dominant and subordinate forms of literacy in its recent study through the promotion of a pluralistic understanding of literacy. This pluralistic understanding acknowledges the relationship between literacy and cultural identity and contextual factors (such as socio-economic ones). Further, UNESCO’s report acknowledges the pluralistic nature of literacy is determined at an individual level in various contexts and

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conditions (UNESCO 12-15). Through this individual, almost case specific, determination of literacy, it is clear that the determining of literacy is highly relative. With this in mind, UNESCO’s report on literacy offers a generic definition of literacy based on this pluralistic understanding. This definition states:

literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society. (UNESCO 13)

Additionally, through these efforts to deconstruct dominant notions of literacy, UNESCO claims that there can be no single approach to (monitoring or assessing) literacy due to this pluralistic nature (UNESCO 15). Considering this, it becomes necessary to privilege a focus on the individual here to facilitate the most appropriate approaches to literacy. This, perhaps, offers a solution to perpetuating dichotomies of dominant and oppressed notions of literacy in our work as literary critics and educators.

Most importantly, what these theories highlight is that literacy is a context-specific constructed notion, which is both dynamic and pluralistic in nature (Cazden et al.; Lo Bianco; Luke; Lunsford and Ede; UNESCO). This is information that cannot be ignored. However, while the pluralistic and dynamic nature of literacy has clearly been addressed in recent literature, what still fails to be dealt with are normative expectations and values that are being reinforced within these discussions about literacy.

One significant contribution perpetuating these concerns is viewing, and reducing, the concept of literacy and illiteracy as an exclusive dichotomy. Another way of understanding the concept of literacy is as a continuum that language users can move through depending on their contextual circumstances. Such a continuum could include various states or forms of literacy: pre-literacy, functional literacy, full literacy, exclusive literacy (such as occupation specific or specialised...
language), and non-literacy (if no form of language or communication exists) (Personal Communication with Carolan, Norman, and Ladwig). Whether we view literacy as a dichotomous concept or as a continuum, who determines which perspectives are correct or valid? An intersubjective way of managing the various understandings of literacy becomes vital for literacy critics. Ideally, it would allow for a discussion that focused on how different “authorities” on literacy attempt to determine what literacy is and therefore, by default, create an understanding of illiteracy that then excludes others from the realm of literacy. This discussion would also extend to literary critics establishing an awareness of how they may be influenced by different understandings of literacy, and how they may project these understandings or determinations of literacy onto a text.

For many literary and educational contexts, including Australian ones, this discussion has a valuable place in addressing the construction of literacy privilege and its connection to an individual’s subject positions (including their ethnicity and socio-economic status). Literacy privilege contributes to the marginalisation of people and modes of expression, because “linguistic elitism is so deeply embedded in our social discourse with so little critical analysis” (McCann para. 12). Lunsford and Ouzgane highlight that a key issue surrounding literacy privilege is the modes which language, itself colonises, such as the regulatory nature of grammar, which imposes “discourses of society…[onto] writers and their messages” (Lunsford and Ouzgane 4). In addition, Swearingen studies the history of Ebonics and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in American schools, media, and public debate to emphasise that another component of literacy privilege is “a tragic lack of connection between what academicans [sic] know and do and what the public understands” (Swearingen 243). It is vital to understand the ways in which literacy privilege can be constructed if we are to be able to address instances of these privileges in our own work. These critical discussions about the nature of literacy suggest an attempt in academic arenas to address these concerns for language and literacy. However, this critical understanding about the dynamic nature of literacy and privilege, as affected and shaped by individual languages, social discourses, and contexts, suggests there is
no clear solution for linguistic hierarchies especially if we continue to engage with literacy through reductive frameworks.

This is where an EDG approach to language can make a significant contribution. By changing to a reconciling framework in our academic approaches to language and literacy, we are acting upon this critical awareness of the nature of language and literacy by engaging with ideas about and instances of language use and literacy in a way that privileges the individual user by reconciling them and their language use with their contexts. Further, as critics we are afforded the same access to reconciliation, in which we can reconcile our own language practices with both our contexts and the texts that we engage with. By reframing our critical practices through an ethic of reconciliation, academics and critics do not need to work towards changing the fabric of society and language use, as they are better equipped to simply negotiate what already exists.

Throughout Australian literary traditions, the oppression of Aboriginal literatures based on literacy privileges is rife (Grossman; Muecke "Aboriginal Literature and the Repressive Hypothesis"; Shoemaker; vanToorn). The classification of texts as “Aboriginal literature” and assigning them to such a genre is a key instance of oppression because it instantly positions the literature as “other” through that application of a set of stringent conventions and social, historical, and political discourses. It demonstrates a disconnection, as Swearingen suggests, between scholars and the real world. In doing so, it often positions critics to interpret the text as an expression of a universal “black consciousness” or experience (Muecke "Aboriginal Literature and the Repressive Hypothesis" 406). In turn, such a reading ignores or silences the voice of the individual. Muecke turns to Foucault’s work to illuminate the nature of these modes of oppression:

Foucault shows that when Aborigines speak of their own liberation they are using discourses invented a long time ago by Europeans…who also continue to use them in order to indicate they are participating in a liberation which may be mutual. But we cannot claim mutual liberation as long as social conditions remain
different for whites and Aborigines, what we tend to do is *talk* the same way as one another, we produce the same discourses. (Muecke "Aboriginal Literature and the Repressive Hypothesis" 407)

Muecke’s work moves towards devaluing talk and discourses that are applied universally, given that underlying social conditions for language users are so different. These ideas are a staunch reminder of the need to assess the discourses which position and frame our involvement in moments of communication, such as acts of reading and writing, and ideas about literacy.

Muecke notes “the work of the poet and critic is above all in the realm of discourses” (Muecke "Aboriginal Literature and the Repressive Hypothesis" 407), which leads us back to Eatdirtzian Geosophy as a means for negotiating our way through discourses. An essential part of an EDG approach is that we, as critics, work to unpack those social, historical, and political discourses in which our work, and the texts we interact with, are embedded. In order to do this, I propose that the critic’s own geosophical positions are included with the text as subject for analysis and discussion. In this way, we are able to move towards a truer moment of negotiation in our work, rather than continuing a paradigm of recognition (Param and Bemmel).

As Hage explains a paradigm of recognition, in which ideologies of multiculturalism have been established, requires “a recogniser and a recognised” (Param and Bemmel para. 4), which perpetuates these oppressive practices by placing critics in a privileged position of recogniser. A practice of negotiation and expansion of what is analysed and discussed facilitates the shift from objectification to subjectification that an EDG approach requires.

It is evident that oral forms of literacy, if they are considered at all, are positioned in opposition to quantifiable or material forms of literacy, such as written, visual or print. In recent literature on literacy, even definitions of pluralistic literacy fails to extend itself to oral forms of literacy (UNESCO 13). This exclusion is a means of disciplining the notion of literacy. When considered geosophically, this positioning of oral literacy becomes highly problematic, as it excludes any
individual knowledges shaped by diverse experiences of the world that emerge through oral literacy, by privileging print literacies. This positioning constructs a dichotomy; it creates a subordinate “other” and works to subjugate Indigenous knowledges about literacy and genuine states of literacy.

Alan Fox acknowledges the depth of knowledges that are embedded in oral literacies within Indigenous Australian communities, through the connection that oral literacies have with the landscape. Fox states that the role of the individual in facilitating the knowledges inscribed within the landscape through oral communications, such as the sharing of stories, is vital for the intergenerational survival of these knowledges (Fox 61-63). There is an ever-present fear for the continuation of these knowledges in Neidjie’s work, due to his geosographical position, which is largely shaped by his role as a Bunitj Clan Elder and Senior Law Man, and the threats of colonisation on the Bunitj Clan’s country, understandings, and culture. Neidjie responds to this fear through his attempts to convey the oral literacies that offer this reading of the land, and the knowledges that it divulges, by publishing them in the print medium. Neidjie’s stories are accompanied by an array of visual texts capturing aspects of the environments to which he refers. Perhaps the inclusion of these visuals is an attempt to re-establish this connection to landscape in the print medium (Fox; Neidjie Story). Has this shift to the print medium made Senior Law Man (SLM) Neidjie’s stories and knowledges more valuable than his oral versions? Has societal evolution and access to the print medium changed the way he is fulfilling his obligations to pass on knowledge down to younger generations? How have my obligations as a reader changed now that I have access to stories that I traditionally could not access because I did not physically have access to the Bunitj Elders and landscape? How am I to act upon and engage with the knowledges that come through these stories? As a non-Bunitj reader am I to continue to share the feeling that SLM Neidjie so passionately conveys? Is it transferable to other times and spaces? Or does the story and feeling just stop with the printed text, removed from person and place?
These are issues that need to be considered in reading *The Binna Binna Man*. In McDonald’s and Pryor’s work, a connection between story and country is established through the use of visual texts and multilingual characters. *The Binna Binna Man* is a young adult novella written by Meme McDonald and Boori Monty Pryor, and it is a sequel to one of their earlier texts, *My Girragundji*. The narrative follows the family’s return to country for the funeral of the narrator’s cousin. *The Binna Binna Man* offers explicit experiences of characters moving through and interacting with Australian environments. This narrative is pivotal for a geographical discussion of language and literacy as it offers a number of interesting features that blend oral and written literacies, including: multilingual characters, examples of code-switching languages, and conversational tones.

McDonald and Pryor’s narrative offers a diverse range of languages, seamlessly shifting between Standard Australian English, Aboriginal English, Australian colloquialisms, and traditional Aboriginal Lingo. Further, the written text of the narrative is accompanied by a variety of visual texts: photographs of characters and landscapes; and images of artworks, animals and landscapes that are superimposed onto the paper of the text, or set in the background. There are a number of fonts used for the written text; and the actual pages of the text are black, white or grey. The use of these visual effects as well as the variety of languages deployed becomes significant for the discussion of languages and literacies.

The work embeds the value of oral literacies into the narrative through the conversational tone used in narration and the distinctive use of voice. These features are most notable in the opening pages of the narrative, where the narrator is talking to the reader, orientating them to the story, the characters and place:

That’s where we’re going now. Yarrie. Migaloo fullas, whiefullas, call Yarrie a reserve or a mission or something. We just call it our place. That’s where my mum’s people come from. They tell you stories about that hairyman, that Binna Binna man, make you wish there was no night.
He’s called the Binna Binna man ‘cause he’s got big long ears. Binna means ears, see. He’s got ears that long they drag on the ground, true. Drag along the ground as he walks. (McDonald and Pryor 10)

For me, this conversational spoken tone of the narration is reminiscent of traditional oral storytelling, where a direct dialogue is established between speaker and listener. Using an EDG approach where I consider the features of text geosophically, including the use of a meta-critical approach and a-colonial reading position, will enable me to be aware of my own standards upon engagement with the text, which consider print medium a norm for storytelling. This awareness informs my practices of reading, ensuring that I do not reduce a text by considering it solely within the bounds of my own subjective positions; rather the awareness will feed into a reading that is an intersubjective discussion of the text.

Based on my education in Australian literary and cultural studies, I consider that this shift to print medium for this story is a form of colonisation. Not only does this shift represent a colonisation of knowledge and a Eurocentric notion that valuable knowledge must be stored safely in books, but it also represents a colonising of modes of literacy. Having been raised and educated in a western education system that places emphasis on the value of reading and writing for successful participation in contemporary society, I am perpetuating these ideals in my initial approach to the text. However, using an EDG approach as an access point for engaging with The Binna Binna Man, I can shift the dominance of my reading of the text by refocusing on the geosophical and reconciling the text with its contexts.

The blending of oral literacies and print medium could be viewed as an emergence of time and space. Reconciling this idea with mine and the text’s wider contexts the act of publishing contemporary Indigenous Australian becomes quite significant. The ability to disseminate Indigenous stories and voices via the print medium is part of bigger push towards self-determination and self-representation in the public arena (Heiss Dhuuluu-Yala; Heiss Black Enough). In light of this,
the character’s unique use of voice and language becomes significant in placing and representing himself. It allows him to define of “Migaloo” as “whitefullas”, position them as different or other to himself (McDonald and Pryor 10). Further, the narrator provides establishes the emotional and spiritual connection to country by distinguishing that act of labelling Yarrie as “a reserve or a mission or something” is a Migaloo practice that denies the sense and ownership of place that he has for the location (McDonald and Pryor 10).

The narrative’s use of time and space becomes an avenue for accessing ideas about the cultural significance of storytelling for the character. In this example, the narrator’s ability to tell his stories about the Binna Binna man and transient state of returning to country reveals understandings about time and space from his geosophical positions. Namely, that his version of the stories act as a connection to country; “We just call it our place. That’s where my mum’s people come from. They tell you stories about that hairyman…” (McDonald and Pryor 10). This is significant because it emphasises the importance of storytelling for Aboriginal people living off country and reminds the reader of the intergeneration nature of oral storytelling. When these ideas are reconciled the wider contexts that the text exists in it potentially offers more ideas about the nature of print medium in facilitating new traditions of oral storytelling.

Within an Australian literary context, these concerns of addressing and valuing oral literacy are not limited to the analysis of Aboriginal Australian literatures. There is a growing need for Australian literary critics to be competent in engaging with concerns for diverse language usage and forms of literacy, including oral literacies, as they emerge in a growing body of multicultural, migrant, and refugee texts (Baranay; Gunew). The geographic knowledges embedded within the literacies of migrant and refugee literature are becoming more and more significant to contemporary Australian contexts. Oral literacies are a recurring theme in Cho’s work on identity and navigating his migrant experience as a Chinese Australian. Despite Cho’s short stories being presented in the print form,
there are a number of short stories that deal explicitly with the conversations he has with family members.

Tom Cho’s collection of short stories *Look Who’s Morphing* echoes Wright’s original ideas about geosophy and the role of the imagination in forming individual geographic knowledges. The stories do this through their unique representation of narratives that attempt to deal with personal concerns about identity, migration, and relationship to place. Not only are the content and themes of Cho’s work explicitly relevant to our discussion, but also the unique ways in which he presents this content can expand our consideration of geosophy further. Cho draws the reader’s attention to the peculiar and varied interactions of time and space, and how we might better understand them, through the use of textual self-insertion as a literary device, the practice of intertextuality that draws on, and blends, western and eastern popular cultures, and through a unique use of language.

Cho’s narratives constantly force readers to challenge their own subject positions and knowledges, creating a sense of general confusion as you navigate your way through the individual stories. Cho creates an overwhelming, yet entertaining and humorous feeling of the familiar by combining common themes related to time and space, and the exploration of identity, such as gender, sexuality, popular culture, media and technology, with familiar story lines and characters from other popular texts. The analysis of Cho’s work in this chapter will focus on a selection of the stories from the series, including *Dinner with my Grandmother* and *Learning English*.

Of most significance to this discussion of oral literacy is the story *Dinner with my Grandmother*. At the beginning of the story Cho states: “I like visiting with my grandmother. Although we do not know very much about each other and we do not even have proficiency in the same language” (Cho *Look Who's Morphing* 31). Given that the Grandmother cannot speak much English, she speaks to Cho in French. However, it is not stated whether Cho speaks French or not. Only once
the French dialogue is translated, however, it does seem absurd, out of context, and rather humorous.

I smile at my grandmother and I gesture at the food as I compliment her on her cooking. My grandmother does not know many English words so she replies: ‘Mon chien a été vacciné contre la rage. On lui a ensuite fait une analyse de sang, avec un résultat satisfaisant. Mon animal ne réside pas en France. Il n'a donc pas besoin d'être tatoué.’ (32)

This translates to: “My dog was vaccinated against rabies. He then had a blood test with a satisfactory result. My pet does not reside in France. So he does not need to be tattooed.” Alone, the use of French by the grandmother appears absurd because as a reader I do not know French, nor is it clear that the narrator even knows French, and as she speaks in French, it becomes apparent that her own knowledge of French is limited. This becomes more apparent with the second use of French dialogue, of which, upon editing my translation of the French material, one of my supervisors notes “the next quotation sounds like something out of a language textbook” (Personal Communication with C. Webb). Further, the absurdity manifests through the actual content of the conversation because it is extremely mismatched:

Just as I am walking down her paved driveway, I hear her call out to me. I turn around. She is waving at me. She smiles at me and she says: ‘Si vous avez besoin de viande, vous allez chez le boucher. Vous pouvez y acheter toutes sortes de viands et de volailles, et si vous avez envie de bon jambon, ou de pâté ou d'autres produits du porc, vous allez chez le charcutier.’ (34)

This can be translated as: “If you need meat, you go to the butcher. You can buy all kinds of meats and poultry, and if you desire good ham or pate or other pork products, you go to the delicatessen.” This instance of using French adds to the significance of this technique deployed by Cho. The dialogue offered by the grandmother reflects a desperate attempt to interact and say something to her grandson during his visit. My deeming of these instances as absurd is significant also, because it reveals my own understanding of oral literacy as needing to be
functional, clear, and of the same language, which I am imposing onto the text. Only upon reflecting on this forcing of my subjective position onto Cho’s work do I see the brilliance of his work. He himself is offering commentary on the nature of oral literacies. Are the actual words we say more important than the context or gestures that deliver them? Do we need to speak the same language to fluently communicate? How important are oral literacies for personal interactions? It suggests that there is more to oral literacy and communications than just vocabulary and speech. Further, what happens when oral literacies are embedded within written texts?

The importance of considering the speaker in acts of language is also raised as vital for consideration in Nakata’s analysis of practices in anthropological linguistics. In this discussion, Nakata highlights that the separation of language from those that use it facilitates a study of language where there is more value given to “how” language is used rather than the meaning of its use. He notes that the speakers “are heard but not listened to” and the speakers are deemed “irrelevant” (Nakata ”Linguistic Inscriptions” 37). He emphasises that this linguistic practice, which focused on how language was used or spoken, only sought grammatical information about the language at the expense of cultural and functional information about the language. In the context of Nakata’s work, this meant that no consideration was given to the influences that the people of Torres Strait Islands had over language use, and literacies. For my analysis of Cho’s work these ideas remind me of the need to expand my reading of the text past a purely grammatical reading framed by my understandings of literacy, as this could potential colonise and reduce the ideas Cho’s work has to offer about language from multi-lingual subjective positions.

The literary critic cannot ignore understandings of oral communications. There needs to be a shift, as King proposes in his discussion of literature, towards acknowledging the “co-operations” of oral and written literature and literacy (King The Truth About Stories 110). Rather than perpetuating an opposition between the two, this is a shift away from a dichotomy between oral and written
literacies. Such a movement would be geosophically sound, as it would privilege both forms of literacy and literature in analysis, not allowing the dominance or silence of either. The authority to facilitate such a repositioning of oral and written literacy lies with the literary critic. King notes of oral and written literacies and literature, “…they occupy the same space, the same time. And, if you know where to stand, you can hear the two of them talking to each other” (King The Truth About Stories 101-02). It is the job of the literary critic to find where to stand, so that the critics may hear this dialogue.

Part of finding this standing position as literary critics is addressing the dichotomy that the very existence of any determination of literacy predicates, being the defining of illiteracy, and how that has shaped our own understandings of abilities to communicate. The approaches to literacy discussed previously from Masny and Cole’s MLT, the New London Group’s Multiliteracies and UNESCO’s Pluralistic literacies all denote a clear message, that literacy exists (albeit as a relative construct) and it is valuable. In fact, literacy is so valuable that it warrants an examination of the nature of literacy so that they may better promote inclusive approaches for literacy. The promotion of inclusivity is, however, a dangerous dialogue, because embedded within this dialogue are dichotomies of literacy and illiteracy, disciplining covertly.

It is relevant to our work as literary critics to, at the very least, acknowledge the dialogues in the global community, and of individuals, that are going to affect the way texts are presented and how we, as critics, are positioned in the reading of texts. Eatdirtzian Geosophy proposes that critics apply an intersubjective lens to reading practices, which is accompanied by a reconciling ethic that allows us to manage the potential subjectivities we may encounter. This enables us to not disregard any notion or understanding of literacy nor reduce it to the terms of one of these notions or understandings. In this way, what an EDG offers is an emancipated approach (Galbraith). As such, it requires critics to critically understand the discourses and ideologies that affect the subjective positions of themselves and texts through a focus on geosophy, and explore how “these forces
can be overcome” through the use of meta-critical practices and a-colonial reading positions that locate critics and their work into a paradigm of negotiation (Habermas qtd. in Galbraith 187-88).

In the UNESCO report, the emphasis on “universal literacy” and “meeting the goal of literacy for all” globally (UNESCO 5) promotes a value judgement by establishing a normative expectation regarding the standard of literacy as a print literacy, despite its claim to pluralism. This promotion of literacy at a “universal” scale, as suggested in UNESCO’s report and reinforced by their “one-definition-fits-all” package of pluralistic literacy, could be seen as an act of assimilation if it were to function on a global scale. This act of defining and promoting a standard of pluralistic literacy globally becomes a geopolitical issue because it relies on having global power to enforce it. It lacks intersubjective insight into the nature of Indigenous literacies.

With this in mind, a lack of intersubjectivity and further geopolitical instances can be identified within both Masny and Cole’s work on MLT and the New London Group’s theory of Multiliteracies. The texts privilege geosophical positions from predominantly western, developed and “English-speaking countries,” with the collaborators of the New London Group being educational experts from Australia, United States of America, and Great Britain (Cazden et al. 62). Further, their studies focus on globalisation and western education systems, including western philosophies such as the theories of Deleuze (Masny and Cole). Both texts demonstrate attempts to reshape and redefine the nature of literacy in ways that validate changes to the notion of “literacy” that account for effects of globalisation relative to their geosophical positions, such the New London Group’s defining of multiliteracies as “a word we chose to describe two important arguments we might have with the emerging cultural, institutional, and global order: the multiplicity of communications channels and media, and the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity” (Cazden et al. 63). In doing so, this literature concurrently works at establishing what is considered illiteracy, by excluding other geosophical positions and how literacy may be viewed from
these, which is exactly what ideas about multiplies literacies claim to avoid. These inclusive takes on literacy highlight a key issue for literary critics, being representation. What does it means to be literate or illiterate? And who has the authority to determine such a state?

Anita Heiss explores this problem within her discussion of Indigenous discourses and literature. In a reading of Stephen Muecke, she notes that Indigenous Australian peoples often deemed “‘illiterate’ have always read or written in the broad sense, but that these forms of writing have simply been valued differently by other, mostly colonising, people” (Heiss Dhuuluu-Yala 25). She concludes that being able to “portray a story and comprehending it”, regardless of the medium or signifying systems used to present it, “adds…another dimension to the concept of literacy” (Heiss Dhuuluu-Yala 25).

What Heiss manages to expose here are two elements of the representation of literacy that fall within the literary critic’s scope of practice, being acts of “valuing” and “comprehending”. Geosophically speaking, by privileging an understanding of literacy from her individual knowledges, as a Wiradjuri woman, western university educated author and literary critic, Heiss offers a subversive shift from dichotomous understandings of literacy and illiteracy.

In addressing understandings of literacy and illiteracy geosophically, the power to decentre and challenge the authority allocated to a definition of “literacy” via acts of representation lies with the literary critic. Offering an analysis of the illiteracy and literacy dichotomies, Knoblauch states that “the labels literate and illiterate almost always imply more than a degree or deficiency of skill” (Knoblauch 74). Despite the functional positioning and definitions of literacies they ultimately embody social, cultural, economic, political, or geopolitical judgements to the extent that literacy could be seen as “a social trope” (Brodkey qtd in Knoblauch 74).

27 For examples of work conveying these types of literacies discussed by Heiss see Marcia Langton, ”Sacred Geography: Western Desert Traditions of Landscape Art,” Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius (Sydney: Art Gallery of NSW in association with Papunya Tula, 2000).
A geosophical reading of literacy needs to address the determinants of literacy too. One key determinant of literacy that needs to be addressed is that of language. A geosophical positioning of language would privilege an individual’s experience of language. This would have significant implications, considering the nature of literacy, as it forces the examination of geographic factors and acts of representation in the determining of literacy. *The Binna Binna Man* is a text that presents a challenge to determining notions of literacy through its use of language, by juxtaposing Standard Australian English, with Aboriginal English and with Indigenous Lingo (McDonald and Pryor).

She’s laughing in m’face. Shandell’s pulling at me. ‘Let’s dunghai, let’s get outta here, cus.’ I’m not giving in. The jalbu serving is laughing that bad she’s about to burst. She’s calling out to the others, ‘Hey, anyone heard of Ronald McDonald’s niece having an Aboriginal nephew?’

Shame. I’m out of there faster than lightning. Her words chasing after me, but. Sticking in real sharp. ‘Hey kid, don’t you know? Ronald McDonald doesn’t even exist!’ …Uncle Garth grabs me and hugs me tight, still choking on his laughs. ‘Got you fulla good, eh?!’ I feel like a real munyard, a real bush Murri, falling for that. (McDonald and Pryor 28-29)

This juxtaposition of languages illustrates how the geographic factors of time and space, and their relationship with one another can be embedded within and shape our language use. The effect of juxtaposing these languages within the one linguistic event depicts a cyclic understanding of time. The individual’s idiolect and ability to code shift has been determined by historical and recent traditions. As part of navigating this context the character draws on past and present languages simultaneously. To this individual, the languages may be seen as current or ongoing in contemporary Australian contexts. From my understanding of Aboriginal language use, which is shaped by a colonial history, I see language use as being shaped by a linear scale of time and of historical events where traditional Lingo represents a stage of pre-colonisation, Standard Australian English represents an outcome of colonisation, and Aboriginal English represents...
an outcome of post-colonisation. My use of a linear scale here is significant given that it privileges western notions of time which imply that linear movement through time represents progress and evolution. These implications of progress can lie in contrast to geosophical positions other than my own, for instance from a critical Indigenous geosophical position such historical events measured on a linear time frame may actually imply regression and destruction rather than progress. Given this potential conflict, it is important to reconcile my ideas here with the text by exploring instances of time and space further.

This linguistic event also draws our attention as readers to the space that the character occupies, and why this language use is significant for the individual. The ability to code shift demonstrates a key geographic knowledge, as it represents characters’ understanding of their environments and how they need to survive within them. It is interesting that most instances of shifting to Lingo or Aboriginal English within the example given above are when the speaker or other characters are referring to themselves or other people: “cus”, “jalbu”, “fulla”, “munyard”, and “Murri”. There is a lot which could be inferred from these linguistic instances. From my subject position, and keenness to focus on how time and space is reflected within language use, I would privilege an interpretation of language use by the character as shaped by linear time and reactions to colonisation, within the context of Australian landscapes. However, my reading here would be limited. From an Indigenous subjective position, the language choice here and ability to code shift when referring to oneself and others may have a deeper significance as a mode of identification, a demonstration of pride, a reclamation of language; it may be a reaction against oppressive traditions of assimilation, or be a means for locating one’s self. McKay, in discussion of Rumsey, notes that Aboriginal languages are “inherently connected to a tract of land as a result of establishment in that place” within Dreaming (McKay 101), embedding a significant identification to place within instances of language use.
This example reinforces ideas about how language has been shaped within Australian contexts by historical, colonial, and cultural discourses that are embedded in the shaping of these contemporary Australian spaces that we occupy. Furthermore, the cyclic understanding of time within that space seems appropriate, given that many Australian contexts are concurrently pre-colonial, post-colonial and still actively colonising. For an Indigenous Australian person, this interaction of cyclic time with space could be even more apparent, given ever-present ancestral connections with country. Clearly, taking an intersubjective approach here helps to consider the text more thoroughly. What these linguistic events highlight is that there is a need for an Eatdirtzian geosophical discourse to equip critics to address the hybridity of language displayed in texts, such as The Binna Binna Man, or the disconnection between language in text and reader, in a way that facilitates the linking of language back to the speaker.

In his review of linguistic practices conducted by the Cambridge Expedition with Torres Strait Islanders, Martin Nakata discusses the need to study languages beyond their grammatical functions, with due consideration needed to be given to language traditions and the speakers of languages. “If the history of a language is not factored into the theory as a primary standpoint, then any knowledge generated about that language is flawed” (Nakata "Linguistic Inscriptions" 37). An Eatdirtzian geosophical discourse positions time as a concept, through the study of language as a discursive enunciation of the geosophical (relating to time); such an approach to texts allows a historical consideration of language and its usage.

The positioning, recognition, and valuing of language and its relationship with language users is an issue that needs to be addressed within Australian contexts, especially given the role that language plays as a determining factor of literacy. If we look to America, there has been a notable shift in the reconsideration of language study, which links language to language speakers, through an increase in borderland and postcolonial studies. Gloria Anzaldúa’s writing on American borderlands raises numerous concerns for the reconsideration of languages and
their usage. One key notion that she raises here is the vital role that language can play in identification processes, noting that for many “language is a homeland” that is closer than actual (or physical) homelands (Anzaldúa "Wild Tongue" 55), especially for “dispossessed or relocated peoples” (Anzaldúa Borderlands 35).

The role that language can play in identification processes becomes most evident in acts of language reconstruction conducted by people who occupy borderland spaces; this includes bi-lingual and bi-dialectical practices, in addition to the development of hybrid languages (Anzaldúa "Wild Tongue" 54-56). Anzaldúa claims that language can evolve in these ways for a variety of reasons or purposes within borderland spaces, such as a response to geographic dislocation, or as a source of geographic and cultural relocation, as a response to colonisation, to function within institutions, or as an act of rebellion. However, ultimately, the reconstruction and code-switching of languages and dialects equips people that occupy borderland spaces with language that is “capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves – a language with terms that are neither español ni inglés, but both” (Anzaldúa "Wild Tongue" 55).

Knowing when to use and deploy various languages emerges as a key skill for survival and negotiating time and spaces within these texts. One of the components of geography is to study how individuals understand, live, and survive within their environments. One key example of this is the code-switching that occurs within The Binna Binna Man. In his discussion of Australian Aboriginal languages, Fazard Sharifian notes how Indigenous languages, both traditional and contemporary, are encoded with “cultural conceptualizations” (Sharifian 181-82). This encoding evolves with time, capturing aspects of culture such as kinship and identification of country. Sharifian points out, from a linguistic perspective, these aspects of culture are embedded within Aboriginal English through this coding process. Similar to Anzaldúa’s discussion, the evolution of languages that Sharifian depicts embraces an identification process which links linguistic experiences to cultural and geographic ones. This highlights
the need for a literary study of language that can draw attention to these connections.

For an Australian context, there needs to be a context-appropriate shift in perceptions regarding language too – a shift that recognises the significance, and validates the processes, of language reconstructions. In particular, this must be done by addressing hybridity factors of language and the positioning and valuing of Aboriginal English – in an official language capacity, in educational institutions, and of course, in literary criticism.

Diana Eades’ work on Aboriginal English reinforces the need for such a shift to occur by highlighting continual problems that arise in legal and educational institutions for Indigenous Australians due to language barriers, and by packaging Aboriginal English in an accessible way for wider Australian contexts and audiences in attempts to limit such language barriers (Eades Aboriginal English and the Law; Eades Aboriginal English; Eades "Understanding Aboriginal English"). Eades notes that a sociolinguistics perspective is vital in such approaches to Aboriginal English, as it enables an understanding of how language and language use is shaped by social (and cultural) experiences (Eades "They Don't Speak"). In her study of varieties of Aboriginal English, Eades facilitates the recognition and valuing of the processes of language reconstructions and languages themselves. She does so by breaking down Aboriginal English into various facets of the language: grammatical functions and rules, rhetorics and behaviours of language usage, questioning, and links to culture (Eades "They Don't Speak" 100-13).

Eades also outlines various non-verbal communications that arise as a feature of Aboriginal English within interactions as they may occur in context, and their cultural and social significance. In her sociolinguistic approach to language study, Eades claims that “language is impossible to separate from context – it is continually both reflecting and creating aspects of context” (Eades "They Don’t Speak" 97). Although I agree with this sentiment, from an Eatdirtzian reading the
application of context in Eades’ work is limited. It is focused on the language speakers and their interactions within various contexts; it positions context as situation. An Eatdirtzian consideration of context and language would extend beyond Eades’ employment of “context as situation” in her study of language. In addition to considering the individual language speaker, an Eatdirtzian approach would aim to also explicitly address the context itself by applying a geographically informed assessment of language and its relationship to the individual language user.

By considering the relationship of time and space as discursive occurrences of the geosophical, an Eatdirtzian reading of language would equip literary critics in making this transition, by drawing attention to the locatedness of language and the language user; whether this is in-text or within the critics’ relationship with the text. An understanding of how language can be dealt with discursively is presented in Lunsford and Ede’s discussion about the relationship between language and identity, which notes that “we may write language, but language also writes us” (Lunsford and Ede 168). What they remind their readers is how discourses are positioned and function post-structurally. A discursive approach to the study of language here could enable revelations about identity; this reminder reinforces Nakata’s claims about the fundamentality of not separating the speaker from the language (or what is spoken). The juxtaposition of languages in The Binna Binna Man highlights how identity can be shaped by elements of the geosophical linking the individual to land via the use of language.

For the literary critic, this positioning of language needs to be prevalent in the assessment of Indigenous Australian texts in order to highlight the geosophical knowledges that the use of language demonstrates and how this contributes to the text, and notions of literacy. In this way, language can facilitate the emergence of a geosophical discourse.

An Eatdirtzian geosophical approach to literacy would be beneficial to literary critics working in Australian contexts, given the diverse instances of language
use. It enables literary critics to assess dichotomies that arise in the defining and depicting of literacy, and how these may shape the valuing and comprehension of texts. An Eatdirtzian approach to literacy would also allow a consideration of determinants of literacy. By taking an a-colonial position on literacy, literary critics are able to focus on the individual determinants of literacy, such as the context of language use and the user and social discourses shaping notions of literacy in their analysis of texts and self. Using an Eatdirtzian geosophical discourse to inform this approach to language, critics would be able to consider the relationship between language and language user and the role of geographic concepts in the development of these relationships. Then, by reconciling various instances of literacy, critics would be equipped to draw intersubjective conclusions about the significance of language use and users.

When we look at examples from Cho’s stories, the need for critics to consider the history and development of language usage becomes more apparent. In the short story *Learning English*, Cho offers a reflection of a fundamental part of his migrant experience in Australia: learning to speak English. As with many themes that Cho explores in his work, he frames it with both explicit and implicit popular culture references: “Like numerous migrants, I picked up a lot of English by watching television” (Cho *Look Who's Morphing* 54). Cho’s English language history and usage starts off with formal “English lessons through a migrant settlement program” (Cho *Look Who's Morphing* 53). The language development continues when he learns “tricks” from popular culture which are integrated into his language practices: “things did improve once I learnt the trick of replacing words I did not know with phrases like ‘blah blah blah’, ‘yada yada yada’, ‘whatever’ or the name of a celebrity” (Cho *Look Who's Morphing* 53). This “trick” is a reference to a *Seinfeld* episode, where the characters use phrases like “yada yada yada” to omit truths and avoid consequences. Although Cho’s character does not make an explicit reference to *Seinfeld*, this instance does bring to mind ideas about the ways in which television influences and constructs popular verbal phrases, potentially playing on the reader’s memory and familiarity with the cultural phenomena spawned by the program. Cho’s deployment of the
The initial humour of Cho’s deployment of these “tricks” mask serious messages in Cho’s work. This becomes more apparent in what might be the final paragraph of the narrative, seeing as the text of the narrative is presented in one complete block, with no paragraph structure:

Me, I just felt happy that my English had improved. In fact, last year, I even decided to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of my arrival in Australia by adopting an anglicised name. I turned once again to television for inspiration and began watching repeats of Fantasy Island and this is why I now answer to the name ‘Ricardo Montalban’. However, this morning, my friend Chuck told me that ‘Ricardo Montalban’ is not quite the name for me. He said that this is because I am more like ‘a Chinese version of Heather Locklear’. Chuck told me that I am like Heather Locklear in every respect – looks, lifestyle, love life, family, worldview, etc – except that I am Chinese. Part of me really wanted to believe that Chuck was right but, the thing is, only earlier that day someone else had told me that I am ‘the Korean equivalent of Oprah Winfrey’. I guess I wanted to believe the Oprah thing more. It also occurred to me that, these days, I am definitely doing a lot better in terms of expressing myself and my needs. So I just looked at Chuck and
said: ‘Yada yada yada. Whatever.’ (Cho Look Who’s Morping 54-55)

The first issue to consider here is the adoption of an anglicised name. The changing of names is a recurring feature not only in multicultural Australian literature but also in non-fiction accounts and experiences of Australia. The anglicising of a name for non-Anglo migrants reflects another form of assimilation in Australian contexts and a move towards accessing the cultural capital that accompanies perceived “whiteness” in Australian contexts (Hage White Nation; McInally). Geosophically, the act of adopting an anglicised name demonstrates the way in which language and language usage can offer ideas about time and spaces. In particular, it offers insight into the colonising nature of a character’s Australian contexts by implying that knowing to anglicise a name becomes a part of survival upon resettlement.

The second issue that this passage also demonstrates is the desire to communicate, and how that may be affected by limited knowledge of a particular language, similar to the examples of the grandmother’s use of textbook French. In this case, the characters’ engagement with western popular culture both enables and limits their successful participation in communication. In this instance, ability to access and replicate popular culture and media also becomes a source of cultural capital within his new contexts.

This dialogue emphasises that effective language usage also involves being familiar with the content of discussions. In this case, Cho’s engagement with television and celebrity information as part of his experiences of western culture within Australia enables him to successfully participate in on-topic conversation, unlike the mismatched conversation topics with his grandmother. However, it is not until the final passage of the narrative that Cho has achieved this.

28 More examples of this trend in contemporary popular culture includes, but is not limited to: biographies such as Anh Do’s The Happiest Refugee; popular documentary series such as SBS’s Go Back To Where You Came From; the literary works of Tom Cho, Christos Tsiolkas, Peter Skrzyniecki, and Raimond Gaita; and, stand-up comedy by Akmal Saleh, Anh Do, and Jimeoin.
Unlike earlier in the narrative, the last line in this passage, which is the last line of this narrative, demonstrates that Cho’s character has now mastered using the “trick” from the original Seinfeld episode by saying “yada yada yada” to avoid lengthy awkward social conversations, such as having to correct the misinformation or presumption about his ethnic identity being Korean. Perhaps, by the standard of being able to deploy a popular culture reference appropriately, Cho’s English use, and ability to express himself, have improved from the start of the narrative. Prior to this final passage, Cho uses incongruous language and phrases learnt from television shows about American lawyers: “my day-to-day speech was soon filled with sentences like ‘Murder in the second, twenty to thirty-five years, and we’ll drop the conspiracy charge.’” (Cho Look Who’s Morphing 54).

Despite Cho professing that his English, and ability to express himself, have improved, the engagement with popular culture has limited this expression. One key instance of this limitation is Cho’s initial choice in “anglicised” names, which reveals a lack of cultural knowledge, given that he has chosen the Spanish name of an American actor. The deployment of such tricks throughout the narrative becomes farcical highlighting their limitations further: “I was born and raised in a town called Rod Stewart. Back in those days, Rod Stewart was a very busy town. The major industries were David Hasselhoff and coal” (Cho Look Who’s Morphing 53). Further, Cho hires Bruce Willis, the voice of “Mikey” in the Look Who’s Talking films, to speak for him until Cho develops a better command of the English language. For me as a native English-speaker with knowledge of the popular culture references and other texts, this representation of his experience learning English is rather humorous.

Reconciling my reading with Cho’s work also offers more serious connotations about the role of language as a geographic knowledge and the experiences of migrants making language transitions. My reading potentially offers commentary on how an user of English as a second language practices of English are treated as a source of humour within an Australian context. My interpretation of these
examples as comical suggests to me two key things about my own subject positions: first, it reflects the literacy privilege I have in an Australian context as a native English speaking woman and as a trained English teacher; second, it reflects the racist traditions of the Australian contexts that I have been conditioned by. Part of this tradition is a language status quo, which places an expectation of language assimilation onto non-English speaking people. This legacy of this colonising pattern is observed in contemporary Australian societies with the occurrence of too many instances of the public vilification of migrants and tourists involving issues surrounding language ("ABC Presenter Cops Racial Abuse on Sydney Bus"; Olding; Rourke). In a more serious tone, Cho acknowledges within the story, “I think it is hard for a non-migrant to understand just how difficult it is to learn a new language while adapting to life in a new country. Every single day presented me with new frustrations. At the most fundamental level, I hated not having the necessary words to express myself and my needs” (Cho Look Who's Morphing 53-54). For me, this statement represents Cho’s attempt to highlight the racist nature of Australian contexts as he experiences it from his subject positions, and in doing so he subverts my own subject positions where successful participation in language is taken for granted.

Cho extends this farcical experience of learning and using new languages to languages other than English too. In Dinner with my Grandmother, Cho describes having Cantonese lessons taught by his Grandmother, after stating that the two characters are not proficient in the same language. Cho uses comedy to emphasise that Cantonese is a difficult language to learn, mainly because it is a tonal language…[and]…changing the tone of a word can completely alter that word’s meaning. Thus, to a beginner, the word for ‘electronic mail-sorting machine’ can sound very similar to the word for ‘compulsory jury duty’, and the word for ‘it’s not a cat’ can sound very similar to the word for ‘the Norwegians’. (Cho Look Who's Morphing 33)

Although, my perception of this passage as humorous might be limited to my reading position as a native English speaker; it does not necessary extend to a
Cantonese audience or speaker, or an Indigenous language speaker. In light of this potential conflict, I can reconcile my perception here with Cho’s work and context through a return to geosophy. In terms of the geosophic, both of Cho’s representations of language learning are significant as they both highlight a theme of survival within migrant experiences. The ability to develop English proficiency demonstrates an understanding of the level of communication needed to survive within this new cultural space. Further, the attempts to learn Cantonese demonstrate an attempt to establish, maintain, and promote the survival of traditional cultural spaces for these characters (Cho and the Grandmother) as language users within this new context. However, it is unclear what Cho’s character’s first language is. Both of these experiences of language learning are required as part of navigating and establishing identity within this new physical context.

These examples highlight the need to consider the history of the language user and their experiences of language. In terms of intersubjective reading practices, moreover, it is not enough to just consider the language traditions of individual language users; critics need to consider their own language traditions too. This includes acknowledging any positions of literacy privilege we may hold or any states of pre-literacy we may be forced into if we come across unfamiliar linguistic events.

A consideration of literacy needs to be extended to discussions of subalternity and modes for negotiating cultural interfaces. Warrior reviews Spivak’s work on the subaltern, and its impact on, and application to, Native studies. In doing so, he offers a beautiful metaphor of traditional dancing to unpack the key issues surrounding the nature of the subaltern, including the nexus of power within Indigenous communities and intellectual traditions, which can create subaltern positions. The shared act of dancing becomes significant, because within this act everyone has to play in a similar fashion, they are now all dancers. Warrior reminds us of Spivak’s advice: critics need to face the issues surrounding cultural interfaces by “formulating work that can address…concrete reality without
fetishizing it” (Warrior 90). Additionally, Warrior remind us of the catch-22 underlying Spivak’s conclusion that speaking “mobilizes the speaker”, once the subaltern speaks “they become something else” (Warrior 90). Olson also contributes to this discussion of addressing post-colonial cultural interfaces through a comparative review of the work of Pratt, Spivak and Bhabha. He notes that Pratt’s work on the Contact Zone is problematic because it does not emphasise the importance of differences or work to deconstruct the systems of power and oppression that post-colonial studies warrant. Further, he reminds us that Spivak’s work highlights how the internalisation of discourse to construct the identity of “other” as a mode of oppression is epistemic violence.

Similarly, Anzaldúa reinforces the need to address forms of racism and violence in the objective approaches of western cultures. She claims that one significant act of violence is the dichotomy that is created through western cultures creating objects and then putting distance between themselves and those objects (Anzaldúa Borderlands 37). Anzaldúa notes that “to speak English is to think in that language, to adopt the ideology of the people whose language it is and to be ‘inhabited’ by their discourses” (Anzaldúa “Haciendo Caras, Una Entrada” xxii). These discussions create an awareness of the modes through which epistemic violence functions at cultural interfaces, such as the internalisation of discourses and objectification. An Eatdirtzian approach promotes a practice of subjectification that privileges differences, while simultaneously works to deconstruct power relations by using geosophy. This focal point of geographic knowledges operates from an epistemological position that values individual sources of knowledge, therefore moving away from traditional power structures associated with knowledges and differences found at these interfaces.

So moving forward, but also backwards and sideways as the reconciling ethic provides scope for revisiting as a means of subjectification and decentring our dominant position to consider alternatives: how can we prevent further instances of epistemic violence, racism, and abuse surrounding literacy and literature? The literature here reinforces that there needs to be a genuine focus of the individual
language user and acts of language use. I would also suggest that we need to place an onus of full disclosure onto the critic too. This is where an EDG approach could be useful, as it promotes an intersubjective practice that would facilitate addressing the language user, language use, and the critic simultaneously. It moves us forward by not studying differences in isolation from each other or the discourses that shape them, but instead looks at studying them in a connected way – a joint narrative about the text, the critic, and their contexts. It takes the next step forward by embedding a reconciling ethic within our practices through an a-colonial reading position which allows for subjectification. Further, similar to Warrior’s metaphor of dancing as a level access point to the usual differences and power relationships amongst participants, the geosophic is another way in which we can access differences in a level way, as it begins from an epistemological position that validates all sources of geographic knowledges, from all points of view. Taking all of this into account, it moves us to the meta-critical position we need to occupy so that we do not miss what is going on.
Figure 12: Geosophy leads the way as the Meta-critic and Geosophy traverse the litera-sea (image created by Gareth Bryan ©2013 Emma Joel)
Chapter 3 – Literary representations of geographic knowing: exploring examples of discursive geosophy in literary texts

We live in a world of worlds…
(Thrift "The Future of Geography" 297)

The relationship between time and space is a peculiar thing. When I was travelling recently through the United States of America (USA) I was reminded of just how strange it can be. While travelling, my understandings and experiences of time and space were continually challenged with each move to a new location. This was due to the multitude of time zones I moved through within the USA itself. These initial challenges were complicated further when I attempted to contact people who were located elsewhere in the United States, or back home, in Australia. I really struggled with comprehending such diverse and disconnected experiences of time and space. I became quite frustrated and angry. I found myself repeatedly complaining to my travel companion, “This is crazy! I know what time it is, and how to tell the time! I know how to use a phone! Why isn’t this working for me over here?”

It might sound silly, and I hope that I am not the only person in the world to have felt this way while travelling. Despite this sense of silliness, I think this experience was significant. It was important because it allowed me to physically embody and experience some of the ideas, notions, and theories about time, and its relationship to space, that I have been studying. In particular, these experiences allowed me to feel the relative nature of time, and really begin to think about how spaces and time interact with each other, and then with me as I move through them. As this is just one experience of time and space, and is not necessarily my general, everyday understanding and experience of time and space, it highlighted what happens when my geographical knowledges are challenged. Now home, my thoughts of time are less physical and immediate. I find my thoughts about time
less significant and fleeting, because my core understanding and experience of time is safe, and free from those challenges. I am located safely back into my geographic base, where my knowledge about time, and how it interacts with the common spaces I use, are solid. I know how to contact and interact with other people located elsewhere (and in different time zones) because I can retreat back to my routine in which the knowledges and skills I need to do so are firmly rooted.

Just like travelling, the act of reading texts is a geosophical act: we enter new geographies and are forced to draw on our existing geographical knowledges, skills, and imaginations to survive and navigate our way through these new terrains. When we engage with texts, our local knowledges are applied to new or different geographies, and not always successfully. As critics, one of the challenges we face is to work out to what extent our own geosophical positions are universal or when they conflict with other geosophical positions, resulting in the need to negotiate within new geographical zones. Reading cross-cultural texts with experiences of migration and transnational interactions lets us explore the significance of knowledge about time and spaces in our everyday lives that we often take for granted. Geographic knowledges give us a core mode of dealing with moving through times and spaces; they are an initial coping mechanism for transnational movement. Yet how do our geographic bases change, adapt to or challenge geographic ideas other than our own? How can movement through time and space reshape our identities? As literary critics, how do we navigate multiple identities and geographic bases in our interactions with texts? The texts discussed in this chapter allow us to explore some of the various ways that people deploy their geographic ways of knowing, and how our own geosophical positions might emerge when reading texts. Further, the discussion of these texts and geographical bases exposes the ways in which an EDG approach to critical reading can assist critics and academics in negotiating multiple sources of knowledge or geographic ideas concurrently.
This chapter explores the discursive nature of geosophy and its relationship with the literary. It does so by framing such a discussion around John Kirtland Wright’s ideas about the imagination in the construction of geographic knowledges. Wright’s points about the role of imagination as a source of geographic knowing can influence how critics think about the appearance of geosophy in texts and their reading practices. This chapter presents an analysis of short stories from Tom Cho’s *Look Who’s Morphing* and the film *Lucky Miles*. *Lucky Miles* offers an interwoven narrative that follows the stories of four groups of people who try to navigate their way around the Pilbara Desert regions of Western Australia. The groups include Cambodian refugees, Iraqi refugees, the fishermen who bought the refugees by boat and a team of local army reservists looking for the other three groups. As outlined in Chapter 2, Tom Cho’s *Look Who’s Morphing* is a compilation of short stories that blend western and eastern popular cultural material in an exploration of transition, identity, migration, media and technology, sexuality and gender, and relationship to place and self. Analysing examples from these two texts enable us to explicate theoretical ideas about the discursive nature of time, space and scale in texts and our reading practices. This discussion and analysis highlights ways in which the geographic imagination can construct and create key examples of discursive geosophy, including experiences of nationhood and identity, geopolitics, the ability to locate oneself, constructions of place, the use of navigational tools and humour as a skill for negotiating geosophical conflict.

Both of these texts demonstrate their own level of sophisticated geosophical awareness and make certain demands on their readers and viewers. As such an EDG becomes an access point for audiences of these texts as a focus on the geosophical location of characters within them helps develop a comprehension of the texts and their geosophical sophistication. These two texts, *Lucky Miles* and *Look Who’s Morphing*, provide a scope for considering examples of geosophical positions unique to southern hemisphere landscapes and experiences. They allow us to focus on reconciling Australian and Asian experiences of country, culture
and identity, as well as geosophical issues surrounding transnational movements and interactions in cross-cultural Australasian texts.

In developing an Eatdirtzian Geosophy (EDG) approach to reading, a consideration of the discursive nature of geosophy is essential because it highlights the kinds of information and representations that critics are looking for. It presents as a crucial beginning step in the EDG approach, as critics work towards conducting an initial reading of text that focuses on the geosophic, before moving into the meta-critical practices associated with an EDG approach. Further, an understanding of the discursive appearances of geosophy will enable critics to conduct meta-critical analysis of themselves and their reading practices, by providing insight into the way their own geographic ideas and means of knowing have been constructed, what those ideas and ways of knowing are, and how they are being used in or shape reading practices. These discursive emergences of geosophy represent the interaction between the geosophical positions of the text and the geosophical positions of the reader. As emergences of the geosophical\(^\text{29}\) they embed ideas and understandings of time, space and scale within a text. Further, in studying these ideas and understandings, these emergences become a site for interaction between geosophical positions within an EDG. In exploring the nature of geosophy further, therefore, we must first return to Wright’s work on the concept.

**Wright and the imagination in geographic ways of knowing**

Returning to Wright’s work on the imagination becomes essential for the development of an EDG approach. It is essential because it helps us establish the concept of geosophy further through a consideration of its discursive nature and how to identify that within literary texts and reading practices. Wright’s work provides scope for unpacking individual geosophical positions through reading by

\(^{29}\) I use the phrase “the geosophical” as description for or identifier of examples of geosophy. These examples are ones that demonstrate subjective or individual ways of geographic knowing.
acknowledging the role of the imagination in geographic knowing. My work then
takes this beginning step further by deconstructing examples of the geographic
knowing processes through a focus on time, space, and scale to accentuate
common examples and geographic themes. In this way, the imagination processes
that inform geographic knowing are focal points which encompass potential
emergences of geosophical issues such as the geopolitical, constructions of place
and location, geographically informed ways of knowing and interpreting, and
sociogeographic expectations. Wright’s work on the imagination processes that
underpin ways of geographic knowing becomes a core component of an EDG
approach in that it further demonstrates how an EDG uses geosophy as an access
point to texts.

Wright’s work is also central to the development of an EDG approach because it
embeds a critical understanding of the subjective and subjective ways of knowing
that is an essential aspect of an EDG approach. Wright highlights the fact that
subjectivity in some form or another influences geographic imaginative processes,
but this acknowledgement is not to devalue their worth; rather it emphasises how
to approach these processes critically (Wright 5-6). Further, an understanding of
how subjectivity influences the imagination works to promote a multitude of
sources of geographic knowing in that individuals all have subjective processes
for constructing geographic knowledges about the earth, their physical, cultural,
social and economic environments and how to live and survive within those
environments. This critical consideration and valuing of the subjective ways of
graphic knowing is crucial in constructing and using an EDG approach to
literary practices.

Imagination is a key element of the geosophical. Wright notes that we develop our
geographical knowledges through our imagination; we use what we already know
to imagine what the unknown might be like and how to survive within it (Wright).
Perception and imagination play a large role in the study of the geographic; as
John Allen suggests the imagination “must be viewed as critical for the processes
of geographical exploration by which unknown lands are brought within the
The politically charged concept of *terra incognita*, Latin meaning “the world unknown” or “an unknown land,” is rooted within the very concept of geosophy in John Kirtland Wright’s work (Wright 2-3). However, in contemporary geography where facts and information exist about most parts of the world, the nature of the *terra incognita* is changing. Now, there is a notable shift from its literal application, referring to lands unknown and uncharted, to denoting a geographic way of learning and thinking through subjective and imaginative processes. It may indicate, for instance, how we imagine worlds we have never encountered based on the facts and information we have access to; we construct an understanding or perception of a location based on reasonable inference. We apply the same processes to understanding a scientific process or theory or other phenomena that is unknown to us (Wright 3).

For example, if we lived at the foot of a mountain but had never been to the other side of that mountain, based on the knowledge of the mountain and the valley area we lived in we could estimate through the process of imagination what the other side might look like and involve.

To elucidate this idea further, I have never visited Iceland, but based on information I have accessed and other volcanic islands I have visited I construct a mental image of it. For instance, as it is a volcanic island, I imagine it would be small and have a good deal of rocky terrain; I also imagine it would have sulphuric springs or lagoons. Based on information about Scandinavian countries and the Arctic Circle in the Northern Hemisphere, I could imagine that the climate would be extremely cold and snowy conditions over its winter months, further I could estimate that fish would be a large source of food supply. Imagining places we have never been based on the geographic resources we have, is a very common experience. Allen explains that the practical influence of the concept of *terra incognita* is that when faced with unfamiliar landscapes we are able to draw on pre-existing geographic skills, understandings, knowledge of directions, lived experiences and perceptions of particular landscapes to guide our interactions with new landscapes, and in doing so, we can reveal our geosphical positions (Allen 42-47). This is not untrue of acts of reading either. In approaching subject matter
in texts that might be unfamiliar for us, we resort to our own worldly experiences or critical frameworks to assist us in navigating the material – a practice that could be extremely reductive.

Wright’s work guides us in acknowledging the role of the imagination in both geography and what it might mean for a geosophic discourse, in that it provides an outline of subjective ways of geographic knowing that reflect individual geosophical positions. In positioning the imagination as a means of geographic knowing, Wright describes three levels on which the imaginative process functions: the promotional, the intuitive and the aesthetic (Wright).

Focusing on the nature of promotional, intuitive and aesthetic imaginative processes we can consider key features of geographic knowing as they relate to the literary and reading practices. Further, by studying these three processes we can expose other aspects of geographic knowing and common literary representations of geosophy, including ideas about the geopolitical, place, location and navigation processes. In studying examples of these processes and ideas within the literary texts *Lucky Miles* and *Look Who’s Morphing*, we can further clarify the discursive natures of time, space and scale as they appear in texts and reading practices.

**Locating promotional imaginings within an EDG as an emergence of the geosophical**

Wright explains that promotional imaginings involves the “desire to promote or defend any personal interest or cause other than seeking the objective truth”, and can be influenced and shaped by both emotions (such as bias, fear, patriotism or prejudices) and realistic subjective experiences (such as a response to a real-life personal or first-hand encounter with a particular thing) (Wright 5). This is an important process as it emphasises how elements of our human geographic
conditions and experiences influence and shape our thinking. Many examples of such promotional imaginings appear as examples of geosophy throughout the film *Lucky Miles*. Expectations that are geopolitically, economically, and culturally informed reveal characters’ geosophic positions. These examples are often emphasised further through geosophical conflicts between characters or between characters and audience, which indicates different human geographies and how they colour our thinking.

One key example of this style of promotional imagining is the construct of East and West. The significance of such constructs can be accentuated through a consideration of a prominent scene from the film *Lucky Miles*. The film cuts to a scene which follows the Iraqi refugees shortly after they have left the beach. The men are talking about football (soccer) as they walk. However, Youssif is constantly complaining: “Where are we going?...we are lost...who made you boss?” “Where are the people, these Australians? Why haven’t we seen anyone?” (A bird screeches in background.) “The birds aren’t musical here”. The other Iraqi men continue to joke around, ignoring Youssif’s complaining until Youssif stops walking and says: “Maybe this is not Australia? Have you thought of that? Maybe those fishermen have left us on a big rock island!” The men all stop and stare at him – in an instant the camera shot captures a combination of humour and anger in the Iraqi men’s response: “Shut your mouth moron! Your mouth is like an open drain! This is Australia. A western democratic country! There will be a city nearby!” Youssif replies: “If it’s such a great country why haven’t we heard of their soccer team?” The men laugh (Rowland Chapter 2; 15:05 minutes).

In this example, the cultural influences and the need for access to refuge reveal the characters’ promotional imaginings that shape their geosophical positions. The notion of a western democratic country, and the characters’ expectations for this, is significant when considering the nature of geosophy. The characters are promoting their self-interest in seeking access to a safe space such as a western democratic country, where they will be free from religious, cultural and political persecution. Their knowledge of and political ideologies surrounding the notion of “the west” and “democracy” are essential geopolitical concepts that they cling to.
in order to promote self-survival in the global landscape they have traversed to seek asylum. It can be assumed that such knowledge and ideologies are key motivations for their decisions and actions taken to travel to Australia. However, the scene points to their mistaken conflation of geopolitical with geographic similarity.

A source of geosophical conflict arises in this scene, as the geosophical perspectives of the Iraqi men is opposed by the scenery and shots offered by the camera. The men’s dialogue communicates what they imagine they will find in a western democratic country, such as civilisation, people, buildings, cities, urbanised and populated spaces, and of course a notable soccer team. These imaginings are shown to be the opposite of the spaces that they currently occupy, which the camera visually communicates to be open and uninhabited land. The Iraqi men’s idea of place, that it does not exist if it does not have a city, a soccer team, musical birds, or some form of culture or habitation, is challenged by these Australian landscapes represented in the film, which offer vast spaces and different or wild forms of habitation which challenge the men’s expectations.

This contrast between the characters’ expectations for a western democratic country and the Australian landscapes offered as scenery through the camera shots is almost hyperbolic, adding a source of humour for the knowledgeable Australian viewer as the scene unfolds. The suggestion that there will be a “city nearby” accentuates this for me as a viewer familiar with the vastness of Western Australia. This comment reveals that the dimension causing these conflicting geosophical positions is different scales. None of the refugees have any conception of the sheer scale of Australia’s northwest, whereas the long shots used by the camera work towards establishing a more realistic mode of measuring the enormous size of that space. Scale becomes a major issue throughout this film, as the refugee characters attempt to negotiate vast, and presumably unoccupied, Australian spaces for which their previous experiences of Asian and Middle Eastern landscapes have not adequately prepared them.
Throughout the film, the audience sees Youssif rehearsing his asylum-seeking speech, which he finally delivers at the end of the film when he meets the army reservist team (Rowland Chapter 10; 128:35 minutes). This speech adds to the construction of this notion of a “western democratic country” through what Youssif imagines will gain him access to such a space. In this scene near the conclusion of the film, the army reservist team finally catches up with the refugees and Youssif claims asylum. At this stage the group of refugee men consists of Youssif, Arun, Ramelan (the fisherman’s nephew), and Muluk (the fisherman). In the scenes just prior to meeting the reservist team, Youssif, Arun and Ramelan had been confronted by Muluk, who hijacked them for the old car they had found and started to use. This confrontation results in Muluk being knocked out by his nephew, who hits Muluk in the head with a shovel as the reservist team enter the scene. Muluk is lying on the ground when Youssif and Arun approach the army reservists, Youssif saying “They look like army. I am going to give myself up”. Watching on, the reservists discuss amongst themselves: “It doesn’t make sense”… “They’ve been in the sun too long”. Youssif approaches: “Hello, my name is Youssif Ahmed el Bashir. Under article 1 of the United Nation Convention 1951, I seek asylum from the Government of Australia.” Tom responds: “Yeah. Okay, my name’s Tom. This is Plank and this is Sergeant O’Shane.” The humour here is created through the juxtaposition of Youssif’s serious and official seeking of asylum and Private Tom Collins’ lackadaisical introduction as a response to it.

Focus on time, space and scale assists us as critic in unpacking the geosophical significance of this scene beyond the notion of an individual’s promotional imagination, in which Youssif offers ideas about a western democratic country. An EDG approach deconstructs the examples of geosophical positions here and facilitates an interaction between them, to gain greater access to the meaning and geographic knowledges being communicated within the text. This moves our reading from a deconstruction of the subjective to facilitate an interaction of the subjective.
In analysing the geosophical discourses within this scene, Youssif’s asylum-seeking speech introduces particular spatial understandings for consideration. In particular, we see the idea of space being shaped by ideas of global relationships, geopolitics and power. The setting of the Pilbara Desert becomes a site for characters to enact an example of what Foucault calls a heterotopic space. Heterotopic spaces are counter-sites, in that they are both simultaneously real and unreal spaces, they offer an “enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault para. 12). This scene demonstrates the construction of a hierarchy of spaces on a global scale, in which western and democratic spaces are located at the top. The utopic ideal of a western country and a democratic country is enacted by the refugee characters in this physically real space of the Australian Pilbara Desert. Here Youssif occupies a crisis heterotopic space in which his personal circumstances, his state of crisis, drive him to seek out the privileged space of a western democracy. The importance of Youssif’s speech, which has been emphasised and rehearsed throughout the film, is now actualised within this scene. The speech, a combination of the correct words in the right order and spoken in English, act as a means of access to this crisis heterotopia for Youssif: it presents an opportunity for him to enter a space of asylum reserved for an exclusive group of people. One key principle of heterotopias is that they are “not freely accessible” sites (Foucault para. 22). Heterotopic sites have particular systems governing their exclusivity and accessibility. The use of language is rather significant here from a geosophical gaze. This practice reveals Youssif’s promotional imaginings, as for him it is a personal endeavour to seek asylum and free himself from a persecuted past. The onus and attention placed on Youssif’s rehearsal of this speech throughout the film is significant because it reveals the power, the importance, and the value he places on accessing the space and asylum that it provides via language. These words, arranged perfectly as per the United Nations’ conventions and spoken in English, become the only thing now that guarantees his human rights, his life in and access to Australia.
From an Eatdirtzian reading of this representation of spaces, we must also consider reconciling this scene with the Australian contexts of the text’s audiences. From a contemporary Australian audience perspective, this heterotopic space that the refugee characters occupy could be perceived as a site of deviancy. Foucault explains that heterotopias of deviation are constructed when an individual’s behaviour “is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm” of the space (Foucault para. 15). However, this idea of established norms is complicated within the film and the setting of the Pilbara Desert, because as far as we can see from the film, the area is an empty space, inhabited only by the refugees. This becomes a point of geosophical conflict as Australian audience members conflate the site of the Pilbara to ideas of Australia as a nation, with protected national borders. In this conflation the “norm” established in contemporary Australian and United Nations’ political rhetoric, refugee and asylum seekers are positioned as undertaking criminal behaviour or of an “illegal” status if they do not access refugee in Australia through the “right” channels (Australian Human Rights Commission). The most common examples of “illegal” entry is if a person seeks refugee without a valid visa or via means of people smuggling (ABC Fact Check). In doing so, Australians have established physical spaces that embody these understandings of deviancy, through the construction of refugee detention centres (Australian Human Rights Commission). These centres not only embody a sense of criminality, but establish a site of transition where people are placed in a state of being “nowhere” or “elsewhere.” These understandings are important in establishing the part that language plays once again in defining roles and geosophical positions. Australian’s use of western political means and terminology, such as manipulating language to define illegal entry, function as a means of gaining power and authority to establish such heterotopic spaces (Commonwealth of Australia).

An intersubjective dialogue between the geosophical positions that inform these different perceptions of deviant and crisis heterotopic spaces should explore what forces people into these deviant or crisis spaces. Has the construction of deviancy from one geosophical position here impacted or caused the crisis state of another
geosophical position? How do these spaces narrow the choices of individuals that interact with them? Power is significant in the understanding and experiencing these spaces from either perspective.

Time and space can be used as critical access points to this text. Heterotopic sites also interact with time, determined by histories of societies, and can be linked to slices or “absolute breaks” from traditional or real time, called heterochronies (Foucault para. 20). When we consider the interaction between time and space as a heterotopic site within this scene, the interactions between the characters within this heterotopia become quite significant. These interactions offer ideas about colonial understandings, traditional and contemporary, that construct heterochronic spaces within Australian contexts. This is most apparent when Youssif requests asylum from Private Collins, an Indigenous Australian on the army reservist team, who is presumably on country and a traditional descendant of the area. This very act constructs layers of heterotopic sites within the same space as we see Youssif unthinkingly introduce ideas about land ownership within Australia’s colonial history. It positions the Indigenous character an opportunity to welcome the refugees to his country. As such, the scene recreates historical spaces in which Indigenous Australians were denied authority and power.

The act of seeking asylum in Australia represents more contemporary versions of colonial practices which could be explored through intersubjective consideration. In continuing an intersubjective discussion of the geospatial positions in these scenes, we need to consider how geopolitical positioning of the various characters and ourselves as audience and our interactions with the text actually creates heterotopic spaces. In addition to a consideration of power dynamics of the space in which the characters meet, we also need to analyse the roles we all play within that interaction and space. The western or Australian filmgoer sees that there is a difference in the characters’ understanding of their places in space and therefore their roles, and obligations in connection with that role. To Youssif, he is an asylum seeker whose right to this place can be established by the correct form of words; to the army reservist, he's a person introducing himself, despite Youssif
positioning him as some greater authority. The significance of the characters’ understandings of time and space and their geospatial positions in this scene can be understood by an intersubjective discussion of the context surrounding it. This analysis forces me as an Australian citizen engaging with this film from a comfortable position of consumption of the film into a state of awareness about the powerful geopolitical position that I occupy, and my role and obligations as a member of an international community. In particular, for me reconciling it with my experience of current Australian contexts and their politics, the film presents a distinct message about how we (Australians) should treat refugees, as people and with empathetic understandings about the journeys they undertake and why.

The final scenes of the film continue with Youssif informing the reservists that the fisherman they are travelling with has taken them hostage and that he is a bad man, with a gun. “A gun?” they respond. The camera cuts to a long shot with the army truck on one end and the fisherman lying unconscious on the ground at the other end of the screen; all of the characters instantly drop to the ground at the news of a gun, crouching around the army vehicle on high alert. The scene becomes a source of humour as the characters respond to news of a gun. It would seem logical for the refugee characters to feel threatened and intimidated by the fisherman, given his power over their fates. However, my humour is derived from the army reservists’ response to news of a gun. As they work on Australian land, the army reservist team works in safe surrounds and is in limited danger compared to other areas around the world where Australia’s military are deployed. However, as military, they would have been trained to react in particular ways to the mention of a gun in the hands of someone not in the Australian army, especially no doubt a foreigner. In Australian contexts guns are rarely heard of except in rural settings where they are used for hunting and pest control. In perceiving this scene as a source of humour, I am forced into a consideration of my geospatial position and its disconnection from this heterotopic space. From my geospatial position I am privileged to think of the characters’ abrupt reaction to the appearance of a gun as funny. This humour is exaggerated by my privileged position as viewer, as, unlike the characters in the scene, I know that the
fisherman is unconscious and therefore poses limited risk to them, with his “gun”. The humour derives from the scene of five able-bodied men cowering in fear of one small man who is unconscious in the distance.

The humour increases as Sergeant O'Shane and Private Collins approach the fisherman cautiously with a gun and a stick. As they do, you can hear the use of radio in the background as Private Plank communicates with headquarters. Private Plank: “We’re on the Irish Road, five kilometres south of Bore Fence. One guy’s requested asylum off Tom. Over” Youssif, listening to Private Plank, says: “Yes. 1951 UN convention, article 1.” Private Plank responds to Youssif with a smile, while winking with his thumbs up. Reporting the team’s position over the radio reveals again the colonising of Indigenous land, as the use of English language, Eurocentric measurements (south co-ordinates and kilometres) and the landscape marker of Bore Fence all combine to rewrite a colonial understanding of what is Indigenous country.

Again, the scene establishes humour for the audience by juxtaposing the seriousness of Youssif’s experiences with a common Australian gesture that you might offer someone with news that the barbecue is now cooking, or in response to a potty-training child who has successfully taken themselves to the toilet. As an audience member who has been shifted into a state of geopolitical awareness’s and having just watched an entire film where Youssif’s story unfolds, I do not see this thumbs up as a welcoming gesture befitting someone who has escaped war and survived a harsh journey to seek the refuge of another country. However, from the reservist’s role within the scene and his scaling of the situation, perhaps it is the only gesture available to Private Plank. Further, the gesture undoubtedly offers a sense of the iconic laid-back Australian attitude, which is part of an Australian national identity. This juxtaposition of this gesture reveals ideas about the construction of the physical body in relation to one’s sense of identity within this space.
The humour created by the juxtaposition of roles, experiences and privileges in this scene continues when the scene finishes with Private Plank offering the refugee characters a biscuit. Here the biscuit becomes an ironic symbol, as something that has been a basic element of survival throughout the film for the refugee characters, who had limited supplies of biscuits and water, is now being offered as an afternoon tea politeness.

**Shifting to the meta-critical: humour as an interaction of geosophical positions in Australian literature**

Humour can be read as a geographically or culturally informed way of knowing used in the negotiation of instances of geosophical conflict. In an EDG approach to text and reading practices, the appearance of humour becomes rather significant. Humour appears in two key ways that suggest it is an indicator of geosophical conflict or the interaction between geosophical positions. The first instance is a critic’s interpretation of text as humorous. One key source of humour is when we find something out of place or incongruous. In reading practices, the appearance of humour in audience’s responses is an example of subjective interaction. This subjective interaction may be informed by an individual’s geosophical position being incongruous with another geosophical position, or a disconnection between expectations and reality. This incongruence and disconnection becomes a site of potential humour. As critics we need to assess how the appearance of humour could be an indication of our unique intersubjective interaction with a text.

The second instance is where humour is used between characters within a text. This second source of humour is offered when we privilege the perspectives of the asylum seeker characters in the film. In these instances the characters are using humour amongst themselves as a means for survival: it helps the individual characters build solidarity based on their experience and can be used a means for comprehending their experiences of unfamiliar lands. This use of humour
amongst the characters within scenes in the film is significant as it demonstrates their cultural and global knowledges, and how, when faced with adversity, individuals can use these knowledges as a means of survival, as coping mechanisms. For Australian audiences, the use of humour as a coping mechanism is not uncommon; in Australian literary traditions we find the use of comedy in Anglo-Australian literature as a means of survival for the “battler,” and the use of humour in Aboriginal Australian literature and films as a means of survival and resistance for the Indigenous (Behrendt; Conrad; Rickard; Turnbull). In a way, the use of humour here works to locate this experience or practice as commonplace in human nature when conditioned in post-colonial contexts. If we approach emergences of humour meta-critically, humour potentially presents as a means or source for navigating intersections of geosophical positions and conflict.

Expectations are a key part of the geographical imagination and cannot be ignored within a study of geosophy and humour because expectations are shaped by an individual’s promotional and intuitive imaging processes. By drawing on what we already know about familiar spaces and time we can imagine what we will expect to find in unfamiliar terrains. The opening scenes of Lucky Miles introduce the refugees’ expectations – an understanding of what Australia should be, the characters expressing ideas about western democratic countries, beaches and city spaces which are incommensurable with their current surrounds, resulting in the ridiculing of Australia or disappointment and frustration. In these instances, the characters’ expectations represent the ways in which an individual’s promotional imaginings influence how we interact with our environments, and both the humanistic and physical geographic individual needs, wants, desires and conditioning that shapes our realities, functioning and behaviours.

In the opening scenes of Lucky Miles, the audience is introduced to Australia in 1990 through the presentation of coastal water and a deserted beach (Rowland Chapter 1, 3 minutes). The refugee characters are deposited on this beach by the fishermen who claim “You are now in Australia” and advise the refugees that just over the sand dunes there is a road and a bus that will take them to Perth. I
wonder: do these men trust the fishermen’s knowledge? Is this really Australia? Is there really a road? I watch on in fear as the different characters climb the sand dunes, thinking about the vulnerability of these characters in this moment based on my own intuitive imaginings about Australian environments, and Western Australia in particular. Youssif punctuates this moment perfectly when he remarks “This does not look like a place where bus stops”, later exclaiming “It’s the wrong place!” This fear is substantiated when the characters reach the top of the sand dunes only to realise what is on the other side of the dunes—more sand dunes—while the camera spans offering an establishing shot that features endless mountains of sand meeting an unbroken blue sky that stretches the entirety of the horizon, unpopulated by human activity. From this point, the refugees split into their two groups: the Iraqi men and the Cambodian men. The groups move off in two different directions. Focusing my viewing on geosophy and geographic imaginations, I am forced to ask at this point: what do the characters imagine they will find? How are their imaginations and expectations communicated? What pre-existing geographic knowledges will they apply in this new environment which will reveal their geosophical positions?

When the fishermen’s boat catches fire and sinks, Muluk, the fisherman and people smuggler, Abdu, his assistant, and Ramelan, his nephew (who ends up separated from his uncle and his assistant) plan to go to Broome (Rowland Chapter 3; 22:01 minutes). Drawing on pre-existing knowledge about Broome and its sea-ports, their expectations lead them to the assumption that they will be able to return home from there and that they will be able to walk the distance. Further, they decide to follow the coastline rather than heading inland. These two decisions are indicative of their intuitive imagining processes. Walking along the beach they discuss their current environment:

“What sort of beach is this? There are no buildings, no people, no boats. Where is everyone?”
“I don’t know. It’s hot, maybe they’re inland.”
“In caves?”
“Maybe in caves. Why not?” (Rowland Chapter 3; 17:40 minutes)
This dialogue between the characters is significant, because it indicates their promotional imagination. The characters are communicating their geosophical positions, and expectations for coastal and beach areas. Their dialogue suggests an understanding that coastal environments are built-up areas, seen as profitable areas for tourism and water-based businesses. This expectation is in direct contrast to the actual environment they occupy, which is an uninhabited vast coastal stretch. The use of the term “everyone” suggests they expect the beaches to be populated, and again suggests a disconnection between their personal experiences of densely populated Asian countries and environments, and the scattered population patterns of Australian’s smaller population. In suggesting that the local inhabitants are occupying caves due to the heat, the dialogue reveals that from these characters’ geosophical positions there is no conception of anyone living away from the coast line in actual houses. Their promotional imaginings are shaped and conditioned by the population, economic and climate needs of their home landscapes.

The intuitive imagination also appears with the suggestion of people being “inland” because of the heat. This comment offers insight into the characters’ geosophical positions and knowing how to navigate the heat in landscapes familiar to them. The same idea is offered by the group of Cambodian refugees in another scene:

“IT’S VERY HOT.”

“It will be cooler inland, in the mountains”

“I hope so”

“What mountains?”

“Let’s get out of this desert quickly.”

“I can understand why this is a secret place” (the group laughs)

(Rowland Chapter 1, 6:45 minutes)

Here the audience sees the idea of being inland explained further, in that for the Cambodian characters it is a source of relief from the heat. The opposite often is true for Australians living in rural areas or city-dwellers in urban areas, in that people seek relief from the heat in the ocean and coastal areas, given access to
breezes and water for swimming. From their experiences of Cambodia’s tropical climates and country’s terrains, the characters are seeking to apply their pre-existing ways of knowing to a new location. This attempt to predict reveals one of the ways the characters are constructing geographic knowledges; however, given the different terrains of the two countries, the application of moving inland for respite from the heat will not be effective, as the characters will find themselves moving further into the Pilbara desert. Here humour appears as a point of geosophical conflict through the characters’ ridiculing of the landscape. The characters use humour as a means of attempting to process the clash of their geographic knowledges and their current environment. They seek to comprehend why the landscape is unoccupied and how to deal with this climate by playing with the idea of a “secret place”. Presumably, a secret location would be so out of sacredness or as a means of preserving an idyllic site from the masses; in this case the characters employ the notion of a secret place with an element of irony and sarcasm to emphasise the unpleasantness of the landscape.

The characters reveal their geosophical positions through promotional imaginings further by the references that they make relating to elements of human geography, such as cultural, religion and economics. There are two scenes where the refugee and fishermen characters discuss what they imagine Australians and Australian culture to be like, locating these understandings in relation to their own cultural subjectivities. In doing so, these conversations reveal the nature of their promotional imaginings, in that they are informed by their “desire to promote or defend any personal interest” (Wright 5). The first is a conversation between Youssif, Arun and Ramelan:

Youssif: What are Australian people like?
Ramelan: You have never met an Australian?
Youssif: There are no Australians where I am.
Ramelan: Open a bar, you’ll find plenty.
Arun: What you mean?
Ramelan: They drink alcohol, eat pork, and smell like monkeys.
Youssif: They smell?
Ramelan: You’ll see. I prefer Indonesia. A good Muslim country.
Youssif: Yes, you are good Muslims when my money is in your pocket. (Rowland Chapter 5; 38:40 minutes)

This conversation is significant because it provides comment on Australian culture from the refugees’ perspectives. Youssif and Arun imply that they have had little access to Australians and their culture, placing Ramelan in a superior position due to his claim to knowledge. Perhaps it could be assumed that Ramelan has greater access to information about Australia and Australians because he is from Indonesia, which is in closer proximity to Australia, and the relationship and exchanges between the two nations. Ramelan frames his assessment of Australians and Australian culture through his own cultural expectations as a Muslim, revealing a prejudicial approach to knowing about other cultures. Youssif exposes Ramelan’s bias construct here, by offering a contrasting expectations about what it means to be Muslim. This contrast becomes a source of humour as Youssif challenges Ramelan’s understanding about what it means to be a “good” Muslim. What is also significant is that the three characters, presumably from different language backgrounds, use English as a central language in order to communicate with each other. This highlights the fact that for these characters, being able to code-switch or change languages is a geographic skill, which they can adapt to their environments. It also highlights the extent to which English has successfully colonised global language systems.

The second conversation that highlights elements of human geography in promotional imaginings occurs between the two fishermen (and boat owner) as they walk to Broome:

“Suria’s cousin’s brother-in-law’s nephew spent some time in Darwin. They don’t eat rice, they eat pork. The only food he liked was the frozen cow’s milk. He said Australian women wear very little clothing.”

“These women, did he have to pay them money?” (the men laugh)

“ARGH!”

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“Did a fly bite you again?”
“Damn, this place is hell” (Rowland Chapter 8; 104:32 minutes)

Unlike the first scene, this conversation is spoken in the characters’ native language, with English subtitles provided in the film. The humour in this scene arises from my perspective as an English-speaking Australian viewer responding to the translation of material from another language. The English subtitles provided in the discussion of food here is comical from my viewing as an Australian audience member. The representation of ice cream as “frozen cow’s milk” is an interesting source of humour. It is funny because it offers a literal description that sounds significantly less inviting than the commonly used term “ice cream.” As such it creates an element of humour through the incongruence of the social construction of what Australians see as a delicious prized treat and its literal origin.

The metaphor used to position Western Australian landscapes as “hell” is interesting in this scene. Initially, an audience member could assume that such a comparison provides comment on the physical properties of the environment, in particular, the heat. However, introducing the concept of “hell” directly after an inference that Australian women are prostitutes and comments about eating pork could also be interpreted as a moralising comment about Australian culture framed from a presumably Islamic perspective. Despite the moralising undertone of this scene, as an Australian viewer I find this depiction of Australia rather humorous. For me the humour arises out of empathy and understanding of the physical if not the cultural discomfort the characters express. As an Australian, I am all too familiar with the experiences of extreme heat and being bitten by a variety of insects.

Both scenes offer examples of geosophical positions through the promotional imaginings of the characters. These imaginings are shaped by the characters’ personal experiences and understandings of Islamic religion and cultures. In a shift to an EDG concern for intersubjectivity, the use of humour in both scenes, in the first Youssif’s sarcastic remark about Ramelan being “good Muslims when
my money is in your pocket” and the fishermen’s joke about having to pay Australian women, offers something interesting to consider. Firstly, it decentres white post-Christian Australian culture as dominant, to a film that has presumably been marketed to Australian audiences. Secondly, it is suggestive about humour’s role within geographic knowing; in particular, it invites us to contemplate how we comprehend cross-cultural interactions and information. Perhaps the use of humour is a geographic coping mechanism, as a means of navigating cultural practices unfamiliar to an individual or that conflict with an individual’s own cultural knowledges. A recurring feature throughout the film is that humour is used or presents itself at a number of instances when the characters or audiences are faced with cultural differences.

In terms of establishing an understanding of geosophy and an EDG approach to critical reading, being critically aware of the promotional imaginings that shape our individual geosophical positions is vitally important. Promotional imaginings are informed by elements of human geography, such as culture, religion, and economics, and are highly subjective. As such, promotional imaginings shape our expectations and underlying bias or prejudices. For literary critics, the delivery of critical and ethical reading practices means being able to shift centres and occupy an a-colonial reading position, which in many circumstances will involve a shift to the meta-critical as a means to unpack our own geosophical positions that might impact and shape our engagement with texts. The presentation of humour presents as an element of meta-critical practice, in that it exposes instances of conflicting geosophical positions.

**Locating intuitive imaginings within an EDG as an emergence of the geosophical**

Wright defines the intuitive process of imagining as “objective, in that the intent here is to secure realistic conceptions”; however, it is still a subjective way of knowing as it relies on the individual to process available evidence to reach a
conclusion (Wright 6). Throughout *Lucky Miles* the characters’ use of navigational tools to deduce, and move through, the Australian environment are clear examples of intuitive geographic knowing. The various characters display a variety of skills to navigate the Australian environment including the use of maps, reading tracks, predicting climate, drawing on local knowledge, and testing the unknown for safety. The process of intuitive imagining in *Lucky Miles* is offered in the explicit examples of characters using subjective and pre-existing geographic skills to interpret or predict the landscape. The use of maps and various modes for surveying the environment become key examples of discursive geosophy, as they reveal information about geographic ways of knowing and geographic knowledge from a variety of sources. In the development of an EDG, a critical awareness of the skills and geographically informed ways of knowing that individuals use is crucial in elucidating scales used from different geosophical positions. This critical awareness extends to our own reading and thinking practices as critics and humans, and can guide our attempts of facilitating interactions between the subjective geographic knowledges from unique and varied geosophical positions.

An example of intuitive processes in the construction of geographic knowledges includes the ability to survey and observe an environment. In the film we see a number of different modes of surveillance used by various characters, such as climbing a mountain to visually survey a landscape or drawing on pre-existing knowledge about the sea and the coast line (Rowland Chapter 6; 46:50 minutes). The team of reservists use a variety of methods ranging from the use of radio technology and European co-ordinates, to local knowledge of country and the ability to read tracks. In scenes where the reservists are at the beach looking for the boat that has been reported, the observational techniques of Private Plank, a non-Indigenous army reservist, looking out over the water using binoculars, are contrasted with those of Private Collins, a young Indigenous army reservist, who is analysing foot prints and tracks left in the sand on the beach. Collins discovers there are two groups (“two mobs”) of men and the directions they were heading in (Rowland Chapter 4; 29:01 minutes). The dialogue that transpires in similar
scenes reinforces the contrast between the characters’ geosophical positions and as such becomes a point of humour.

Private Plank: “Visibility’s good, but there’s no sign of any boats…can you see anything?”
Private Collins: “Like what?”
Sargent O'Shane: “There’s nothing unusual”
Private Plank: “Sarg O'Shane, there’s good crayfish just north of here this time of year”
Private Collins: “Up at pearl rock”
(the radio buzzes in the background ordering the team to head north)
Sargent O'Shane: We should ask these crayfish then. (Rowland Chapter 2; 16:34 minutes)

This scene draws our attention to not only different intuitive ways of engaging with a landscape but also the ways in which we value different modes of geographic knowing. The dynamics of the army reserve team characters offer constant fodder for analysing the subjective nature of geographic knowing, with Private Plank representing colonial and non-Indigenous ideas about Australian landscapes, Private Collins offering Indigenous perspectives of country and local knowledges, and Sargent O'Shane acting as a medium between the two. Humour emerges within this scene from an Indigenous perspective as Private Collins asks “like what?” The irony is that Private Collins can see plenty of things within the landscape; however, Private Plank is not being specific about what he is looking for. Private Collins’s dialogue draws our attention to the ambiguous nature of language, but is also intentionally mischievous, as his use of questioning and humour demystifies the romantic lens through which Indigenous Australians’ local knowledges and relationships with land are often viewed. This romantic lens used by colonisers places an particular expectations onto Indigenous Australians, which is emphasised in this scene with the assumption that Private Collins will be able to see something more than what Private Plank observes. The humour about
engaging with the landscape is used between these two characters throughout the film to position non-Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing against Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing. It often raises questions about the way we value and validate knowledge too, as Private Collins’s opinion and ideas are often valued more by the other two reservists. An example of this is when Private Plank accidentally lets the troogie roll into the creek, positioning him as inept in these landscapes – reinforcing that his knowledge is not as valid or valued as Private Collins (Rowland Chapter 7; 58:54 minutes).

This mischievous style of humour used by Private Collins consistently features elsewhere in the film. In doing so, it emphasises the different modes of geographic knowing, while also playing on the colonial stereotype of Aboriginality that romanticises Indigenous Australian’s relationship with land.

Private Collins: It’s going to be forty-nine today.
Private Plank: (curiously looking around at the sky) how did you know that?
Private Collins: It was on the radio. (Rowland Chapter 7; 54:39 minutes)

The use of observation, distance communication and co-ordinate language all appear as examples of navigational tools within these scenes. The use of intuitive geographic knowledges and reasoning is established relevant to our own geosophical positions. As critics, our own use of intuitive geographic knowing can be a site for meta-critical reflection and assessing not only our own geosophical positions but how those positions affect the way we engage with a text.

The subjective nature of geosophy is emphasised further through other examples of intuitive processes. An additional source of humour throughout the film is when the intuitive knowledges and survival mechanisms of the refugee characters meet with local knowledges of the viewer. An example of this is a scene where the Cambodian refugees are walking along a dirt road and see an aluminium drink can on the side of the road. “Look at this,” one character says as he gestures to the
can. Cautiously, one man picks up a stone and throws it at the can; the rest of the Cambodian men duck for cover as he does so (Rowland Chapter 2; 10:05 minutes). The can does not explode. The resulting humour here is the incongruous nature of this act within an Australian landscape. To me, I have just witnessed ludicrous behaviour towards what is a piece of roadside litter. The humour experienced is all mine, as an Anglo-Australian audience member; however, it is fleeting. The humour subsides when I quickly realised why these characters are responding to the cans in this way. This instance challenges and confronts my comfortable and familiar position as an Australian resident by forcing me into a geosophical position as a global citizen, where I am to imagine why these men would behave in this manner. The men thought the cans were bombs, and have learnt to approach with caution, as part of their own local knowledges. This scene presents incommensurable scales and spaces between myself as viewer and the characters. Cambodian home spaces and national identity have been shaped by a modern history of war and civil unrest. It is these spaces that have shaped the characters’ intuitive responses and survival strategies, including presumably their endeavour to find refuge in Australia. This can be contrasted with my own experiences of home spaces, Australian landscapes, where the survival strategies I have developed are extremely different. I am able to take a piece of litter for granted by picking it up or choosing to ignore it and walk straight past it. However, the Cambodian characters have been conditioned otherwise, with experiences of war shaping their way intuitive reactions to rubbish.

Recognising geographic aesthetic imaginings in literary texts and reading practices as emergences of the geosophical

The third imaginative process for geographic knowing is aesthetic imagining. Wright describes aesthetic imaginings as “a desire to enjoy the process of imagining itself, and to give satisfaction to others by communicating the results in written and graphic form” (Wright 6). Wright poetically laments that we are not attuned with our aesthetic modes of knowing as a result of conditioning through
dominant western modes of knowledge construction, where objective and scientific paradigms are privileged and subjective modes are warned against and devalued.

Unfortunately, this deep-seated distrust of our artistic and poetic impulses too often causes us to repress them and cover them over with incrustations of prosaic matter, and thus to become crusty in our attitude toward anything in the realm of geography that savors of the aesthetic. Like the companions of Ulysses we would row along with ears stopped to the Sirens’ song. If a little of its melody penetrated through the stopping, we would try not to let others know. (Wright 7)

These ideas are of particular importance for literary critics to consider in navigating the aesthetic as a source of geosophy. Additionally, this repositioning of geographic knowledge by valuing subjective modes of construction is vital in thinking about the subjective nature and knowledges that arise in our practices and the texts we engage with as literary critics. In exploring the nexus of geographic knowing and the literary, aesthetic imaginings that expose geosophical positions are a fundamental access point to texts. By drawing on Lucky Miles and, later, Tom Cho’s Look Who’s Morphing core examples of aesthetic imaginings can be demonstrated. In particular, the aesthetic construction of place and the use of language and narrative to locate oneself present geosophical positions that emerge through the aesthetic.

In Lucky Miles an aesthetic imagining of Australia is communicated through the film’s construction of a sense of place. The film makers have emphasised characters’ relationship to space through aesthetic representations of their geographic imaginations which position Australian environments as a particular place. In the geographic context, the concept of “place” is understood as a particular physical space imbued with meaning, emotions, feelings, ideas or purposes (Thrift "Space"; Castree). The concept of place is commonly used in literature, through the portrayal and representation of spaces, such as the artistic
construction of landscapes\(^{30}\) (Gibson; Fiske, Hodge and Turner). These representations are informed by geographic ideas, feelings, uses and knowledges about particular spaces. Given this influence, these representations present as a source of geosophical conflict or confluence, as audiences and readers see a space through someone else’s eyes and interact with the meaning of that space. Representations of places are the equivalent of viewing a space through someone else’s personal geosophical lens, regardless of whether their lens is similar, different, or unexpected when compared to our own. A geosophic approach to text needs to consider constructions of place and the ways texts project special meanings onto spaces.

Throughout the film *Lucky Miles* Australia is consistently represented as place through a sense of un-urbanness. Generally, the film depicts Australia’s west as a vast landscape through the different characters’ perspectives, opinions and interactions with that landscape. This sense of un-urbanness is accentuated by camera shots and the directors’ use of *mise en scene*. The film offers background shots of vast landscapes which capture an extensive spread of uninterrupted red earth, dusty green bushlands, sand dunes, coastal waters and never-ending blue skies. The *mise en scene* of unbroken colours of the landscape adds to the vastness of the environment being depicted. The use of film techniques, such as long establishing shots used to emphasise the landscapes, help in revealing this vastness and the un-urban qualities of the space. There is no music soundtrack in scenes featuring the refugee characters. Instead these scenes offer soundscapes such as the sounds of flies and insects, or breeze or wind sounds. These soundscapes emphasise the incomprehensibility of the landscape as perceived and experienced by the refugee characters. To a certain extent, this soundscape is similar to my experiences of Australian landscapes, where some days the environment just sounds hot and threatening because the sounds of insects are extremely loud, such as the deafening roar of cicadas in the Australian summer months. These sounds present as a source of geosophical conflict within

\(^{30}\)As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, I use “landscape” as it is defined in Gibson’s work on formative landscapes as a particular representation or portrayal of a particular piece of land or environment. For more information see: Ross Gibson, “Formative Landscapes,” *Australian Cinema*, ed. Scott Murray (Sydney: Allen & Unwin / AFC, 1994).
Australian spaces, because unlike the refugee characters I know what those sounds are due to my familiarity with the bushy settings I work and reside within.

In reconciling the text with its contexts, we could see the establishment of Australia as a place of un-urban, as a vast, harsh land as a contemporary recreation of the myths about Australian landscapes prized by Anglo-colonial representations of Australia. These myths captured the colonial settlers’ geosophical positions, feelings and experience, fears and desires, in viewing Australia as a place of uninhabitable, unexplored, unknown, and vast land that needed to be tamed (Fiske, Hodge and Turner; Gibson). Further, the film makers are placing the refugee characters in a similar position to colonial settlers in their first encounter with Australian landscapes, by emphasising a sense of nothingness and un-urbanness and a construction of place through first encounters. This idea of first encounters with Australia is reinforced by the opening credits of the film, which offer examples of maps, diagrams, and reports of Australia, presumably from other people’s encounters with, and attempts to comprehend, Australian landscapes. However, how would different audiences perceive this projection of landscape? Would an Indigenous Australia perspective challenge colonial and migrant encounters with Australian landscapes?

In a shift to the intersubjective, we can draw on multiple encounters with the landscape via other characters within the text. Complicating this place of vast un-urbanness and nothingness are two scenes introducing the three characters of the army reserve team. In the first, the three men are playing football in the middle of nowhere in particular (no identifiable landmarks in landscape, just generic red earth and scatters of bushes), listening to music with a relaxed feeling when the radio speaks “Kangaroo Four,” interrupting the scene (Rowland Chapter 1, 7:42 minutes). The other scene is of the three men at the beach trying to find the reported boat; here the men are positioned on the coastal sands with a background of light greens and browns from the sand and bushes on the sand dunes (Rowland Chapter 3, 16:31 minutes). These scenes construct a sense of place by projecting feelings of comfortably and belonging onto the same landscapes through the

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characters’ intimate knowledge of the environment, engagement and use of the environment, and the relaxed ease through which they navigate the environment, especially as compared with the disconnection and uncomfortable experiences of the refugee characters. For the army reserve characters this space is familiar and normal, which works to contrast the refugees’ interactions with the space as a vast, un-urban space, and my own east-coast interpretation of Western Australian spaces through a sense of nothingness and colonial myths.

In this introductory scene, the use of costuming works at locating the army reservist characters and their relationship with the space as familiar and normal. The three men are all dressed in army camouflage material to some extent, visually suggesting that they belong to the landscape as it co-ordinates with the bushes within the scenes, the colours of the camouflage matching and blending them into the landscape scenery. However, the slight differences of their costuming position their relationship to the space even further, constructing an individual sense of place for each of the three characters. This is achieved mainly through the colours of their undershirts and then reinforced through their speech. The relationship to country of the two Aboriginal characters, Sergeant O’Shane and Private Tom Collins, could be elucidated from their costumes. Private Tom Collins, who is local to the country, is not wearing a visible undershirt, dressed entirely in camouflage material, suggesting he is entirely in, and of, place. Sergeant O’Shane’s costuming suggests he is Indigenous but living off-country as he is wearing a visible light brown undershirt, the visible undershirt suggesting an interruption to place, yet the brown colouring of the shirt symbolising connection to the landscape, because it blends with the light browns of the beach bush and sands. The non-Indigenous character, Private Greg Plank, and the red football he uses in the first scene, stand out against the backdrop of landscape. Private Plank is wearing a visible dark brown undershirt which stands out against the backdrop of the scenery; it is not a natural colour for this landscape. The unnatural colourings of Private Plank’s costume and his football make them visibly stand out, symbolising that they are introduced to the landscape and not of the land. As a non-Indigenous Australian, Private Plank’s coloured undershirt makes him more
visible, making him stand out more than the other two characters suggesting he is not indigenous to that landscape – yet the camouflage places him as Australian. This costuming effect suggests a sense of place better understood through Tim Cresswell’s work on the concept of place.

Cresswell’s work reinforces Thrift’s account that place refers to a sense or significant feeling or idea attached to a particular site, and as such, “place refers to something more than a spatial referent”: it prescribes a psycho-emotional approach to interpreting and interacting with sites (Cresswell 3). However, Cresswell develops the concept of place further within his work by exploring its nature as an ideological concept, something that locates an individual through expectations and social structures to create an understanding of place as combining “the spatial with the social – it’s a ‘social space’” (Cresswell 3). Through this ideological understanding of place we see a common usage of the construct in locating people, socially and culturally, with a sense of belonging emerging in this use. This understanding informs social hierarchies in which a person can be positioned as “in place” or “out of place.”

Cresswell offers historical American examples to elucidate his point, such as contemporary experiences of exclusion for African American men, who are “out of place” in predominantly white neighbourhoods. He cites the example of three African-American men whose car had broken down, and decided to order a pizza while waiting in Howard Beach in Queens, New York (Cresswell 5-6). The men were assaulted and chased out of town by eight white men, resulting in the death of one of the African-American men. In discussing the case, Cresswell notes that police and lawyer’s line of question focused on victim blaming, “Why were the three men in Howard Beach if they weren’t causing trouble?”, rather than questioning the eight men who assaulted them (Cresswell 6). Cresswell concludes that the case emphasised that the African-American men had broken the social laws of the place, “that the black men were out of place”, and the real “‘trouble’ caused by the three men was purely a transgression of expectations – expectations concerning where black people do and do not belong” (Cresswell 6). These kinds
of socio-cultural, psycho-emotional, and ideological expectations that inform notions of place are a clear example of Wright’s promotional imagination, as they are purely based on ideas of spaces being constructed through subjective aspects. However, their manifestation and representation occurs in the literary through an aesthetic example of geosophy. Studying *Lucky Miles* provides scope for reconciling Cresswell’s theoretical ideas to Australian circumstances.

These ideas become relevant when examining the three army reservist characters’ relationship to space throughout the film. The use of costuming and language works to construct a sense of belonging for these three characters. Aligned with Cresswell’s ideas about place referring to a person’s social space, and social spaces having hierarchies, we see a clear hierarchy of belonging develop between the three characters in their relationship to these Western Australian spaces throughout the film. Their position of being in and out of place is further reinforced with the dialogue of the scenes. Private Plank suggests that there is “good crayfish just North of here this time of year,” revealing that his knowledge of environment and construction of place is created through both seasonal and cartographic knowledges. By contrast, Private Collins’s connection to place in this environment is reinforced by his ability to name where they will find the crayfish, “up at pool rock”, suggesting his sense of place is influenced by his local knowledge of the area. In this dialogue, language functions as a clear indicator of relationship to place as well. In terms of linguistic relativity, the way we use language to locate ourselves reveals not only our geographic knowledges but also the social and cultural informants of that geographic knowledge (Deutscher; Lucy). Here Private Plank’s use of scientific ideas (such as the climate “seasons”) and cartographic co-ordinates (such as “North”) contrasts with the use of locating language used by Private Collins, where the use of an informal “up” implies direction and the ability to position himself in relationship to the natural landmarks of country. The director’s use of costuming and construction of place here gives authority to the characters’ knowledges of the land, and establishes a power dynamic about their ways of knowing that is continued throughout the film. Sergeant O’Shane always questions Private Plank’s advice and suggestions,
seeking a second opinion and validation of knowledge from Private Collins, who is local, before making a decision. Once Private Collins confirms where the good crayfish are, Sergeant O'Shaney responds with “we best go ask these crayfish then” before returning to their vehicle to go in search for the reported boat, and some delicious crayfish.

The use of colours and costuming is also used to establish the refugee characters’ relationship to place. In the opening scenes where the refugees arrive at the beach their colourful clothes make them visually stand out amongst the Australian landscapes (Rowland Chapter 1, 3:17 minutes). The use of red, yellow, cream, dark grey, dark brown and black clothing provides a stark contrast to the rich blues of the coastal waters and sky, and the beige-white colouring of the beach sand and sand dunes which are in the background of the camera shots. These characters’ disconnection from the space, their positioning of being out of place, is also reinforced through their dialogue. In a scene that cuts to the Cambodian refugees navigating their new environment their dialogue reveals their construction of Australia as place through a sense of un-urbanness and nothingness.

“How can we walk all day and not see people?”
“No road.”
“No bus”
“Your father’s country is strange. There is nothing here.”
“He lives in a city, like Phnom Penh.” (Rowland Chapter 1; 8:39 minutes)

This scene offers potential for conflicting geospatial positions through the various understandings of Australia as place. As an Australian viewer who knows about the vastness of Western Australian landscapes and the nature of its coastal settlement I can empathise with the refugee character’s experience of place. The way in which urban sprawl exists along the western coast of Australia differs significant from the eastern coast. Along the eastern coast line there is the consistent establishment of urban and suburban areas. However, on the western coast line random pockets of urban and suburban areas have been established,
which means you can travel for hours before encountering any colonised spaces. Perhaps this has to do with the sheer scale and size of Western Australia, or the ways in which the two different coast lines were colonised over time.

As an Australian viewer my perception of the coastal Australian landscapes is shaped by my personal experience and knowledge from residing locally in coastal areas of Australia and having visited Western Australia. Further, owing to my literary and cultural studies as a student and educator, I feel positive emotions when I see coastal landscapes such as those shown in the film. Coastal areas often symbolise fun, relaxation, and holidays, and are iconic in Australian tourism. These understandings influence my construction of the beach and coastal environments as enjoyable and accessible areas for recreation. For the Cambodian characters here their sense of place for these coastal Australian surrounds is constructed through an absence of association to this environment, visually displayed through the comparison between the coastal Western Australian landscape and the heavily populated Asian city and coastal landscapes the characters describe in their dialogue. There is a disconnection between my positive experience of these spaces and the refugees’ current experiences of them. Further, their dialogue suggests a disbelief that the space is not populated, which potentially reinforces my ideas about Australia’s coastlines as a site of economic gain and tourism. As destinations running the entire length of eastern coastline of Australia are infamous for tourism business within Australia, I am often surprised that there is only a few sites along the western coastline of Australia that are established tourism destinations. This sporadic use of land along the western coast line conflicts with expectations I have for beach areas which are informed by capitalist and colonial ideologies.

In studying *Lucky Miles* and *Look Who’s Morphing*, it is clear that there are many ways in which the imagination can reveal the geosophical. *Lucky Miles* offers a literal demonstration of the concept of *terra incognita* through the various characters’ geographical imagination upon engagement with unknown and unexplored or familiar territories. The characters of the film present an array of
examples of all three processes of geographic imagining. All texts are geosophically complex and operate at complex geosophically informed interfaces upon reading and reception. However, some texts such as Lucky Miles and Look Who’s Morphing demonstrate a self-awareness of this geosophical complexity. As a cross-cultural text, the film’s use of characters allows it to explore various geographic ways of knowing and their interactions.

Geosophically self-aware texts place extra demands on their readers in the comprehension of the texts and the locality of geosophical positions shaping the text and its reading. As a theoretical position, an EDG provides the initial scope for critics to acknowledge the complexities of geosophy within all texts, including those texts which a geosophically self-conscious such as Lucky Miles. As a intersubjective reading practice, an EDG provides readers with a critical access point to texts and readings to make sense of the complexities of individual geosophical positions and their intersection.

Using EDG to make sense of the geosophical complexity of cross-cultural narratives

Similar to Lucky Miles, Look Who’s Morphing is self-conscious of its geosophical complexities through its deployment of intercultural material. In contrast to Lucky Miles which offers a full range of promotional, intuitive and aesthetic imaginings as part of its geosophical complexity, Cho’s work offers an extensive range of aesthetic imagining through his use of intertextuality, the literary device of textual self-insertion and the exploration of cultural themes. In Look Who’s Morphing, the terra incognita is the unknown cultural territories that Cho’s characters attempt to navigate. The narratives explore how Asian-Australian characters occupy unique and underrepresented spaces between eastern and western cultures through an emphasis on western popular culture and texts. Further, understanding gender and sexuality within this terra incognita created at the nexus of eastern
and western cultural expectations becomes a recurring theme throughout Cho’s narratives. Cho’s characters also explore aesthetic geographical imaginations through playing with temporal and spatial language in order to locate themselves.

In Cho’s work the cognitive process of aesthetic geographic knowing is emphasised and explored through the use of narrative to shape ideas about time and space, and through his use of positioning language, intertextuality, and self-insertion. Cho’s ability to play with and distort understandings of time and space through the construction of his narratives and his deployment of literary devices and language provides a site for demonstration of how critics can access the geosophical in texts through a focus on aesthetic imaginings.

In Wright’s initial descriptions of intuitive and aesthetic geosophical processes, to engage with the unfamiliar, the *terra incognita*, one needs to be able to draw on one’s geographic knowledges to date in order to construct images and ideas about new unexperienced terrains. Throughout his work Cho constructs an understanding about the unfamiliar literary terrain of existing on the cusp of eastern and western cultures. He does so by extensively using intertextuality as a device to expose the gaps and limits of western popular culture in representing the diversity of real lived experiences. In this way, Cho engages with popular culture and popular culture texts as a means of exploring what he doesn’t know through accessing the information that he does have access to.

If we focus on Cho’s work through ideas about aesthetic imagining, we can see that his use of intertextuality and engagement with eastern and western popular cultures constructs a transitional space of learning for his characters’ individual geosophical positions. In constructing this geosophically informed transitional space of learning within his narratives, Cho expands traditional western ideas about narrative spaces by offering the liminal as a site in which geosophical ideas can be explored. His narrative actions often shift from occupying physical settings to occupying a liminal space constructed through ideas about transnational identities and the cultural elsewhere. Further, in occupying and creating these
previously unrepresented liminal spaces his narratives offer non-linear representations of. An EDG approach in which critics focus on the ideas about time, space, and scale provides a point of access to the concept of subjective experience as relative to context explored within Cho’s narratives. Further, an EDG approach to Cho’s work provides scope for the critic to consider reception of the work intersubjectively, which is of benefit given the distinctive and unique nature of Cho’s work and the geosophical positions explored within it, which challenge western and Eurocentric ideas about narrative space and time.

Cho uses intertextuality to create a liminal space of learning and understanding about one’s geosophical position and cultural identity. Intertextuality allows this space to be informed by contemporary societies’ media and popular culture in Cho’s short stories. In “Dirty Dancing” Cho creates a new space for learning about sexuality and family by drawing on the narrative and scenes from the popular film from 1987 by the same name (Ardolino). Borrowing from the original film, Cho’s story follows the Houseman family’s trip to a resort and the occurrence of a forbidden love affair between Johnny, the dance teacher at the resort (played by Patrick Swayze), and the Houseman family’s youngest daughter, Frances “Baby” Houseman (played by Jennifer Grey). In Cho’s recreation of the iconic Dirty Dancing (1987) love affair, he places himself in the narrative as the character of Baby. In “Dirty Dancing”, Cho’s method of self-insertion is also self-reflexive as his narrator character moves between being active within the narrative action and detaching from it when he recognises an encounter with one of those painful gaps:

The thing is, while Johnny looks very nice and all, I do not really feel very ‘in the moment’. In fact, as Johnny is panting and thrusting, I feel very detached from the experience. It is like I am a bystander, looking on as someone else is having sex with Johnny. And that someone else is a Caucasian man with a moustache. This man is very tall and very well built. He is wearing a leather cap and leather chaps. His name? Bruce. As Bruce reaches for Johnny’s wrists, I take the opportunity to watch him. I find myself admiring
the sheer physical power of Bruce’s masculinity. And Bruce is so confident when it comes to sex. He doesn’t say anything; he just pushes Johnny’s face into the pillow. In the end, I watch as Bruce and Johnny spend all night having the hottest sex you can imagine (Cho Look Who’s Morphing 4).

In the original film there is no reference to Bruce. The character of Bruce becomes a device that allows Cho’s character to detach or remove himself from the narrative action. The narrator continues to interact with Johnny and “Bruce” throughout the narrative. The use of intertextuality and textual self-insertion in this story constructs a place for Cho’s character to navigate and explore adulthood and sexuality between two cultures, the traditional culture offered by his family members and the western popular culture offered by the film Dirty Dancing (1987).

The narration moves seamlessly between first person and third person to reflect these shifts of participation. Here, Cho’s narrator emphasises the practice of self-insertion by negotiating his own involvement with the sexual encounter, opting to study Bruce’s masculinity as Bruce has sex with Johnny. From the liminal space of being in and outside of the narrative that Cho’s character now occupies, the reader sees gender and sexuality appear as concepts and experiences to be studied and understood in relationship to cultural and geographic contexts. In this instance, ideas about sexuality and gender are sourced from an iconic western popular cultural text and the observing of others. The figure of Bruce offers an interesting, and exclusive, depiction of an Australian-masculine-homosexual stereotype. The text offers a physical representation of masculinity as characterised as powerful, dominant, confident, and Anglo. The use of the iconic Australian name “Bruce” works to locate this depiction geographically. The references to the leather clothes work to locate the stereotype culturally in assumptions of homosexual cultures. As a self-reflexive narrator, Cho’s character interprets this cultural knowledge as constructing a space and persona that he is excluded from, relinquished to the position of observer not participant. By
removing himself from the scene, it could be interpreted that Cho’s character does not in fact have good sex with Johnny, and that he himself cannot reach for Johnny’s wrists because he is not a Caucasian in leather.

In this scene Cho combines two significant literary devices, the use of intertextuality that initially establishes the narrative and the use of self-insertion that allows him to distort and reconstruct the narrative. Cho describes the literary device of textual self-insertion as a means for “examining the very act by which the writer enters the text, and the dynamics this act creates between writer and text” (Cho "Inserting My Self into the Text" 102-03), moving his work past ideas and conventions of mere autobiography to a meta-space of learning and thinking about the creative processes—and, more importantly, a meta-space of learning about creative processes from his own geosophical positions. For Cho, this method of self-insertion goes hand-in-hand with intertextuality, as it positions him as both a writer and reader of popular culture. For Cho as an Asian-Australian writer it is also a means of producing texts that fill gaps in representations experienced by readers: he identifies a “painful incongruence between one’s desires, knowledge and experiences, and the texts that articulate contradictory perspectives”, in which experiences as an Asian-Australian or transgendered person were not represented (Cho "Inserting My Self into the Text" 103). When considered from an EDG perspective, textual self-insertion offers interesting implications for understandings of time and space as they affect the acts of reading and writing. In “Dirty Dancing”, Cho’s narrator works to bring those effects to the forefront of the narrative action. The disjointed use of time throughout the narrative is most obvious. The story begins as taking place in the resort in the year 1963, just like the film Dirty Dancing. However, by inserting Cho’s character and his family members as characters within the reconceptualised narrative we see time move forward, as Cho and Johnny talk about their “favourite 80s television shows and pop songs” (Cho Look Who’s Morphing 4), and then time moves back as the narrator reflects on how Auntie Feng and Uncle Stan met in 1968 (Cho Look Who’s Morphing 5). This use of time within the narrative challenges dominant understandings of a linear movement of time in
narrative and the reader’s own environment. In creating jumps or rifts in narrative time through a process of self-insertion and removal from narrative, Cho distorts common modes of scaling time, blurring the lines between real life and author’s contexts, and the context of the story – real time becomes story time, and the two become connected and indistinguishable. Due to the interrelatedness of time, space, and scale, this construction impacts readers’ perception of space too. When the reader follows the characters’ experience of blurred time, the spaces that the characters occupy become indistinguishable also. This is reinforced as Cho’s narrator shifts from references to the fictional setting of the resort in the narrative and film to references to real places, such as Hobart and Melbourne. In combining methods of intertextuality and self-insertion, Cho embeds within his work an understanding about the unique learning about the self and the cultures we live in (or outside of) that occurs through the act of reading or engaging with popular culture texts.

An EDG approach to Cho’s use of literary devices here extends this assessment to reconciling the text with its critical assessments. The extent to which Cho uses intertextuality throughout his narratives can potentially create a sense of confusion for the reader, especially through the ways his narratives create disjointed portrayals or rifts in time and space. The transitional spaces constructed within the narratives that become sites for learning for the characters, and emerge from Cho’s characters’ relationship with popular culture texts, can challenge a reader’s geosophical positions in a number of ways. Having taught Cho’s narratives within a number of university classes on Australian literature, I have discovered that students often speak of a number of challenges in engaging with these liminal spaces within the narratives and geosophical positions that emerge from within the text.

For some students, the narrative flow of the short stories, shifting between the narrative of the evoked film and the narrative of the short story, and then a blending of the two, subverted their understandings of narrative structure informed by their western literary studies education. Other students who were
unfamiliar with the original popular cultural texts that Cho’s work references were able to approach the text in a number of ways. These students who were unfamiliar with the original film often found the story inaccessible, or read the stories in unique fashions not shaped or colonised by a knowledge of the original text (the film *Dirty Dancing*). For instance, Cho’s makes two references to the finale dance scene from the original film. In the first,

I watch as Johnny says to Auntie Feng ‘No one puts Baby in a corner’ and he performs a big raunchy dance number with Bruce after he says it and everyone else at the resort joins in and starts dancing in a raunchy way too. Auntie Feng has no comeback for all of this. (Cho *Look Who’s Morphing* 5-6)

The second reference is at the conclusion of the narrative when Cho’s character uses the same “raunchy dance number” strategy to define his new state of adulthood to his parents:

The newer part of me – the part that learnt dancing at the resort – tells me that dancing, like pop culture discussions, brings people together. In the end, the part of me that learnt dancing at the resort wins out, and so I jump out of my father’s arms and I say to my parents ‘No one puts Baby in a corner’ and I perform a big raunchy dance number after I say it and everyone else at the airport joins in and starts dancing in a raunchy way too. My parents have no comeback for all of this. As a result, they have no choice but to come to terms with the fact that I am an adult. (Cho *Look Who’s Morphing* 7-8)

Cho’s references to the finale dance scene are extremely short and literal summaries. The significance of their use here can be inaccessible to a reader unfamiliar with the original film. Students who had seen the original film found these references humorous as the way they are written by Cho parodied the the original dance scene and downplayed its spectacular nature. Further, they also established a different sense of connection with Cho’s texts at this point, as their readings of these references conjured feelings and ideas from their attachment to the original film, which coloured and shaped their reading. Most notably, the
Cho’s parodied repetition of the scene challenged the spectacular and idealised romance of the original movie by relocating the dance number in reality. In reality, such dance numbers would not occur, reminding students that the romantic ideals established in the original film are too just fantasy and unrealistic. Students unfamiliar with the original film, however, merely saw these references as a peculiar strategy for conflict resolution. Further, students who were familiar with the original text also expressed levels of uncertainty in engaging with the material which was both oddly familiar and different.

By inspiring these varied responses in his readers in a way, Cho’s narratives have created or established new “painful gaps” in representation and narrative style for some readers. In using intertextuality in this way, Cho offers a particular representation of western spaces and the ways in which knowledge and understanding is constructed within them. His stories reveal a unique geosophical position in which engagement with popular culture and media is positioned as a way of learning about the environments and societies in which a person lives. This engagement can be a source of information about behaviour, expectations and norms required to survive within these environments. An EDG reading of text assists in navigating the varied responses which are all interesting and valid, and facilitates an intersubjective discussion amongst the various critical perspectives of the text. Further, an EDG approach to reading provides a literary critic with scope for navigating the representations of time and space within Cho’s texts. As a critic familiar with the original film and expectations of narrative structure informed from years of both literary study in western institutions and engagement with western popular culture, by striving for the a-colonial reading position of an EDG approach I endeavour to ensure that I do not impose my expectations of narrative time and space onto Cho’s text. As a teacher, I deploy my complex understanding of the intricate perspective on culture in Cho’s text to assist my students to negotiate their own literary expectations and so come to terms with the text’s operations. I use EDG to encourage students to move past our initial subjective experiences of the text by focusing on constructions of time and space
within the narrative as a collective access point to the text for our class discussions.

The recurring themes of family, intergenerational relationships and adulthood or age are also examples of the way understandings of time appear within Cho’s narratives. The family provides contextual knowledges about gender, sexuality and relationships within the narrative, “Dirty Dancing”. Auntie Feng’s disapproval of Johnny and “Bruce’s” relationship reinforces cultural ideals about heterosexuality, positioning her marriage to Uncle Stan as “perfect”. This disapproval shifts to a hyperbolic metaphor of biological connections to rationalise the nature of love, sexuality, and relationships.

Their is a marriage of convenience. She has a type of green algae growing on her and he has a rare type of fungus growing on him, such that her green algae receives water and nutrient salts from his fungus, and in turn his fungus gains nutrients synthesised from her green algae…

…there is a breakthrough. Bruce is right in the middle of having sex with Johnny when he discovers that Johnny has a special kind of intercellular methane-oxidising bacteria in his hair and Bruce’s own body produces a particular kind of enzyme, such that Johnny’s bacteria is able to convert methane to a form that Bruce can use for nutrition, and in turn Bruce’s enzyme protects Johnny from harmful hydrogen peroxide that is a by-product of Johnny’s sulphur metabolising process. (Cho Look Who’s Morphing 5)

The biological metaphor here emphasises the similarities between homosexual and heterosexual relationships as fulfilling a biological desire or need, normalising and universalising sexual experience regardless of gender or orientation. As Auntie Feng still offers disapproval of the relationship, despite this biological revelation, Johnny and Bruce have no option but to defend their relationship by borrowing from the iconic final dance scene of the film Dirty Dancing. These two hyperbolic explanations of sexuality, love and their relationship, which is a concern that is eventually resolved through dance, can be
reconciled with Cho’s wider contexts. The passage emphasises the ways in which societies attempt to construct and define love, sexuality, and gender, but also replicates traditional western ideas about the construction and value of knowledges in scientific paradigms versus popular-culturally constructed knowledges, subversively privileging Johnny’s and Bruce’s relationship by explaining it in complex chemical terms. Nevertheless, having observed this scene, Cho’s narrator character decides to use dance technique to address his own parents’ concerns with his sexuality, privileging popular-cultural knowledges over the scientific. Cho’s ability to play with ideas about knowledge construction and how arguments work, blending scientific, social and cultural knowledge constructions within these scenes demonstrates the complex geosophical ideas at work within this text. It exposes an EDG perspective in highlight the relationship between modes of knowledge construction; scientific knowledges and the value of them are socially and culturally constructed too.

When reunited with his parents, the narrator is burdened by his parents literally treating him like a baby. The issue of age and adulthood, a culturally constructed account of time, emerges as Cho’s narrator feels ready to assert his position and authority as an adult within the family context. In revisiting the final scene of Cho’s narrative, in which he reimagines the final scenes from the film Dirty Dancing, engaging with popular cultural texts provides the narrator scope for confronting his family’s treatment of him. Here Cho’s combination of intertextuality and self-insertion functions in two ways: first it exposes the recreation of, and engagement with popular culture texts, as a liminal space of learning for Cho’s character, and second it provides a means of representing something difficult (i.e. revealing his sexuality to family and defining his authority as an adult) in a light-hearted fashion. Again, humour functions as an indicator of geosophical conflict as the light-hearted nature of parodying the dance scene in Cho’s work emphasises Cho’s character’s own disconnections from the character’s experiences within the film.
In terms of the geosophical, references to age and adulthood are important especially when reconciled with Cho’s geosophical positions as a means of measuring time and his relationship with it. An EDG approach to text requires that we set aside our individual preconceptions about adulthood and assess the significance of family and age as a means of scaling time from the perspective of an Asian-Australian youth. To act one’s age and determinants of adulthood are undoubtedly informed by contextual spaces, including family dynamics, ethnicity, and cultural influences. Age becomes the central temporal concept in this story, as the liminal space created through the narrative of “Dirty Dancing” becomes a site of transition into adulthood for Cho’s character. Here the interaction of family and his family’s culture with the narrative of the film provides Cho’s character with a space for learning, a space to consider what defines adulthood for him: is it just age, a purely linear measurement of time? Or are their other factors, such as family, shaping the way in which he measures his time on earth?

**Reconciling temporal and spatial language with texts and contexts**

In addition to the use of intertextuality and self-insertion, Cho locates his characters and self through the use of temporal and spatial language. He draws our attention to the concept of linguistic relativity and its emergence as a form of aesthetic imagining in not only locating characters but revealing their geosophical positions too. For Cho the manipulation of language becomes a key avenue for him to develop self-aware intercultural material. In Chapter 2 the discussion of Cho’s narrative revealed his work demonstrates a geosophically informed understanding about how languages and literacies can encode particular geosophical ideas and understandings. Cho’s short story “Pinocchio” demonstrates further the complicated ways in which common phrases can indicate the measuring and scaling of time or space. The short story is about Cho’s character, the narrator, reuniting with his girlfriend, Tara, having not been in contact with her for a year. The narrative follows Cho’s attempt to explain his absence through a story documenting his transformation into a Muppet to appear
on the television program *The Muppet Show*. Tara accuses the narrator of lying and suggests that his nose is growing (like Pinocchio’s), which leads to the narrator contemplating the nature of lying, before the two characters are reconciled. The narrative ends with the characters’ satisfying collective lies about the positive future of their relationship:

> In embellishing this fantasy with the appropriate amount of detail, we draw inspiration from films we have seen, books we have read, friends we have known, lovers we have had, words we have written, daydreams we have dreamt and much more. As we discuss our fantasy future, we realise that it looks a lot like this: every night, she – a good girl – will turn into a bad girl because she has gotten together with a bad boy, and yet, every day, I – a bad boy – will be redeemed by her love – the love of a good woman – thereby turning me into a good man. We agree that this fantasy is immensely appealing to both of us. Thus, for the time being, the future looks good. (Cho *Look Who’s Morphing* 127)

In this final scene, the characters’ relationships with popular culture are revisited, introducing the ideas about transitional spaces of learning created through the ways we engage with cultural texts that Cho explored through the narrative of “Dirty Dancing.”

The interaction between time and space which constructs these transitional spaces in Cho’s narrative is reinforced through the use of intertextual references to the original story of Pinocchio.

I put to my hands to my nose and am shocked to realise that she is not lying: my nose is at least five centimetres longer than it originally was. I run to her bathroom to look at myself in the mirror. She follows me and watches as I look at my reflection. I stare sadly at myself. For a few moments, I cannot speak. I just look at myself. After a while, I turn to Tara and I apologise for lying to her. I say that it seems that I have become like Pinocchio – a not-so-real boy who is full of falsehoods and fallibilities. I turn
back to the mirror once more. Tara puts her hand on my arm but I do not say anything. Then I feel her hug me. She tells me that Pinocchio was a fascinating and lovable boy precisely because of his frailties and vices. She also declares that, ‘real boy’ or not, Pinocchio was actually at his most interesting when he was a ‘bad boy’. (Cho *Look Who's Morphing* 126)

Here Cho draws on the story of Pinocchio, constructing a transitional space of learning through other narratives and popular culture in which he can locate his character and better understand his role within his relationship with Tara and the social practice of lying. Drawing on a source of narrative from European cultures, Cho establishes a transitional space in which the characters can explore understandings about the nature of masculinity and gender as it relates to their relationship by considering what it means to be a “real boy” or a “bad boy”. This space is further reinforced with the symbolism of the mirror, where the character is literally reflecting on their identity. This use of intertextuality is significant, as it shows the characters drawing on examples of popular culture and narrative to develop an understanding of themselves, gender and their relationship, and to locate this within an understanding of functioning within expectations of contemporary Australian context and society. The characters continue to do so more explicitly as they discuss their relationship’s future, with the narrator positioning this future as a good lie given that it is embellished with enough detail for it to seem plausible: “In embellishing this fantasy with the appropriate amount of detail, we draw inspiration from films we have seen, books we have read, friends we have known, lovers we have had, words we have written, daydreams we have dreamt and much more” (Cho *Look Who's Morphing* 127).

In exploring the discursive appearance of geosophy within texts, especially in terms of aesthetic imaginings, it is significant that Cho’s narrative is littered with temporal language. In this final scene, Cho offers a complicated representation of time through the phrase “…for the time being…” (Cho *Look Who's Morphing* 127). As an English speaking reader who is also an English teacher, I am familiar with this phrase and understand that this phrase has been used to indicate the
immediate, and is often used in colloquial dialogue to indicate that something has an interim or temporary nature. However, for other readers the grammatical structure of this phrase could lead to confusion or other understandings. The phrase could be read in an instance in which “time” is positioned as a noun and “being” as a verb, offering a sense of continuing present tense, making the occurrence of time here seem infinite. Alternatively, “time being” could be understood as a noun phrase, positioning an understanding of time as finite thing with parameters, such as the now, which is how I initially interpreted the phrase. Within the context of the narrative, the use of these elusive phrases helps relay and construct the uncertainty of the characters and the nature of their relationship: “We agree that this fantasy is immensely appealing to both of us. Thus, for the time being, the future looks good” (Cho Look Who's Morphing 127).

The idea of linguistic relativity is particularly important when thinking about how spatial and temporal language function in placing the language user. As a geosophic scale, the scopes of languages can affect the ways a person “describe(s) the orientation of the world around” them, despite offering ideas about the same position two different language users may represent this information in entirely different ways (Deutscher 2). For a geosophical approach to text, a critic needs to be fluid in navigating language use, and address the spatial and temporal complications of the use of simple words or phrases by reconciling their use to their contexts.

This explicit measuring of time extends to narrative structure too. Similar to “Dirty Dancing,” the narrative begins by locating the story within time and place; “the year is 1981 and I driving down the streets of Melbourne…” (Cho Look Who's Morphing 117). This feature is duplicated when Cho’s character tells Tara the story of his disappearance, beginning his lie with the line: “about fifteen months ago…” (Cho Look Who's Morphing 118). This act of locating the narrative is a common strategy; often stories begin with “once upon a time” or “a long time ago,” and at the beginning of Lucky Miles the audience is made aware of the year and place setting through a caption at the bottom of the screen. If we
consider this conventional narrative beginning geosophically, we must ask: what
does it achieve? Is it really an efficient way of setting a scene if it relies on readers
to bring to the story their own knowledges of a time and place, which may be very
different? Although Cho begins some of his short stories in this fashion, he is
quick to distort time and space or relocate this narrative, subverting the familiar
opening. Cho’s use and subversion of this technique as a narrative convention
expected from western, English-speaking readers or a replication of western
popular culture texts can be reconciled with the text’s wider context, as Cho
deliberately puts into play conventional popular-cultural understandings of time.

Throughout the narrative there is the explicit mention of modes of measuring time
as a means to locate the story’s events: “about fifteen months ago” (Cho Look
Who’s Morphing 118), “the next morning” (Cho Look Who’s Morphing 127), and
words such as “months”, “year”, “day”, “moment”, “future” and “ever”. These
words reveal the ways in which the narrator and Tara are locating and measuring
the duration of their actions, events and interactions with each other and their
surrounding spaces. Meanwhile, the words “moment”, “future”, and “ever” are
geosophically ambiguous as they are relative to an individual user, and audience,
who will determine the implications and meaning of the term’s use in any
particular instance. The significance of this ambiguous language use within a
narrative of deception and lies, allows the language users to avoid commitment to
the plans.

The conversational nature of the language used throughout the narrative also
facilitates the use of a number of informal speech phrases that allude to an
individual’s temporal understandings.

We don’t say anything for a moment but then she softly asks me if
I have come back for good or if I am going to go away again. I take
a moment to consider this. I tell her that, as much as I have so
desperately wanted to, I have never been able to predict my own
comings and goings. But I also tell her that I would like to stay.
Tara smiles and we both start to fantasise about what our future might look like. (Cho *Look Who's Morphing* 127)

In this instance, the use of “for good” as a measurement and perception of time is interesting. Colloquially, within a context of Australian English slang, the phrase means “forever” and indicates a sense of permanency in the character’s return to that space, and their relationship. The word “good” also injects positive connotations into this measurement of time, which when reconciled with the context of the narrative alludes to the characters’ desire to stay and their fantasy for a positive future together. Further, in this example the use of “go away” offers interesting implications regarding a person’s relationship to spaces. It positions the user of the phrase as centre, offering an ego-centric perception of space in which other things (namely the other person in this example) are removed from the user’s spaces. Similar to the use of colloquialisms and spatial language used in *Lucky Miles*, these common phrases remind the reader that an understanding of time and space is relative to an individual’s geosophical position, and their unique modes of measuring and cognitive processes. Whether these are processes are shaped culturally, linguistically, educationally, physically or geographically our understandings derived from them are embedded into our everyday word use. Cho’s deployment of these conventional phrases in a story that highlights deception and doubt emphasises his awareness of how English language encodes particular geosophical awareness within its idioms. In doing so, he allows his characters to capitalise on the ambiguity of the language.

In further considering the temporal implications of language in Cho’s work, an EDG reader notices the specific use of adverbs and prepositions. Throughout Cho’s short story a number of common adverbs and adverbial phrases relating to time (“suddenly”, “immediately”, “formerly”, “once again”) and prepositions (“while”, “when”, “then”, “throughout”, “prior to”) are used. To an English-speaking reader these phrases may seem commonplace and insignificant, and their meaning may be taken for granted upon reading. However, from a geosophical perspective and a meta-critical practice in which the critic de-centres the use of the English language as dominant, these utterances offer an access point for
insights into Cho’s narrative. Their use is pivotal in locating the self and actions, as the temporal utterances become a means of scaling ideas about the nature of time in changing oneself. In particular, their use highlights Cho’s own awareness of the complexity of his unique geosophical positions – that his language use is relative too and shaped by his relationship with time and spaces as a multi-lingual migrant.

The extensive use of spatial and temporal language within the narrative can be reconciled with, and better understood through its relationship with, the themes and content of the narrative action. A recurring theme throughout Cho’s short stories is that of transformation and the changing of the self. In “Pinocchio” this theme manifests throughout the narrator’s lies in a number of ways. A key example of this is the telling of the creation stories of Muppets. The Muppet characters offer the narrator a variety of stories about their own transformations from human beings into Muppets.

It turned out that all of The Muppets had formerly been humans. For example, the guy who became Kermit The Frog was once a high-profile taxation lawyer from a prestigious law firm who, upon finding himself in a midlife crisis, decided to pursue a career in the arts...Another one of The Muppets also had a background in the corporate world. A few years ago, Jim Henson had hired her as a consultant to write a business plan for his rapidly expanding company. As it turned out, Jim and his management staff did not care for her ideas about how to maintain financial viability in balance with artistic integrity. The morning after she had informally suggested a company restructure, she woke up to find herself chained to a drum kit in a basement. She had been transformed into an aggressive Muppet drummer who played the drums with a crazed and violent kind of intensity. Her analytical skills and strategic planning expertise has also disappeared. Instead, these characteristics had been overtaken by raw, primal urges for sex, food and playing the drums. Yet, after her initial shock at her
transformation, she too found a greater sense of fulfilment in her new role. She told me that Jim Henson had done her a favour and that she did not miss her life as a Business Analyst at all. (Cho  
*Look Who's Morphing* 121-22)

In light of this comic emphasis on transformation, the uses of temporal and spatial utterances emerge as significant in this narrative as they reinforce the scope of language as a means for locating oneself. Stephen Levinson claims that studying the “language of spatial description” reveals information about spatial cognition and culturally-specific ways of knowing (Levinson 355). In the Muppets’ transformation stories, time interacts with internal spaces of the self to construct a transitional space for these characters to occupy. In the passage, time simultaneously functions in a progressive-linear mode and a regressive-linear mode in constructing an experience of transformation for the Business Analyst. The presumable regression of biological time changes her from a sophisticated and educated executive to a “primal” and “aggressive” animalistic state of being, even while her continued existence in this animalistic state suggests a state of linear progression. Further, temporal references used in this passage (such as “formerly,” “after,” and “rapidly,” and the use of past tense, including “she had been transformed”) allow the characters to locate, map and convey their transitions to the other Muppet characters; they allow the characters to construct or represent a space of transition and process, which is also reflective of the self. Cho’s work reminds the reader that simple utterances within the context of a geosophical discourse can point to the “habits of mind” that language plays in our lives, alluding to epistemological insights. By further locating these utterances within the context of the narrative a critic can espouse information about ways of knowing located within a text. The relationship between language, time and space is always culturally and geographically relevant (Levinson).

Reconciling spatial and temporal language with the context of the narrative and the language user elucidates the complexity of Cho’s geosophical positions that inform text. Cho’s work highlights other ways in which the geosophical appear in
texts by manipulating language throughout his narratives as a form of being geosophically self-aware; in essence he demonstrates that texts can offer their own performance of an EDG approach. In realising the theory of an EDG, we become aware of texts which facilitate their own geosophical exploration and analysis, which cannot be ignored or silenced within our critical readings of text. The next two chapters explore self-conscious emergences of the geosophical in more detail as the main purpose of this chapter is to elucidate what the geosophical can look like in texts and in readings.

**Conclusion**

EDG takes Wright’s focus on subjectivity in knowledge construction further by providing a platform for intersubjectivity amongst geosophical positions. An EDG achieves this by offering an intersubjective reading practice that it explores the multiple geosophical positions in texts and reading practices, and moves these geosophical positions into a space of negotiation through the combination of an a-colonial reading position and reconciling ethic. By drawing on Wright’s work about the imaginative processes that inform subjective geographic knowledge construction we can move towards establishing how critics can access and identify the geosophical and geosophical positions in literature before applying the same ideas to a meta-critical consideration of how critics interact with and interpret the geosophical in their reading practices. In doing so, we reach an understanding that all texts and their readings are geosophically complex. Geosophical complexity is discursively embedded within texts. Further, some texts not only embed the geosophical into their work but explore points of geosophical intersection through their own awareness of the geosophic, offering their own EDG approach.

By revisiting Wright’s ideas about the imagination and geographic ways of knowing, we can elucidate further the concept of geosophy and the ways in which the geosophical presents in literary forms. Although the examples of geosophy in
literary representations studied here is not extensive or in no way complete, the examples do outline some common and key markers of the geosophical that literary critics can use as a basis for developing their geosophical approaches to reading. Again, we see language emerging as a key feature in appearances of the geosophical, particularly as we study the dialogue between the reservists and the refugees in *Lucky Miles* and Cho’s subversion of conventional phrases. Geopolitical understandings, such as in *Lucky Miles* are demonstrated through Youssif’s act of asylum-seeking and the interactions between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous army reservists, present as major elements that readers and filmgoers must engage with. We must recognise how many of the actions and expectations within literary texts, such as the ability to navigate a landscape or expectations for particular spaces, are informed by geographic knowledges and must be understood geosophically.

An EDG approach to reading practice requires a shift to the meta-critical: we must recognise that our emotive responses to a text are geographically specific. For instance, interpretations of humour or seeing an example as a source of humour when engaging with texts could present as an instance of geosophical conflict, indicating the need for a critic to consider the interaction of geosophical positions which have led to a perceived source of humour. Critics can achieve this by analysing their readings of the text and reconciling this with their own geosophical positions. In terms of an EDG approach to reading, this is a blatant reminder that we, as critics and readers, are not just examining the geosophical within texts, but within acts of reading and the contexts surrounding and informing both texts and their readings.
Figure 13 Geosophy and the Meta-critic survey the brain terrain
Chapter 4 – Applying Eatdirtzian Geosophy to an inaccessible text

For far too long, I would argue, the Indigenous have also looked to the north and given the West the privilege of theory, as though real power in their lives lies in theory. But what is theory? I understand theory as nothing more than a story. Just as history is the story of the victor, not the defeated, so theory is a story that elucidates a people’s sense of self. Like all stories, it is a matter of how much power it is given. So when reading a theory, one must ask, does this story tell me who I am? (C. Black 350)

In the previous two chapters I have been discussing multicultural texts, namely the film *Lucky Miles* and Tom Cho’s short stories from *Look Who’s Morphing*, that are embedded with various geosophical positions; the work within these texts operates at complex cultural and geographic interfaces. This particular selection of texts has been useful in supporting a discussion that clarifies and develops an Eatdirtzian Geosophy (EDG) and the contexts from which such a theoretical position has emerged and in which it operates. However, this chapter aims to demonstrate how an EDG enables critics to engage with texts that may seem inaccessible to audiences. The main purpose of this chapter is to highlight contributions that the theory of an Eatdirtzian Geosophy can make to critical reading practices, namely that it provides a framework for critics to access texts that may appear inaccessible to them.

I use the term “inaccessible” here as an indicator for the incommensurability between a critic’s own geosophical positions and those of a text. In particular, this inaccessibility highlights the incommensurability between diverse ways of knowing. In this chapter, I specifically explore my own ways of knowing, as a non-Indigenous woman who is the product of western education systems, and Senior Law Man Bill Neidjie’s ways of knowing, as an Indigenous man who is a custodian of Bunitj country and has had experience in both western and
Indigenous education systems (Neidjie *Story*; Neidjie *Gagudju Man*). Exploring the incommensurability between western and Indigenous ways of knowing is itself a theme in Neidjie’s work, which influenced my selection of *Story About Feeling* for analysis in this chapter.

As a non-Indigenous and western academic reader, part of my hesitancy about engaging, and relief in resisting engagement, with Neidjie’s work is that I assumed there is a level of taboo, disrespect and risk of cultural appropriation in non-Indigenous people engaging with Indigenous knowledges. This resistance and hesitancy was informed by my initial assumptions about the text being inaccessible to me, as I assumed the text was mono-cultural, in that it was Aboriginal stories only for Aboriginal audiences. However, my supervisors were quick to point out that this might be an opportunity for meta-critical reflection, because the fact that Neidjie’s text is written in English means the work is multicultural. Upon re-reading Senior Law Man (SLM) Neidjie’s work the significance of his targeting both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences becomes clearer. Rather than disengaging with the work based on cultural assumptions, it is important for readers to reconcile Neidjie’s motives with their current Australian contexts, and the text with readers’ Australian contexts which might reveal the significance of the telling, and production, of these stories.

EDG allows critics to address epistemological concerns in their readings of texts through the use of a geosophic discourse. Geosophy as a discourse gives critics a theoretical scope for engaging with various epistemologies, similar or different, by identifying instances of geosophical conflict and applying a reconciling ethic in their approach to these. In terms of reading practices, geosophy informs our treatment of epistemologies in that it both recognises and validates multiple sources of knowing through individuals’ relationships with geographies. Further, as geosophy is based on geographic knowledges it provides a focus for reading for appearances of time, space and scale as representations of this multiplicity of relationships and ways of knowing. In the creation of an EDG, these qualities are then reinforced by aspects of reading practice, namely occupying an a-colonial
reading position through meta-critical practice, and applying a reconciling ethic. An EDG reading of Neidjie’s work is important to demonstrate the contribution a geosophic discourse could make to critical reading practices in navigating inaccessible or incommensurable texts. Further, as part of this thesis, an EDG reading of SLM Neidjie’s work reinforces the nature of EDG as a consideration of the way critic’s approach texts in a shift away from traditional literary practices in which critics explain the meaning of texts.

Upon my initial readings of the stories of Senior Law Man (SLM) Bill Neidjie, the work seemed inaccessible to me as a non-Indigenous reader because the concept of feeling seems alien to the objective ways of knowing that I am most familiar with. SLM Neidjie’s work seems inaccessible to me as someone raised on objective and western approaches to knowing where inward ways of knowing, such as feeling and emotion, have traditionally not been privileged. However, EDG recognises that understandings of time, space, and scale can be informed by various sources and relationships with geographies, including Neidjie’s concept of feeling. As such EDG works to dismantle western notions of academy where, traditionally, feeling and connection are excluded or not validated. The ways in which the western academy excludes ways of knowing is a large focus in Nerida Blair’s Doctoral thesis, *Sweet Potatoes, Spiders and Waterlilies*. Throughout her work, Blair characterises the western academy as a “brick wall”. This representation emphasises the stagnant and closed-off nature of western ways of knowing, where knowing is constructed in rigid and pragmatic ways through bricks of disciplines, paradigms, and methods. It is this “brick wall” construction that has the ability to limit or outright “block ideas. It has the capacity to enforce boundaries” (Blair 65). By comparing this brick wall to the concept of sweet potatoes or bush potatoes, which represents Indigenous ways of knowing, Blair highlights the incommensurability in ideas about research and knowledge construction that Indigenous peoples working within the academy face. By comparison, the circle symbol used to represent the growth of the sweet potato bulb suggests the infinite possibility for growth in ideas: “it has a nourishing core
that feeds stories and knowledge and which radiates both inwards and outwards from the centre and the periphery” (Blair 66).

One research strategy that Blair suggests is a change in the dominance over ways of knowing, by placing Indigenous epistemologies at the centre of researching. Such a strategy works to de-centre Eurocentric modes of knowing while privileging Indigenous modes that have traditionally been excluded (Blair 41-45). Despite its attempts to dismantle western paradigms, such an approach could become problematic because it still exists and operates within a Eurocentric construct of “research” (Blair 47-51); there needs to be a decentring of dominant Eurocentric perspectives at this level. What distinguishes an EDG approach from other work within this field, such as Blair’s, is that an EDG attempts to move us forward from dismantling to events of connection and interaction. It allows for links and connections to be made between theories, places, peoples, texts, reader and critic – it reveals a that narrative thread exists and is in a constant state of negotiation, as it develops between the text and the critic, no matter where they are positioned.

An EDG reading achieves this by revisiting theoretical frameworks and privileging multiple ways of knowing at the core of a theory via the application of geosophy. Akin to Blair’s work, geosophy reminds us that there is not one sole or absolute way to know. Ways of knowing are informed by expectations or standard validated within particular communities; sociologically speaking, they represent norms that enable the functionality of educational institutions, and it is these norms that need to be deconstructed within the western academy (Spivak "Who Claims Alterity?"). In light of this, EDG allows critics to manage expectations about knowledge, knowledge construction, and knowing, in that geosophy both accepts and validates multiple sources of knowing. Neidjie’s narratives have content matter and themes that explicitly deal with feeling, which is an Indigenous way of knowing represented through the “inward” and “outward” “stories and knowledges” represented in Blair’s sweet potato symbol (Blair 66). An EDG approach to Neidjie’s work reveals how critics working from within the “brick
The reading practices of an EDG also allow interactions between research paradigms, which is why reading Neidjie’s work in this way is so important. It seems to be an inaccessible text to me residing within the confines of the “brick wall”, but through an EDG reading audiences blocked by the “brick wall” can potentially engage critically with Indigenous epistemologies presented within Neidjie’s work. Ambelin Kwaymullina, Blaze Kwaymullina and Lauren Butterly’s work highlight how crucially important it is for Australian researchers to “critically engage with how the ontologies that inform knowledges are valued in the academy” (Kwaymullina, Kwaymullina and Butterly 1). They identify the fact that although there is current critical discussion about conflict and incommensurability between the ontologies that inform western and Indigenous modes of knowing and research, there still remains a gap in the operationalisation of these modes and ideas.

EDG offers a way of operating conflicting or multiple ideas about knowing in critical reading practices in the area of literary criticism through offering a framework for interactions between research paradigms – it offers a shifting centre. By occupying an a-colonial reading position and practicing meta-critical reading, critics can avoid allowing one paradigm or epistemology placing a dominant hold on the centre of their ways of knowing; this practice avoids the risk of the militant application of colonial or anti-colonial positions in the treatment of others work, or the need for an epistemological “apartheid” at a critical reading level by focusing solely on difference (Blair 44). Instead, EDG offers readers a concept of a moving centre, a reading “hot seat,”\(^3\) which promotes co-existence

\(^3\) “Hot seat” is a teaching game that is commonly used in secondary school English and Drama classrooms, in English it functions as a revision exercise where two people battle in responding to questions and in Drama it is often used as a character development exercise when teaching students about play building. It is this version that we often use in Drama that I am thinking of here. The game functions by having empty chairs (in English it is usually two chairs and in Drama it is usually one chair) at the front of the classroom, which students move in and out of quickly. Once occupying the “hot seat” that student is the centre of attention, they must be in character and maintain character as the rest of the classroom group asks them questions about the character they play.
and interaction between geosophical positions and the myriad of epistemologies that inform them. Further, an EDG offers a potential solution to two concerns regarding “epistemic ignorance” in that it offers the opportunity for Indigenous narratives to be considered concurrently with Indigenous epistemologies and it shifts western readers to a position to engage and think about Indigenous epistemologies (Kwaymullina, Kwaymullina and Butterly 6). However, it is important to note that an EDG adds to this discussion of conflicting epistemologies by opening it up further than the traditional dichotomy of western versus Indigenous modes of knowing; it also has the potential to consider the diversity in ways of knowing whether these be Indigenous, Western, Eastern, universal, local or global, or a cross-cultural mix created through an individual’s circumstances such as education, global movement or multiculturalism. Further, it is vital to note that an EDG approach, which is one of multiplicity, provides scope for critics to avoid assumptions of homogeneity within a particular way of knowing or geosophical circumstances. The process of subjectification and inter-subjective interaction embedded within an EDG allows for the re-humanising of theory and steps away from exclusive objective modes of knowing.

The study of SLM Neidjie’s work here will better demonstrate the ways in which an EDG benefits critical literary practices. This reading works by focusing on reconciling the text with its and the critic’s geosophical positions, its analysis focuses on language and instances of language use, representations of time and space, and the ways in which epistemological frameworks have shaped the text and its reading. In doing so, the chapter highlights the nature of feeling and spirit as ways of knowing when viewed through examples of time and space in Neidjie’s work, and through discussion about relationships with country. The exclusive reading offered in this chapter reveals what an EDG theory and approach can contribute to reading practices by emphasising the strength of geosophy as an access point to texts that seem inaccessible.

are creating, which they respond to in character. When they drop character or reach the two-minute time period successfully, it is then the next student’s turn. The idea of a shifting centre reminded me of this Drama game, in that different geosophical positions can occupy the spotlight when needed.
EDG reading of Senior Law Man Bill Neidjie’s *Story About Feeling*

The first step involved in an EDG reading is explicitly addressing the geosophical positions affecting analysis. This involves clarifying the positions of both the text and the critic that inform the geosophical positions involved in their interactions. As the critic in this interaction, my geosophical position is informed by being a resident of Australia, in particular a resident of the areas of New South Wales’ Central Coast, Newcastle and Sydney. My geographic knowledges are located within urban, suburban, coastal, and semi-rural locations. They are further informed by my identification as culturally white, as working-middle class, as a woman, and as a world-traveller and global citizen. As both the product and producer of western education systems, I identify as an academic, as literary critic, as an educator, and as a student, all of which shape my geosophical position and how I understand the world around me, how I understand what I need, and how to act to survive within it.

Bill Neidjie was a Bunitj Clan elder. The Bunitj Clan is an Aboriginal group whose country is located in the north-east areas of what is now Kakadu National Park lands in the Northern Territory, Australia. This area of land is located just west of what is known as the Alligator Rivers Region of Kakadu National Park (Neidjie *Story* 174-75). The text, *Story About Feeling*, is a collection of transcripts spoken by Bill Neidjie and prepared by Keith Taylor (Neidjie *Story*). The transcripts are various short stories spoken by Neidjie that focus on a number of topics such as relationship to land, food, the wet season, history of place and people, being connected to country, and culture and dealing with colonisation. These stories are arranged into short chapters which focus on a particular aspect or topic. The main point of the text is to convey an understanding about “feeling,” a connectedness and relationship to land.

Neidjie’s motivation for compiling these stories into book format was to ensure that the stories and knowledges that Neidjie held were passed down onto the next generation. Throughout his lifetime, Neidjie had experienced both living in
colonised and traditional Bunitj contexts, and both western education through a period spent in a mission at Oenpelli and “traditional learning pathways of his people” (Ian Morris qtd. in Neidjie *Gagudju Man* 3-4). Neidjie expressed concerns that he would not have the opportunity to fulfil his obligation of passing these stories on to the next generation of the Bunitj community given the changing nature of living and the dwindling number of younger Bunitj peoples living on country: “And all my people all dead / but we got few, that’s all. / Not much, not many…getting too old/ and young-fellas I don’t know they hang on this story” (Neidjie Story 168). Younger Bunitj people are moving into more urban areas to undertake study and work (Neidjie *Gagudju Man*). When reconciling these motives to Neidjie’s contexts, I should note that it is a common practice for school-aged children in remote areas of Australia’s Northern Territory to travel in order to participate in education (Ferrari; Purdie and Buckley; Social Justice Unit). For many students this involves attending boarding school, especially to access secondary education (What Works). Reconciling Neidjie’s work to its contexts it is clear that this purpose and the changing nature of his community are responses to colonisation. However, as a white literary critic, equipped with anti-colonial discourses, I would be tempted to leave my assessment of the work’s purpose there, which could deny parts of Neidjie’s work and the geosophical positions they represent. In a shift to intersubjective reading practice, it is important to consider that the purpose of this work is also to remind its audience that identifying as Aboriginal comes with responsibilities and obligations to land, country, community and ancestors, and it is this identification that could also be informing Neidjie’s purpose here.

Further, intergenerational sharing of knowledge amongst the Bunitj people is not the only motivation for Neidjie’s work. At the beginning of the text the editor, Keith Taylor, writes:

in a world where our vision becomes ever more blinkered by the dominance of a single cultural way and where such dominance threatens the survival of other ways of thinking and being, there is
an urgent need for more stories like this. (Taylor qtd. in Neidjie Story i)

Taylor’s comment here reminds me that from the onset of reading this text, Neidjie’s stories are as much for me to heed, as a white non-Indigenous person residing and working in Awabakal and Darkinjung country, as they are for any other person who inhabits any part of Australia. This second motivation to which Taylor alludes to is rooted within colonial contexts as it highlights the author’s purpose of knowledge sharing at cultural interfaces, of two-way learning, which does not privilege a singular colonial experience of Australian environments. A reading that overlooked this aspect of the work would be doing the work a grave injustice. The meta-critical process in an EDG reading allows me to acknowledge my obligation as a reader and as a participant in the reciprocal dialogue with the text.

This story not for myself…all over Australia story.

No matter Aborigine, White-European, secret before,

didn’t like im before White-European…

This time White-European must come to Aborigine,

listen Aborigine and understand it.

Understand that culture, secret, what dreaming.

Big name… ‘dreaming’.

Dreaming e listen. E say…

“Exactly right!”

Because that dreaming made for us. (Neidjie Story 78)

Upon reflection, as a non-Indigenous person interacting with Neidjie’s text I see the point about this work being directed at all Australians as rather significant. It is significant because as a non-Indigenous reader approaching this text, which emerges from a distinct cultural view and geosophical position that seems overwhelmingly inaccessible to me, I could potentially disregard the messages within it as not relevant to me but being exclusively messages for an Aboriginal audience. This would be a much easier, more comfortable, and less confronting approach. However, to ignore SLM Neidjie’s views is a dangerous critical approach, as I would be perpetuating reading models in which someone else’s
work and worldviews are located within the frameworks of the critic’s work and worldviews to learn about the text, denying the critic an opportunity to learn from the text. An EDG approach to SLM Neidjie’s work allows a critic, or any reader, to consider how they may be located within the framework and worldviews of SLM Neidjie’s work. SLM Neidjie goes on to explain that this message is relevant for all audiences, not just those located in Bunitj land: “I speaking story / and this story you got to hang on, no matter who you, / no-matter what country you. / You got to understand…this world for us. / We came for this world” (Neidjie Story 166). Located in Awabakal country as I write this, reconciling Neidjie’s point to my own circumstances as a non-Indigenous reader, I see it as an important message for non-Indigenous readers to start thinking of their locations in terms of country, and recognise the country they are located in. Considering this, for a white audience to disregard or disengage with Neidjie’s messages upon reading his work, would be the equivalent of a tenant failing to read the special instructions regarding a property in a lease agreement set out by a landlord. To ignore ideas about caring for a home that we both enjoy would ultimately affect everyone. The purpose of this text being for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences makes clear to me that proper land care, respect for land, and sustainability is not just an “Aboriginal issue” but is an intergenerational issue affecting all Australian residents.

This significance of Neidjie’s motives and target audiences is highlighted through the concept of “Oobarr,” Gaagudju for “Business”, which is used throughout Neidjie’s work. At cultural interfaces, “business” is a geosophically ambiguous word. For a non-Australian or non-Indigenous reader familiar with English language the term or concept of business might be understood literally through common definitions of it as a noun for referring to a commercial entity or as a verb for referring to activities that someone conducts, commercial or otherwise (in the case of my young nephews, the word functions as a cheeky euphemism for going to the toilet, which might very well be another example for how age functions at cultural interfaces and affects/shapes language use). However,
Neidjie’s use of the word “Business” (used with a capital B at times throughout the text) refers to a governing system, or laws.

Big name… ‘dreaming’.
Dreaming e listen. E say…
“Exactly right!”
Because that dreaming made for us.
This Indjuwanydjuwa…
Two way e made. E said…
“I want rain. I want people.
Oh! Something I forgot! I’ll have to make im something.
They can grow but must keep im this…”
So e made that ‘Business’. ‘Business’ for people.
Well they got Bible they say / but this man, Indjuwanydjuwa, e said…
“I put this one here and star.
You got something to think about
and show young fellas.”
They want to know where the feeling coming from.
That thing now. You know…
Another secret, another secret, another one secret,
another one, another one…
all that feeling e come to you, feeling… now.
Me or you or somebody else…samething.
All same. E said…
“I make this one…but secret!
No kid, no woman, no young fella, unless they get in that Ring-place before e can
see.” I can’t call im… because no good.
I just saying this ‘outside’.
‘Inside’ things I can’t call im because not in Law.
Got to be in Ring-place before e can see! (Neidjie Story 78-79)

Indjuwanydjuwa refers to an ancestor
In this passage, the introduction of the concept of Business provides grounds for Neidjie to unpack the significance of the Aboriginal concept of Dreaming, which Neidjie indicates is important: “Big name… ‘dreaming’” (Neidjie Story 78). Neidjie’s passage goes on to explain how the ancestral being, Indjuwanydjuwa, has “made that ‘Business’” for the Bunitj people (Neidjie Story 78). Neidjie unpacks the Aboriginal concept of Business for a non-Indigenous audience by likening it to the laws or obligations outlined in the Christian Bible, both provide a code (moral, ethical or otherwise) for people to practise in their daily lives. The intergenerational nature of Business is shown here in the passing down of law from Indjuwanydjuwa, and reinforced through the phrase “You got something to think about / and show young fellas” (Neidjie Story 78). This phrase alludes to the responsibilities for an individual who holds this knowledge, to share the law with the younger generation, but also to engage with it and incorporate the knowledge into their life, “to think about”. In this example knowledge expresses a distinct relationship with time, functioning on a continuum that touches past, present, and future. Further, the notions of obligation and responsibility expressed here extend then to thinking about what knowledge can be shared and with who through the discussion of secrets and people being inside or outside of the Ring-place, highlighting that for SLM Neidjie knowledges also have a distinct relationship with places.

As a Senior Law Man, part of Neidjie’s responsibility is to decide what knowledge can be shared and with whom. This passage emphasises his decision that knowledge about taking care of the land and establishing a feeling, a connection and sense of responsibility to place, is part of the knowledge that must be shared with all Australians. It also emphasises that it is the responsibility of all Australians who share in this knowledge and feeling to “listen Aborigine and understand it” (Neidjie Story 78). In SLM Neidjie’s story, an understanding about a balance of rights and responsibility is about cultural interfaces where law and the environment are concerned within Australian contexts. Further, this message is about intercultural relationships in Australian contexts, as Neidjie emphasises that this responsibility extends to “Balanda” (White-European people). The

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balance between rights and responsibility embedded in Neidjie’s way of thinking is similar to other geosophical positions. For instance, as a member of a contemporary Australian society, if I want the right to drive a car that privilege also comes with the responsibility of adhering to safety measures and road rules put in place by our society to protect and maintain the safety and efficiency of the driving community. Considering this, in my reading of this passage as a non-Indigenous critic, I recognise that this request to listen and engage with feeling is fair. It’s a fair request because Neidjie is not asking his audience to do anything that they do not already do: the majority of Australian citizens already listen to and engage with laws prescribed by the state, and Neidjie is offering a different set of laws prescribed by his relationship to country. Further, the way in which Neidjie offers this request reinforces that it is not an aspect of Aboriginal spirituality to be romanticised as cultural tourism or the exotic other. Rather, it is a practical means for all people who inhabit Australian environments to consider the ways in which they engage with and are connected to those environments. The limits that Neidjie places on what knowledges he deems appropriate to share with his audience and what knowledges are restricted, and the fact that this prescription is coming from an Aboriginal geosophical position as a Senior Law Man, reminds audiences that despite what feeling they may establish with their environment there are people in our community who will have different and deeper feelings, such as those with distinct obligation to country. What this request to engage with feeling suggests to me, is a practical stance that recognises that when a person is part of a community, environmental or otherwise, that there is a balance of rights and responsibility that they must aim for.

As part of his request to engage with feeling, SLM Neidjie constantly highlights throughout his work that Balanda need to hear this story, need to feel connected to the land, and to develop some understanding about the knowledges and laws governing the country that they occupy. As a part of this process, SLM Neidjie notes that Balanda need to develop an understanding about the “Djang”, which is Gaagudju language for referring to sacred knowledge and places connected with Bunitj Dreaming (Neidjie Story 80-83). Neidjie points out that non-Indigenous
people do not fully understand the Bunitj concept of Djang, because they have no equivalent to it: “We say, ‘Djang’. / English…what you say?” (Neidjie Story 83). It is necessary that Balanda (White-European people) do not have absolute access to Dreaming, and Aboriginal laws and knowledges, but they do need to develop an understanding of its existence, because without an understanding of Djang, non-Indigenous Australians run the risk of breaking the laws of the country and lands that they occupy:

If you can’t listen, European, to Aborigine…
you go there, something wrong… well your own fault
because you breaking Law you see.

No-matter White-European… this story same! (Neidjie Story 83)

SLM Neidjie’s work refers explicitly to secret Laws from inside of the Ring-place which might not be understood by a wider audience, non-Indigenous and Indigenous. The idea of a Ring-place offers a particular understanding of space unique to Neidjie’s geosophical position as a custodian of Bunitj country. The space is imbued with special meaning, as it offers an exclusive space for learning and knowledge sharing.

This ‘outside’ story.
Anyone can listen, kid, no-matter who
but that ‘inside’ story you can’t say.
If you go in Ring-place, middle of Ring-place,
you not supposed to tell im anybody…
but oh, e’s nice! (Neidjie Story 101)

Those outside of that space have limited access to Indigenous Law and knowledges. SLM Neidjie goes on to make a distinction about the types of stories and knowledges offered in outside and inside spaces, stating that the stories and knowledge shared outside of the Ring-place can change and can be relative to changing conditions such as food and fashion. However, the knowledge, business and stories shared inside the Ring-place, “never change,” the “Oobaar too hard to change” (Neidjie Story 101). The Ring-place represents a space in which Bunitj ontology is privileged and consistent. The never-changing nature of the learning that occurs within this space implies that some business and knowledges unique to

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the space inside of the Ring-place have a transcendental relationship with time as they are intergenerational, traditional and consistent regardless of time. Location of a person, inside or outside of the Ring-place, becomes a signifier here for different relationships with time and space, and essentially different experiences of feeling and knowing. SLM Neidjie’s text also suggests that those outside of the Ring-place also have access to other Law, and with this access comes responsibility. In particular, the access to Law and knowledge that SLM Neidjie is consistently offering throughout the text is the development of feeling, of connection to place.

In reconciling SLM Neidjie’s stories to my own contexts, I find that this urging for non-Indigenous people to engage more respectfully with country is extremely relevant. The practice of feeling that SLM Neidjie speaks about appears as an appropriate response to past, present and future environmental crises we facing as a nation caused by our contemporary uses, mistreatment and destruction of Australian lands. SLM Neidjie’s work offers messages about environmental resource management, informed by feeling, and knowledge passed down through stories:

“Because dream…that Barra.
If you too rough, other fish is feeling because that fish you got to eat and half fish your body.
E got flavour to make good. You spoiling it when you cook it rough way, you got to eat cooked properly way.
Half raw and you throw it away…
that mean next day you can’t get fish!”

“Because what for?”

“Because She said.
That Woman said don’t waste it.
You got to eat fish.
You must not throw back in the river…
other fish e won’t come.” (Neidjie Story 86)

SLM Neidjie goes on to explain that if you throw unused fish back into the water, the other fish know and it affects the fish population negatively. SLM Neidjie’s story about fishing presents a key point about the proper management of waste, to ensure that we do not destroy the environments that also sustain us. This story as a means of waste management is a starkly different approach to contemporary modes of waste regulation and education offered by local councils in more urbanised areas of Australia, despite similar intentions; reading SLM Neidjie’s story with a reconciling ethic requires me to consider and perhaps critique the dominant social discourses around those topics that I might otherwise take for granted.

SLM Neidjie also tells stories about the earth and mining, as another discussion point for exploring relationships with, and treatment of, land. In Neidjie’s stories, non-Indigenous mining represents an interruption to his understanding of how time interacts within country.

Anyhow, that one here last year, but e went ahead.
E didn’t worry about.
And I said…
“I don’t know about twenty years’ time.
This land got to be change
because e would have bin stay like way e was,
before…should be.”
Because that story went through.
E left each clan and e would have bin stay.
And now half the ground e take; White-European.
Spoiling it. E take it half of our culture doing that mining.
Not fair because Aborigine can’t do anything about.
E can’t take White-European country half of it
because no good.
I don’t think so Aborigine can do because bit fright.
Another country e can’t. E got to stay where e belong to.

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E’ll be dead. So Aborigine e say...

“Well behind our children.

They’ll carry on this culture, ‘business’, secret, Djang and that Ring-place.”

Children…we say…

“You hang on this tight!”

I don’t know twenty years time, forty years might be.

They might come in close.

Now is close to us. We got to watch im.

E came through alright. E came… e got im.

I don’t know twenty years I thinking myself.

So I said…

“This culture you go to hang on

and you hang on piece of ground for you.”

I’m telling these kids because I’ll be dead. (Neidjie Story 159-60)

The mention of years here, “twenty years”, “forty years”, reveals the interruption and threat that mining poses, in that Neidjie is estimating an expiry date for relationship with country, when mining moves closer to sacred sites and when life is no longer sustainable on country because of the negative impacts on the environment. This is reinforced by Neidjie’s discussions of possible actions once this day comes; do the Aboriginal people move off country? These circumstances reveal an interruption to the cyclic and transcendental relationship that time and knowledge has with country in Neidjie’s story. The protection of country is an intergenerational process, representing a cyclic relationship: “Well behind our children. / They’ll carry on this culture” (Neidjie Story 159). Neidjie expresses concern that mining not only threatens sacred sites and elements of culture, but also interrupts the country’s ability to sustain life and therefore the next generation have an increased obligation to manage and protect the land; “you hang on piece of ground for you.” / I’m telling these kids because I’ll be dead” (Neidjie Story 160).
In reconciling Neidjie’s sentiments to their Australian contexts, we can locate his ideas about sustainability and intergenerational considerations as part of widespread discussions about mining in Australia. These discussions occur in political, environmental, lifestyle, and economic arenas. In current media, a number of different sources are validated, and drawn on, as insights into the mining industry. However, SLM Neidjie’s text is a cultural document not validated within these discussions as much as other ideas or documents are, such as the recent media attention given to an environmentalist’s hoax and government reports, such as local governments’ analysis of the economic, environmental and social impacts of fly-in/fly-out workers on communities (R. Morris; Moylan). By failing to integrate Neidjie’s work into these discussions, detrimentally the public and media arenas continue to colonise Australian society by excluding critical Indigenous perspectives about mining and environment, such as those offered in SLM Neidjie’s work. This reveals that there is a gap in what is viewed as a viable source of knowledge in this context. As a non-Indigenous Australian reader, SLM Neidjie’s text offers ideas to me about Bunitj cosmology, which informs his geosophical positions and the ways of knowing relative to this position. Engaging Neidjie’s work within these discussions about mining exposes a need for all Australians to feel or develop an awareness of feeling as a way of knowing in this arena of discussing and making decisions about law, economics, and the environment related to mining. An understanding of connectedness and relationship to environments, such as the relationship to country that Neidjie expresses throughout his text, is an initial step to developing an awareness of feeling and valuing it as a way of knowing. The dialogical nature of an EDG approach could facilitate a narrative thread between various stakeholders involved in public debate, just like it can establish a dialogic relationship for all readers of a text in literary processes. Such an approach offers a mode of engagement in which an understanding of connectedness and feeling from a critical Indigenous perspective is not absent from discussions in public arenas such as these.

From a literary position, other approaches to engaging with Neidjie’s work, such as Michael Farrell’s study of Neidjie’s text which locates it as a source of
affective poetry, continue to work to exclude Neidjie’s work as a valid source of knowing about Australian environments and mining from these public discussions and Farrell’s academic discussions. A geosophical approach to Senior Law Man Neidjie’s *Story About Feeling* would allow readers to access and reconcile various epistemological approaches to law and environments in Australian contexts. An EDG approach would position Neidjie’s work within these public discussions about mining in Australia. By shifting epistemological centres in a process of reconciling Neidjie’s work with this current Australian context, an EDG approach could facilitate interactions between Neidjie’s text and other cultural documents, by reading cultural documents through or with Neidjie’s work. This would ensure a critical Indigenous perspectives and way of knowing was engaged in these contemporary discussions. In this way, an EDG approach attempts to move us from colonising towards reconciling.

Neidjie’s texts and the geosophical positions that inform them are located in interesting contextual circumstances. Many Aboriginal elders and senior law men and women are reserved when it comes to sharing their knowledges and languages with non-Indigenous Australians:

“Balanda!
If Aborigine e says something, if e get a little bit wild,
you know…e want to stop im Balanda…e might listen.
But slow e got to ask him…
“What that Djang there?”
Because some Aborigine they hang on.
They don’t want to tell im.
They won’t tell im story easy.” (Neidjie *Story* 82).
Reconciling this idea to my geosophical positions as a postcolonial literary scholar and as a contemporary Australian citizen, I recognise that these reservations are justified because they appear as responsive to the history and processes of colonisation, including acts of epistemic violence and cultural genocide and appropriation. However, Neidjie’s geosophical position on this topic offers another perspective that my non-Indigenous anti- and post-colonial reading
does not. From his geosophical positions, and as a Senior Law Man, he reminds me of two key points to consider about knowledge sharing here. The first is a reminder of protocol, about how non-Indigenous people approach Indigenous knowledge holders, by listening carefully and being respectful: “e might listen. / But slow e got to ask im…” (Neidjie Story 82), and by having an understanding of communication barriers and why Senior Law Men and Women might react in particular ways: “Balanda! / If Aborigine e says something, if e get little bit wild, / you know…e want to stop im Balanda…” (Neidjie Story 82). The second idea that Neidjie offers is that in his role as a Senior Law Man, he is responsible for distinguishing knowledges about country, which involves protecting those knowledges that are sacred and related to dreaming: “Secret. That Djang. / We say, ‘Djang’. Our lingo… ‘Djang’. / That secret place…dreaming there” (Neidjie Story 80).

Within this context, Neidjie’s stories reveal his contemplation and management of knowledge sharing with appropriate audiences. This is explicitly shown through his discussion of Business and Law: “E said… / ‘I make this one…but secret! / No kid, no woman, no young fella, / unless they get in that Ring-place before e can / see’”(Neidjie Story 79). Further, this is reinforced through other parts of the text that make a very strong claim and urge non-Indigenous Australians to start developing a better relationship with the lands we inhabit, lands that are alive with various Aboriginal ancestral beings, lands that need to be respected.

Listen carefully, careful
and this spirit e come in your feeling
and you will feel it…anyone that.
I feel it…my body same as you.
I telling you this because the land for us,
ever change round, never change.
Places for us, earth for us,
star, moon, tree, animal,
no-matter what sort of a animal, bird or snake…
all that animal same like us. Our friend that. (Neidjie Story 19)
One strategy through which non-Indigenous people can start developing better relationships with Australian landscapes, without appropriating Indigenous cultures or exposing sacred knowledges, is to start developing a feeling, a respectful connection, an understanding of the connection between person, place, animal, plant life, and the sky.

The ontologies informing SLM Neidjie’s geosophical position are represented throughout the text through Neidjie’s use of language. In particular, Neidjie’s work challenges western geosophical positions which place humans as the centre of knowing and the environment. This quality of Neidjie’s work is reinforced through his consistent use of personal pronouns of “e” (he) and “im” (him) to refer to all manner of things, such as stories, animals, plants and people. The use of personal pronouns is then combined with other action words to give these objects human-like qualities, such as listening, speaking and types of movements, to create instances of personification.

We think.
Story we think about, yes.
Tree...yes.
That story e listen.
Story... you’n’me same.
Grass im listen.
You’n’me the same...anykind.
Bird e listen...anykind, eagle.
E sit down. E want to speak eagle eh?
Im listen. You listen...eagle.
Because e put im through your feeling.
But for us eagle...
all same. (Neidjie Story 18)

Neidjie’s consistent use of personification places all of these objects into the same category; it creates a sense of sameness or connectedness amongst them, and in doing so, privileges them equally as part of the same environment. However, it should be noted that my analysis of personification may be colonising if it
positions the use of this technique as purely a poetic function of language or a stylistic choice for language use, because that would deny Neidjie’s geosophical position, which is informing the choices surrounding those instances of language use. My claim that this is personification is informed by my western education of literary studies, in which personification is a literary device that involves the imbuing of an object with human like qualities. Offering a purely literary reading here would privilege western ideas about literature over Neidjie’s epistemological beliefs, and could be an act of epistemic violence. The literary concept of anthropomorphism that informs my reading here reveals that I have approached the use of language in the text from a position informed by western epistemologies, where I have privileged humans over other species. By contrast, SLM Neidjie’s use of language emphasises his concept of feeling by speaking about all parts of the environment consistently with the same language used to talk about humans; Neidjie displays a respect that positions all parts as equals. This emphasise highlights Neidjie’s subjective experiences with his environments, including those that involve emotion and spirituality, as a key source of geographic knowledge.

The use of personal pronouns and personification occurs throughout the entirety of Neidjie’s texts, and presents as a geosophical conflict for consideration when I read the text. The use of personal pronouns and personification represent the “feeling” that Neidjie discusses throughout his stories. It is this feeling that demonstrates that Neidjie is speaking from an epistemological position that identifies with nature. A conflict arises in the reception of Neidjie’s text based on this feeling as an epistemological position because it could potentially be different to the ways of knowing that an audience is familiar with or accepts as valid, potentially discounting feeling and emotion as a source of knowing. This potential risk affected both my own interactions with the text the first time I read Neidjie’s work and students’ responses that I am aware of. If an audience was not open to listening to ideas from an epistemological position dissimilar to their own, all would be lost when interacting with this text. An EDG provides a scope for
reading at points of conflict such as this, by striving for an a-colonial reading position.

As part of the meta-critical process that enables me to strive for an a-colonial reading position, I need to reflect on my position at this point of conflict. Part of this reflection requires me to unpack the notion of inaccessibility in relation to SLM Neidjie’s work. For me, as a non-Indigenous reader approaching the text from a western-informed literary position for me SLM Neidjie’s text was inaccessible. Further, for a non-academic mainstream popular culture reader, an audience reading for pleasure and leisure, Neidjie’s text may also be deemed inaccessible or not even considered an option as an everyday narrative for enjoyment. For other audiences, SLM Neidjie’s work may not be classified as inaccessible. As a western-educated literary critic, schooled in the Australian literary tradition in which Aboriginal literature has traditionally been placed on the periphery as other, my initial approach to the text was colonised by these aspects of my geosophical position. Initially, I assumed that the text was monocultural, because it focuses on a singular world view and does not operate at a cultural interface. As I engage with the text through an EDG approach I can see that it does offer a particular world view; however, it attempts to explicitly and implicitly engage with cultural interfaces from that perspective. My ignorance of seeing the world from that perspective makes it harder for me to identify how the text is operating at cultural interfaces. The cultural interfaces were not obvious to me from my colonised position, but approaching the text a-colonially is slowly revealing this aspect to me throughout my reading. This reinforces to me that the nature of reading itself is not a stagnant operation, but rather a space for negotiation, a network for interaction.

Reading Neidjie’s work highlights the ways in which an EDG could allow appropriate non-Indigenous access to a text imbued with a range of Indigenous knowledges. This access, in the form of knowledge sharing, needs to occur because the land is shared, so that the responsibility needs to be shared too; the land becomes a point of connection between the groups. However, it is clear from
reading Neidjie’s work meta-critically that the levels of access to Indigenous knowledges fluctuate. An EDG approach allows me as a non-Indigenous reader to reassess my position in relation to Neidjie’s work and realise that my level of access to land, to the country I live and work within, will be a superficial level of access compared to other people’s. My connection to the land might involve an initial ability to know and to feel, but essentially my level of access needs to be one of awareness. Compared to Neidjie’s connection, this is very limited. In reconciling our different positions, as a critic I need to accept that I will never have a complete understanding of Neidjie’s experiences or knowledge in this area; however, improving my level of access, having an awareness of the deeper connections to country that do exist, is an important part of my engagement with Neidjie’s work. Further, as a non-Indigenous person raised in and living within western ways of knowing, this reconciling between myself and Neidjie raises the awareness that there are other ways of knowing that are not considered in non-Indigenous approaches to land care. Again, part of my responsibility here is to have an awareness of these. In doing so, an EDG approach creates a space for negotiation where feeling is valued and engaged with as an essential way of knowing in Australian environments.

This analysis of Neidjie’s work is important to consider in locating an EDG approach. Making a space for inward ways of knowing is a result of an EDG’s process of subjectification, which highlights the multiplicity of geosophical positions that can then be reconciled with each other. An outcome of this process is that an EDG validates emotional and spiritual ways of knowing represented through Neidjie’s method of feeling. This epistemological approach is not a feature currently offered by postcolonial theories and methods. Even renowned postcolonial and literary theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s work in subaltern studies does not make a space for ways of knowing based in feeling.

Spivak’s work offers a starting point for an EDG, in that it explores decolonisation and considers strategies for decolonising the subject. For instance, Spivak’s discussion of figuration and the mechanics of production provides a
mode of analysing the native informant “figure” within literature and political, cultural and historical narratives (Spivak "Who Claims Alterity?"). Another idea offered by Spivak, which has been drawn on earlier in this thesis and highlighted as a direct influence for my work on an EDG, is the process of “unlearning” as a mode for “measuring silences”, in that it focuses on dismantling a critic’s authoritative claim to objectivity (Spivak "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 296). This process allows critics to work towards decentring privileged positions of authority and colonial discourses surrounding their construction. However, Spivak’s modes for decolonisation are located within the discourses and frameworks of objective and positivist epistemological traditions – traditions that do not make a space for inward ways of knowing within their discourses, a space that Spivak’s work also fails to create. This is one clear distinction between the theory of an EDG and Spivak’s work within subaltern studies. Further, this gap highlights another concern for Spivak’s work on the subaltern, in that without the qualities of subjectification and multiplication of sources of knowledge offered within an EDG approach, Spivak’s work risks offering an assumption of universality in the ontological and epistemological positions informing the subjugated knowledges of the subaltern.

A focus on time and space within Neidjie’s stories further demonstrates the scope of an EDG approach in engaging with various ways of knowing that are often neglected in other academic approaches. The representations of spirit, feeling, and dreaming throughout Neidjie’s text offer notions about time and space that warrant consideration as an access point to Neidjie’s work.

Well I’ll tell you about this story,
about story where you feel…laying down.
Tree, grass, star…
because star and tree working with you.
We got blood pressure
but same thing…spirit on your body,
but e working with you.
Even nice wind e blow… having a sleep…
Neidjie’s explanation of feeling shifts the reader’s focus to ideas about spaces as it suggests something that is both inside and outside of the person: “In yourself…feeling” (Neidjie Story 102), “because that spirit e with you” (Neidjie Story 2). The story itself occupies both internal and external spaces; it exists both within you and around you. Neidjie’s explanation offers an understanding of how space interacts with people by creating inner spaces, external spaces, and liminal spaces. It is these liminal spaces that are essential to engage with feeling. Neidjie urges readers to locate themselves in these liminal and inner spaces of learning and awareness.

Throughout the beginning passages of the text, these inner and liminal spaces are signified through the images of “laying down” and stars, which positions the person listening to the story in a dreaming space that allows a relatedness to land to transpire. The references to night (stars, sleeping, lying down, night time) inform my interpretation of a “dreaming space” here.

This story e listen carefully, e listen slow.
If you in city well I suppose lot of houses,
you can’t hardly look this star / but might be one night you look.
Have a look star because that’s the feeling.
String, blood… through your body.
That star e working there…see?
E working. I can see.
Some of them small, you can’t hardly see.
Always at night, if you lie down…
look careful, e working…see?
When you sleep…blood e pumping.
So you look… e go pink, e come white.
See im work? E work.
In the night you dream, lay down, that star e working for you.
Tree… grass… (Neidjie Story 3)
However, it is through reconciling my reading of a “dreaming space” here with the text and our respective contexts that I am able to take this reading past a simple act of reading symbols for sleeping and dreaming. Firstly, my use and understanding of the word “dreaming” need to be reviewed. In my use here, I am drawing on an understanding of “dreaming” as the mental activities that occurs while sleeping. However, the use of the word “dreaming” from a geosophical position informed by Aboriginal ontologies could take on a variety of different understandings as a word used to refer to ancestors, relationship to country, spirituality, and/or narratives about country. In my reading here I make a connection with lying down as signifying the act of sleeping, an act in which one dreams. However, Neidjie’s “laying down” is not what I perceive as the usual act of sleep. Neidjie actually shows this representation of sleep here to mean the opposite: it’s an awake state in which the person listening to Neidjie’s story needs to pay attention, especially when looking at stars. “Some of them small, you can’t hardly see. / Always at night, if you lie down… / look careful, e working…see? / When you sleep… blood e pumping” (Neidjie Story 3). In my reconciling of my ideas about a dream space experienced while sleeping with Neidjie’s concept of laying down, I interpret Neidjie’s message as being that a person can only access feeling through a entering a mindful space where they can consciously engage with it; the listener needs to really position themselves well to hear this story and understand the story of feeling. Further, Neidjie’s repetitive discussion of the stars and their relationship to “laying down,” including the description of the star offered here in which the star works and pumps blood, establish a sense of connectedness in my reading. Although I do not fully understand Neidjie’s representation of stars throughout the text, I feel they are positioned as an important part of his story about feeling. My attempts at interpreting Neidjie’s representations of the stars and their meaning as symbols in a purely literary reading might westernise, colonise or devalue the important ideas Neidjie is communicating about the relationship between stars and the act of “laying down” from his geosophical position because of my superficial access to country and Indigenous knowledges. An EDG approach allows for critics to recognise the limits of their own understandings.
Meta-critically, to take this reading a step further, this act of “laying down” could also represent ideas about Indigenous ways of knowing. By engaging non-Indigenous readers on common ground, with ideas about stars in the night sky and notions of sleeping, Neidjie subtly introduces ideas about Aboriginal ontologies that inform his geosophical position. This targeting of a non-Indigenous audience could be interpreted through his reference to urbanised spaces, removed from Bunitj country: “This story e listen carefully, e listen slow. / If you in city well I suppose lot of houses, / you can’t hardly look this star / but might be one night you look. / Have a look star because that’s the feeling” (Neidjie Story 3). In reconciling this with my own geosophical positions, as an academic reader and educator, I find this an important interaction with the text to consider. This passage could be interpreted as a comment about non-Indigenous people’s ignorance of Aboriginal epistemologies, such as using narrative, spirit and feeling as liminal spaces that represent a place of education, and learning and knowing.

In the continued construction of these liminal spaces, throughout Neidjie’s stories, the wind becomes a metaphor for spirit because it moves between spaces; it is a sensation that touches and can be felt by all – humans, trees, grass, dirt, fish, stars, and water.

That tree now, feeling...
e blow...
sit quiet, you speaking...
that tree now e speak...
that wind e blow...
e can listen. (Neidjie Story 18)

In touching all, the wind represents the spirit that connects everything in country, reflecting Neidjie’s central message that it is vital to develop feeling because it is feeling that facilitates an awareness or connection to the wind, and it is through that connection to wind that a relatedness to space, to land, to country, and to knowing, learning or awareness can be established.

Wind for us.
That way e come blow wind
and you feel it lovely, nice,
feel it cold now...lovely.
And I love it that wind.
That wind is wind for anybody... no-matter who. (Neidjie Story 16)

And that wind e blow, blow, blow, blow
an e can listen leaf
and you feeling yourself,
your body yourself,
you feeling...
“Ahh...good sleep! I’ll listen that wind.”
Because e talking to you I suppose.
You go sleep. E say...
“Well you might good sleep.” (Neidjie Story 16)

Returning to the idea of lying down and sleeping and the liminal space of knowing that it represents, Neidjie connects spirit to the nighttime by being outside. The wind provides relief from the hot weather, ensuring that those who feel the wind will have a “good sleep”, a strong feeling and connection to spirit. The success of Neidjie’s metaphors here relies on the reader’s familiarity with the weather in Australia, namely the extreme tropical conditions experienced in the northern parts of the Northern Territory where Kakadu is located. It is the combination of extremely hot temperatures and humidity caused by moistures in the air from the wet season in which the wind, a cool breeze is a most welcomed relief. Further, Neidjie’s passages about the wind reinforce the need to be outside, “That’s why I’m outside. Last night...oh, e blow wind” (Neidjie Story 17). Perhaps this need to be outside adds comment on how colonisation has affected people’s relationship with land and changed access to laying down and looking at the stars in the night sky. In a shift to the meta-critical here, I need to remember that reading is not a stagnant act, and by attempting to interpret and define an outcome for Neidjie’s stories I risk westernising the ideas within them. This
discussion explores my navigating an interaction with the text, so that I may access the work in a non-superficial and develop some understanding of it. This involves a constant negotiation of my process of reading as a non-Indigenous reader, of my thinking about the text in relation to Australian contexts I have experienced, and my thinking about the text from educational and literary perspectives, while concurrently unlearning the need to prescribe answers onto a work, which is a product of my own learning experiences in literary studies.

Neidjie continues to provide more information about the nature of these liminal spaces of knowing, which a reader could access through a geosophical analysis. Throughout the text, the recurring references to death and ancestors functions as representations of the ways in which feeling and dreaming construct understandings of particular interactions between time and space.

E’ll be there million, million…star.
Because e stay, e never move.
Tree e follow you’n’me,
e’ll be dead behind us but next one e’ll come.
Same people. Aborigine same.
We’ll be dead but next one, kid, e’ll be born.
Same this tree.
Star e’ll stay for ever and ever. When you laying down in the night, look that star.
I was. I look star.
I remember back when I was young. (Neidjie Story 4-5)

But never change I say.
This culture belong to us.
In our body with this, this story. (Neidjie Story 103)

And all my people all dead
but we got few, that’s all.
Not much, not many…getting too old
an young-fellas I don’t know they hang on this story.
All my uncle gone
but this story I got im.
They told me, taught me
and I can feeling.
Felling with my blood or body,
feeling all this tree and country.
While you sitting down e blow,
you feel it wind
and same this country you can look
but feeling make you. (Neidjie Story 168)

In particular, these references offer a consistent construction of place, in that the space is imbued with meaning through intergenerational knowledges about country, which suggests a construction of place through a continuing and ever-present relationship. Throughout the text, this ever-present relationship between knowledge and country is represented through the image of the star, “Star e’ll stay for ever and ever. / When you laying down in the night, look that star. / I was. I look star” (Neidjie Story 4-5). In the story about feeling, the never-changing star functions as a symbol for how never-changing knowledge is connected to law and culture: “law e said… / ‘Never change!’” (Neidjie Story 102). In constructing a sense of place, this relationship also reveals how the occupying of particular spaces can function as a process for learning and knowing. Not only can these spaces be sites that are external to the body, such as country or the exclusive Ring-place; but Neidjie also highlights the existence and valuing of inner spaces of learning and knowing through the concept of feeling. Moreover, the reference to the movement of the wind in this passage, “you sitting down e blow, / you feel it wind” (Neidjie Story 168), reinforces the importance of spaces that are fluid and transcend physical boundaries in Neidjie’s construction of place.

In approaching Neidjie’s text through an EDG reading, not only are readers able to engage with the ideas of the narrative from a literary perspective, but they can also engage with epistemological ideas about the text and their own reading of it.
Exploring the representations of spirit, feeling, and Dreaming within the text as reconciled to both Neidjie’s and my own geosophical positions has introduced to my reading Aboriginal ontologies and epistemologies that are often blocked by critical reading practices within the boundaries of the academy’s “brick wall”. Through the process of reconciling a text with its and the critic’s contexts, an EDG approach facilitates an analysis of representations of geosophical positions informed by epistemologies from either side of the academy’s “brick wall”, while concurrently discussing the epistemes which inform them.

In reconciling Neidjie’s texts with its contexts further, it is important to consider the ways in which the work has been studied and used. Recently, Michael Farrell offered a geopoetic approach to analysing Neidjie’s text by focusing on “a new affective paradigm” that borrows from the psychological concept of “affect,” which focuses on the complexity of emotions felt in a particular circumstance – in this case it is the complexity of emotions expressed about Neidjie’s relationship with the earth (Farrell 6). Two similarities between Farrell’s approach and an EDG approach are the shared focus on language analysis and the central themes of relationships with land. However, the key difference is the reductive nature of Farrell’s analysis. One key example of the reductive approaches to reading employed by Farrell is his analysis of Neidjie’s use of language. In particular, there is no attempt to decentre western literary analysis used to engage Neidjie’s use of personification or personal pronouns: “Neidjie also insists on the tree’s agency; like a person it isn’t just there to be admired” (Farrell 7). Farrell does not attempt to consider other geosophical positions in which the human is not centred in his focus on agency and affect. In Farrell’s analysis of pronouns, namely the use of “e” in Neidjie’s work, the discussion only extends to a consideration of its gender neutrality (Farrell 1). Farrell’s study of language here is reductive in that it offers a consideration of language and language use as only communicating or reflecting one geosophical position, that of the critics.

Further, an affective paradigm, as offered by Farrell, works to perpetuate epistemological apartheid by uncritically locating Neidjie’s work into a dominant
western literary framework. From within this western literary tradition in which the emotive and the earth are both romanticised, Farrell attempts to position and locate Neidjie’s work through comparing it with the works of romantic poets, such as Keats (Farrell 7). In doing so, Farrell is effectively relinquishing Neidjie’s work to a place beyond the academy’s “brick wall” as the exotic other via a discussion of Neidjie’s lack of adherence to the poetic conventions of the western canon Romantics in order to establish a case of difference for this new affective paradigm. This approach is problematic because it locates Neidjie’s work within pre-existing western frameworks, and further, positions Neidjie’s concept of feeling as a poetic style – excluding it from the realm of epistemology. A geosophical approach would refocus the relationship with land analysed at an emotional level within Farrell’s work as means of knowledge construction. Rather than limiting Neidjie’s work to a discussion of poetics, an EDG approach would open up this analysis for an epistemological negotiation between Neidjie’s and the critic’s geosophical positions, which is absent in Farrell’s discussion of aesthetics and emotions. In this instance, an EDG approach is creating a space in which the emotive representations of land and connection to country can be analysed as representations of Indigenous ways of knowing, and valued as such within the academic arena. In this way, an EDG extends the centre of literary analysis from aesthetics to engaging in epistemological discussion. By drawing on a geosophical discourse, multiple sources of geographic knowledges can be validated, which requires a meta-critical process that decolonises the critic’s own reading practices.

In locating an EDG approach with other contemporary approaches to reading Neidjie’s work, it is vital to emphasise two distinguishing features of an EDG approach. Firstly, an EDG approach allows a space for considering various modes of knowing. Secondly, it offers a framework for negotiating various modes of knowing. This is important, because Neidjie’s notion of feeling complicates objective ways of knowing which are often privileged within the academy. Therefore, if Neidjie’s work is to be accessible within the academy, critics need an approach to critical reading practices that not only validates and reads for multiple ways of knowing, but also provides them with tools for operating such a process.
SLM Neidjie is sharing knowledge about lawful behaviour, of knowing and learning the law that governs relationships with land. For a non-Indigenous reader, what is unique about Neidjie’s work is that it demystifies cultural myths associated with Aboriginal knowledges about the land that reduce them to being solely about the protection of sacred sites, by moving us forward to a position that focuses on improving all individuals’ relationship to land. Upon reflection and reconciling my reading with Neidjie’s work, my ideas about relationship with land are challenged as he positions land as both a person and a resource: “Ground…/ We hang on. / This earth for us. / Just like mother, father, sister. / Me, I say… / ‘Just like you’n’me brother or father.’” (Neidjie Story 146). This perspective offers a sense of balance and respect in Neidjie’s understanding of land, the land is for us, but it must also be treated like us. Moreover, there is a sense of kinship underpinning Neidjie’s position of land here. For me, adding a sense of kinship adds value to the relationship with land by introducing a set of emotions associated with family. This could be seen as substantially different to non-Indigenous relationships with land that are often more objective, and do not allow for a sense of emotion.

Christine Black’s reading of SLM Neidjie’s work is one that attempts to position Neidjie’s ideas about land and feeling as an important knowledge source for informing ideas about law within the Australian legal realm (C. F. Black The Land Is the Source of the Law; C. Black). In doing so, Black attempts to create a space for emotive sources of knowledge in the field of law informed by SLM Neidjie’s ideas about feeling, by positioning land as an “Australian Indigenous legal logos” (C. F. Black "Feeling the Djang” 25). One successful example of Black’s attempt to creating a space for emotive ways of knowing is her revisiting of the notion of intellectual property law through this positioning of land:

SLM Neidjie then goes on to point out that ‘Dreaming places’ are also an extension of the ‘relatedness to land’ – they are there for everyone as repositories of Dreaming stories. But this is as a
responsibility, not as a right. ‘Must keep it. You must keep im
story/ Because e’ll come through your feeling. Even anybody.’
Access to them is through having feelings. ‘E can see . . . have a
look!’ This open invitation is a profound statement in itself. On the
one hand, it explains the popular Aboriginal saying of ‘I’m going to
sit down country’, which means ‘I am going to sit down and listen
to the country’. On the other hand, it is a major paradigm shift in
the intellectual property notion of regulation. This would seem a
breach of Aboriginal intellectual property, but instead it is a clever
safeguard against humans’ obsession with their own rights to have
and control information. By ensuring access is only through having
feelings for a Dreaming site, this ensures a built-in way of ensuring
the visitor will not damage or steal from the site. It is a safeguard
against ‘abstraction’ – where knowledge is gained through memory
and analysis; if anything, ‘objectification of the knowledge’ is a
prerequisite to authority over that knowledge. (C. F. Black "Feeling
the Djang" 35-36)

Black’s analysis and insights here demonstrate the importance for scholars,
literary or otherwise, to engage with emotive modes of knowing. The value of
accessing multiple ways of knowing is that it moves academic practices outside of
the “brick wall,” expanding the potential for deeper and varied understandings.
However, the task that still remains at hand for an EDG is navigating ways in
which readers can operationalise approaches to multiple sources of knowledge
and juggle concurrent interactions with multiple ways of knowing.

It is interesting to note that there are not many literary investigations into
Neidjie’s work. However, deeper analyses of Neidjie’s work are from the fields

33 For examples of some literary readings of Neidjie’s work see:
Susan Bally, “Bill Neidjie’s Kakadu Man: The Genesis of a Story,” Commonwealth Essays and
of the Association of Australian Literature 13 (2013), 5th December 2013

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of anthropology, philosophy, environmental studies and law (C. F. Black "Feeling the Djang"; C. Black; C. Morris; Plumwood; Sansom; Williams), some of which attempt to make space for Neidjie’s epistemological positions within their disciplinary frameworks. Black notes that from a legal perspective, Neidjie’s work offers ways of thinking about the construction of and applying of law (C. F. Black "Feeling the Djang" 24-25). In particular, the notion of feeling provides a mode of internalising law that focuses on environment to guide the construction of laws (C. F. Black "Feeling the Djang" 24-25). Black suggests that this operates in a similar way to human construction of legislation in that, despite its subjective origins through the internalised process of feeling informed by land, any knowledge obtained through feeling just as knowledge obtained through objective scientific practices, is then validated through their respective community.

In reconciling Neidjie’s text further with its contexts, one aspect to consider would be the text’s style. From my reading position as a western literary critic, SLM Neidjie’s text is unique as it does not easily fit a particular literary text type. In terms of reception of the text, this could be problematic. From a Western literary perspective, the act of labelling the text is difficult because the text does not easily adhere to common literary categories. The work is more akin to non-fiction prose and short stories, as opposed to other labels such as “Aboriginal philosophical poetry” (C. F. Black "Feeling the Djang" 26) or poetry (Farrell). These short stories are organised into loose theme-based chapters. The editor of the text, Keith Taylor describes the works as transcripts, which is important for the audience to consider. These stories were not originally produced in a written format, but rather are spoken texts adapted to the written form for publishing purposes. Black’s account of Neidjie’s work labels the short stories as “oratories” to acknowledge their “spoken and public quality” (C. F. Black "Feeling the Djang" 25). From a legal perspective, Black questions whether Neidjie’s texts should be viewed as more sacred or more ceremonial than other examples of popular literature (C. F. Black "Feeling the Djang" 25). However, from my
experiences with Australian literature and post-colonial studies this could prove problematic because it would potentially encourage romanticising “otherness” of the work by a non-Indigenous audience. Black’s point is an important one for academics, including literary critics, to consider. How do we ensure that the material within the text is treated with due respect? Additionally, it is important to reconsider a critic’s use of categorising labels for Neidjie’s text, as this may influence readers’ expectations for the text or promote colonisation of the work through categorising the material in a way that reduces or limits the cultural or artistic justice of its assessment.

However, shifting centres in reading SLM Neidjie’s work, within an Indigenous context, my claim about the problematic nature of classifying the text would not hold true given a change in parameters and expectations for narratives. Further, thinking about Neidjie’s text at the cultural interfaces between western and Indigenous approaches and understandings about narratives may expose other issues in our assessment of the work. Reconciling the reception and presentation of Neidjie’s text at a cultural interface, brings to light other considerations for critics engaging with the work and their own geosophical positions, namely issues concerning the use of oral literacies and print publication. In this instance, I return to a consideration of SLM Neidjie’s use of language and notions of literacy used within my interactions with the text.

The language used throughout SLM Neidjie’s text is a result of oral narratives being transformed into a written work. SLM Neidjie’s text is spoken and written in Aboriginal English. The use of language is significant here because it interacts with expectations and notions of literacy that a reader brings to the text, and could potentially have a reductive or colonising effect on the work and the critic’s interpretation if not addressed within the reading process. As a non-Indigenous academic reader and educator, I approach all texts with expectations informed by my professional positions which include the use of formal language, grammatical structure, and Standard Australian English. Language and literacy contributes to my initial positioning of SLM Neidjie’s text as inaccessible, because there is a
disconnection between myself (as the reader) and the text based on language. Approaching these concerns meta-critically in my readings, I considered what other readings could be espoused here based on language and literacy terms? Black’s work offers an example of another reader negating their expectations of language and literacy, by classifying SLM Neidjie’s narratives as “oratories” and as “having a yarn” (C. F. Black "Feeling the Djang" 25-26). This shift in classification allows Black to re-centre the nature and style of the narratives within an Indigenous framework of language and communication. For me, one shift in my expectations and analysis of language usage was the re-centring of my understanding of “colloquial” in approaching SLM Neidjie’s narratives. This required me to decentre the positions informing my application of the term - my professional position, as an English teacher, and my predominant understanding of Standard Australian English, in which I apply the term to informal language, such as slang, that is conversational and inconsistent with the language used in professional documents or formal writing. Re-centring my reading within a dominant context of Aboriginal English language usage, I could consider SLM Neidjie’s use of Bunitj country specific terms or lingo as instances of colloquial language; a point that Neidjie, himself, alludes to: “Gunmurrurgurrurr they say, but my word, / my mother-word…Yiwurrum” (Neidjie Story 40). I interpret these instances as such because they are inconsistent with the main language used throughout the text. Further, I applied the same expectations to language analysis as I do in reading documents written in Standard Australian English, in that the language needs to be clear and unambiguous, so that any reader can pick up the text and comprehend the language. From my literary and academic expectations, if there are words that are relative to place or culture (such as Australian slang terms); I classify these as instances of colloquial language. However, other readers, such as those familiar with traditional Aboriginal languages or socio-linguists, would be able to interpret Neidjie’s language use in other ways given their knowledges and skills that inform their gesosophical positions.

The colonisation of Indigenous narratives through English language and modes of written publication is not a new issue in post-colonial literary studies, nor is it the
main focus of this chapter (Heiss *Dhuulua-Yala*; Grossman; Kurtzer; Muecke "Aboriginal Literature and the Repressive Hypothesis"; Narogin *Writing from the Fringe*; Narogin *Milli Milli Wangka*). However, in reconciling Neidjie’s work to their contexts and in striving for an a-colonial reading position, it is something critics must revisit and consider in their work. Thomas King discusses at length the problems with publishing Indigenous oral stories, including the removal or dislocation of the knowledge they hold from the person, time and place from which the stories are connected (King *The Truth About Stories*). A shift to print medium can be seen to complicate the rarity and value of an oral narrative from some Indigenous perspectives by dislocating the narrative from the people, place and purpose in which it was inherently linked and by making what was traditionally an intimate and exclusive story, given the oral delivery of the material and the relationship between storyteller and audience that transpires, accessible to a wider audience through a shift to print (King *The Truth About Stories* 113-14 and 53-54; Narogin *Milli Milli Wangka* 138-39). However, in *Story About Feeling*, SLM Neidjie offers narratives in print form that are clearly linked to place, working to re-locate ideas about law and land in country, and to engage and locate readers personally through an awareness of feeling.

SLM Neidjie’s stories about Warramurraunungi, Oobarr and the King Brown Dreaming explicitly reinforce the connection between the story’s purpose, people, and place (Neidjie *Story* 39-56 and 77-106). The very themes and focuses of SLM Neidjie’s work lay in opposition to these scholars’ ideas about dislocation. These stories explicitly offer content that reveals a connection between story and law, and the ways in which land informs law. Neidjie’s focus on feeling as a means of establishing awareness and understanding of country and law functions to locate the individual reader, demonstrating that his work retains the intimacy between the storyteller and audience. SLM Neidjie’s ideas about relationship to place and his urging for his audience to feel, is transferable to other Australian contexts. In this particular case, it allows Australian readers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to reconcile SLM Neidjie’s ideas to their own circumstances, understandings, responsibilities and locations within Australia rather than write
them off as exclusive to Bunitj country; “I speaking story / and this story you got to hang on, no matter who you, / no-matter what country you” (Neidjie Story 166). However, as Neidjie reinforces throughout his text that works to construct the bond between himself and the reader, the responsibility to do so lies with the individual reader, and is a matter that Neidjie explicitly addresses within his work:

If you hard, everybody, everyone of us…
if we fight for country… country e stay way it is.
No-matter they can kill us, run over us, but still fight! (Neidjie Story 152)

Because you love it this world.
Yes, this country, your country, my country…I love im.
I don’t want to lose country somebody take im.
Make you worry.
If somebody take im your country, you’n’me both get sick.
Because feeling… this country where you brought up
and just like you’n’me mother.
Somebody else doing it wrong… you’n’me feel im.
Anybody, anyone… you’n’me feel. (Neidjie Story 153)

If a reader were to apply scholarly ideas about the dislocation of oral narratives from people, place, and purpose through their publication in a print medium dogmatically, SLM Neidjie’s messages here may fail to be heard.

Combining these aspects of SLM Neidjie’s work with the use of location specific languages and visual imagery (artworks and photographs of country) littered throughout the text, presents a staunch reminder of the value of a reconciling ethic for Australian literary critics. The treatment of Indigenous perspectives, experiences and expectations of narrative as universal within a post-colonial literary context is problematic. Internationally, King’s literary work speaks for Indigenous experiences and theories from the northern hemisphere, some ideas offer relevance to Australian literary contexts, but not all. The same holds true for the diversity of experiences and ideas about narrative located within the southern
hemisphere, or even within Australian borders. It is vital for critics to reconcile individual texts and contexts with wider theories.

Conclusion

Eatdirtzian Geosophy opens up academic practices in a way that is inclusive of various ways of knowing, including inward epistemes such as feeling as a way of knowing. EDG is informed by a geosophical discourse that purports the idea that geographic ways of knowing and knowledges about the earth exist in multitude and are developed through a variety of sources. A geosophical discourse provides an access point to texts, opening up the range of epistemological positions that critics can engage with. An EDG provides a framework for critics to operationalise this discourse in their reading practices. This framework consists of occupying an a-colonial reading position through a meta-critical reading practice, and applying a reconciling ethic to their work to ensure a means of interaction between epistemological positions.

This chapter demonstrates that an EDG provides critics with a means for accessing work, even those works that seem inaccessible to them. My purpose for conducting an EDG reading of SLM Neidjie’s Story About Feeling was to explore the ways in which an EDG could allow readers to access and develop some sort of critical relationship with a text that seems inaccessible to them; or in this case, accessing a text whose content has traditionally been located outside of the western academy’s “brick wall”. A significant outcome of this is that this reading demonstrates that an EDG caters for an epistemological discussion by creating a space of interaction. An a-colonial reading position offers critics a shifting centre in which various ways of knowing can be considered, explored and valued in relation to texts, including both objective approaches to knowledge found within the western academy and subjective approaches to knowledge which have often been excluded or not validated within the academy. Embracing inward ways of knowing, such as emotion or SLM Neidjie’s concepts of feeling and spirit is
something not traditionally offered in critical literary practices, and as such, exposes the contribution an EDG could make to the discipline.

Through a geosophical analysis of language, time, and space, readers can gain some insight into the Aboriginal ontologies informing Neidjie’s geosophical positions. Applying the levels of a reconciling ethic as a means of meta-critical practice, by locating these insights into the readers’ own geosophical positions and considering the contexts surround the text, the reader and their interactions, allows the critic to makes sense of the geographic knowledges embedded in SLM Neidjie’s work.

Further, I would like to finish this chapter by making one point very clear to my readers. It is the business of an EDG approach to not just complicate that which has been traditionally subjectified but that which has remained objectified also, protected from the “brick wall”. Where an EDG can actually contribute more to the discipline is through the complication of what is assumed as an accessible text, such as Dorothea MacKellar’s poem My Country, which more realistically runs the risk of being uncompromisingly mono-cultural and colonising. It is here that an EDG approach, with its process of subjectification, meta-critical reading, and reconciling ethic, can better equip critics. The business of this chapter was to demonstrate how one could read a text that seems inaccessible; in my particular circumstances Senior Law Man Bill Neidjie’s Story About Feeling seemed inaccessible while reading through traditional modes of literary analysis. It is important that I acknowledge this point for two reasons. Firstly, I wish to emphasise an EDG approach is not just about accessing “minority” or “fringe” Australian literature. EDG provides a framework that can be used consistently across an array of texts and by an array of people. And secondly, this reading offers the opportunity to continue my meta-critical process and shift the centre of the dominant voice in this thesis, my voice, which is essentially representative of a Eurocentric voice. I cannot not use this voice, however, an EDG creates a space in which I can negate its dominance and authority by giving it an opportunity as part of an ensemble cast to occupy the “hot seat”. This is necessary to ensure that
readers other than myself, regardless of their own geosophical positions, are able to utilise an EDG approach in texts that seem both accessible and inaccessible to them.
Figure 14 Geosophy "encourages" a reluctant Meta-critic to shift centres (image created by Gareth Bryan ©2013 Emma Joel)

Figure 15 The Meta-critic recalibrates his centre through feeling (image by Gareth Bryan ©2013 Emma Joel)
Chapter 5 – Negotiating Literary Self-Determination: reconsidering the case of Anita Heiss’s Chick Lit

We know of course there's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.

(Roy)

This chapter revisits a key component of my argument within this thesis, which is the need for Australian academics and literary critics to reconcile literary texts, theories and discourses, and critical modes of practices with uniquely Australian circumstances. An Eatdirtzian Geosophy’s (EDG) use of a-colonial reading positions, a reconciling ethic and geosophic discourse allow us to work towards this critical reconnection with southern hemispherical experiences. However, to really achieve this reconciling practice, critics and academics need to expose the disconnection between northern hemisphere theory, discourses, and comprehension of colonial life and spaces by reconciling texts and reading practices with their uniquely Australian circumstances. To exemplify and explore these ideas and argument further this chapter draws on the situation of Australian Chick Lit, focusing on the ways in which traditional modes of engagement with Chick Lit texts are northern-hemisphere-centric and do not provide adequate scope for engaging with contemporary Australian women’s writing. An EDG reading of the critical frameworks surrounding Anita Heiss’s Chick Lit narratives *Not Meeting Mr Right* and *Avoiding Mr Right* provides a network of interactions between understandings of genre, cultural authenticity, feminisms, Australian contexts and the critics’ navigation of them. Geosophical discourses reveal frames of reference that shape the way in which people construct and interact with their environments. Striving for an a-colonial reading position is a way of reminding critics to be meta-critical of their own practices and the ways in which their own subjective positions may enable acts of epistemic violence or unintended identity construction. In this way, a reconciling ethic encourages and gives critics permission to subjectify their work and facilitate their intersubjective movement in reconciling a text with its critical contexts.
Rather than completely abandoning traditional modes of practice and critical ideas, an EDG reading of the case of Australian Chick Lit demonstrates an intersubjective practice by engaging traditional critical modes intersubjectively while concurrently reconciling these ideas and modes to unique Australian circumstances surrounding the texts and the critic. In doing so, this chapter demonstrates that an EDG has a real place in literary and academic practices by equipping critics and academics with a mode of critical engagement that helps them navigate new terrains. By studying the new literary territory of Anita Heiss’s Koori Chick Lit genre, this chapter also reveals how an EDG approach in the literary context can move us in the literary field (authors, readers, critics) to a state of literary self-determination and away from more traditional restrictive or colonising modes of practice.

Anita Heiss’s narratives were selected for study because Heiss’s narratives display a consciousness of their subjective positions and their own literary and Australian contexts. The texts explicitly and implicitly offer their readers geosophical insights and intersubjective dialogue between the characters, or the narrator and reader. Heiss’s narratives are a different type of text in terms of traditional women’s writing, in that they move away from traditions of biographical women’s writing and seek to redefine the Chick Lit genre. Her work extends the boundaries of the genre by moving them past a single story of white, heterosexual northern-hemispheric experiences of femininity to multiple stories of femininity, and in doing so, creating a space for Koori Chick Lit within the literary realm. Further, the texts offer, to some extent, their own version of Eatdirtzian Geosophy that is a local, geosophical awareness and reconciling ethic, through this element of self-consciousness. This chapter therefore responds to the questions:

1. In situations when an EDG is offered by the text itself, how can an EDG approach to reading offer something distinctly different to other critical reading approaches?
2. Is it possible for a reader to widen their interactions with a self-aware text?
What this chapter demonstrates is how an EDG can extend a reader’s interactions with a self-conscious text by providing a geosophically informed gaze for critical reading. Further, an EDG critical approach can move the reader outside of the text and reconcile the text with its wider range of critical readings and the contexts associated with the text. The work of this chapter thus exemplifies the outer layers on which a reconciling ethic functions, which were proposed in the Introduction.

Anita Heiss belongs to the Wiradjuri nation, whose country spans a large section of what is now central New South Wales (NSW). Heiss has published poetry, literary criticism, short stories and social commentary, fiction and non-fiction/historical narratives, short film scripts, blogs, and picture books, and has appeared on a number of television programs such as Message Stick and Tuesday Book Club. Heiss has been credited with starting a new sub-genre of Chick Lit, referred to as Koori Chick lit (Warburton; Wyndham) and Choc Lit (Dempsey; Heiss "Onexsameness: Dr Anita Heiss"). She has won a number of awards for her work, including the 2010 Deadly Award for Literature for her novel Manhattan Dreaming, which is one of her Koori Chick Lit texts. It is noteworthy that many of the projects and works that Anita Heiss has been involved in are community based ones, such as her work with the Indigenous Literacy Project and the picture books which she has developed with the students from La Perouse Primary School in Sydney, NSW. Heiss’s level of community involvement and participation is important to highlight as it emphasises the obligation she feels to her Aboriginal communities, emerging from traditional practices of reciprocation within Aboriginal communities, and her sense of cultural ties and responsibilities more broadly, as well as her ongoing commitment to promoting Indigenous literacy and Aboriginal experiences and voices within the wider Australian and international communities. Further, Heiss’s fictional narratives provide their audiences with a variety of explicit and implicit examples of collaborative processes between cultural groups, the ownership of stories and knowledges, and the protocols of producing works that cover Indigenous content or have been developed with Indigenous communities. Given Eatdirtzian Geosophy’s focus on intersubjective practices, these examples are pivotal because they allow us to continue our

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theoretical discussion about reconciling multiple geosophical positions and navigating cross-cultural interfaces, issues of representation and misrepresentation in postcolonial literature, and concerns for Australian literary contexts. Some of these ideas are also explicitly covered in Heiss’s non-fictional work *Dhuuluu-Yala (To talk straight): Publishing Indigenous Literature*, which has been drawn on elsewhere in this thesis.

Contemporary Chick Lit can be critiqued in a number of ways and is a highly contested genre within academic literary criticism. The reconciling of critical readings and potential approaches to Heiss’s narratives not only offers an understanding of the genre and its literary value, but also highlights the various positions that limit or add to and construct that value within Australian contexts. In extending a reader’s interaction with a text, the reconciling ethic and metacritical practice of an EDG reading provides the reader with the ability to engage critically with the contexts surrounding the text and themselves. In a reconciling discussion of Heiss’s work this EDG reading will draw on other criticism of the texts and other modes of engagement with Chick Lit, including a focus on the genre of Chick Lit, feminist discussions surrounding the work and the genre, transnational approaches to the work and approaches to Aboriginal Australian literature. This example also demonstrates how an Eatdirtzian approach might reconcile discrepancies that are found within the different reading practices themselves. A reconciling approach ensures that a critic is able to move between different reading positions, and therefore allows a non-exclusive and non-colonising approach to reading and positioning the text in relationship to its wider contexts. It is this feature of an EDG that offers a new intersubjective approach to reading for literary criticism.

Moving from a critical framework with an onus on cultural authenticity to an onus on self-determination

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A reconciling ethic functions on different layers within Eatdirtzian Geosophy. This means that as critics we also need to assess the use of this language not just within the text, but also reconcile its use within the geosophical contexts surrounding the text, such as critics’ use of language in the categorising of Heiss’s novels as “Koori Chick Lit” and the Australian or international reception of the text. Within the wider Australian contexts from which the text has emerged, the term “Koori” refers to Aboriginal people and communities who belong to country located within what are now areas of New South Wales and Victoria. The term acts in two ways, firstly as a source of identification and secondly, by locating Aboriginal identities to both physical and cultural geographies. Some other examples of this language usage are “Murri,” which is used by Aboriginal communities and people that identify as belonging to country in what is now Northern New South Wales and Southern Queensland areas, and “Noongar” (Nyoongar/Nyoongah/Nyungah/Nyungar), which is used by Aboriginal people who identify as belonging to country in what is now South-West Western Australia.

From an Eatdirtzian reading, the implementation of these identifying words, and the use of language more generally, is often a clear indicator of how time manifests within different geosophical perspectives. From a linear perspective of

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34 My use of the word “country” here draws on the meaning of the word when used in Aboriginal English. To explain meaning of the word, I draw on Deborah Bird Rose’s work in which she defines “country”:

Country in Aboriginal English is not only a common noun but also a proper noun. People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country, and long for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy. Country is not a generalised or undifferentiated type of place, such as one might indicate with terms like ‘spending a day in the country’ or ‘going up the country’. Rather, country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life. Because of this richness, country is home, and peace; nourishment for body, mind, and spirit; heart’s ease…Country is multi-dimensional ~ it consists of people, animals, plants, Dreamings; underground, earth, soils, minerals and waters, surface water, and air. There is sea country and land country; in some areas people talk about sky country. Country has origins and a future; it exists both in and through time. As I use the term here I refer to areas of land and/or sea including the subsurface and sky above, in so far as Aboriginal people identify all these components as being part of their particular country.

time, the use of these terms can be positioned as a post-colonial response to the colonial constructs of “Aboriginality” and “Indigeneity”, locating the use of the terms after processes of colonisation. Langton notes that the social construction of “Aboriginality” is not a fixed concept. It occurs as a result of the ongoing intercultural and intersubjective dialogues between blackfellas and whitefellas, whether this be through direct contact between people and their cultures or through the engagement with representations of people and cultures (Langton Well, I Heard It 28-31). Further, the concept of “Indigeneity” (or the label of Indigenous) in contemporary Australian discourses is problematic. As Lowitja O'Donoghue notes, “the term indigenous robbed the traditional owners of Australia of an identity because some non-Aboriginal people now wanted to refer to themselves as indigenous because they were born here” (Australian Associated Press 1).

A geosaphical reading of language can reveal cyclic perceptions of time that inform words, too. The use of terms such as “Koori” offers conceptualisations about movements within time and space by re-introducing pre-invasion understandings of Aboriginal identities as they relate to country and kinship lines into contemporary Australian discourses. An exclusively linear scale of time and history might work to keep pre-invasion and contemporary Aboriginal experiences separated through their distant locations on a linear time line. This contemporary use of language is a way of connecting to ever-present culture and country, despite the interruptions of colonisation and dominant linear measurements of time and history within Australian contexts. These terms subvert the post-federation (colonial) map of Australia and the borders it uses to indicate the boundaries of states and territories, by re-introducing and re-writing Aboriginal perspectives of country and language groups onto the Australian

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35 The Indigenous Language Map is the work of David R. Horton, Indigenous Language Map. To view an online interactive version of the map, please visit the following website: ABC Online Indigenous Language Map - Interactive. For more information about the evolution of the Australian federation map, including visual examples of these maps, please see: Taylor, "A Nation Sub-Divided."
This re-writing of the landscape through a map demonstrates the interplay between the concepts of space and time from the geosophical positions that inform the maps. As discussed in Chapter 1, the projections used in the creation of maps reveal how geosophical positions, in particular individual frames of reference, influence various constructions of landscapes.

Identifying terms such as “Koori,” “Murri” and “Noongar,” can be studied geosophically. The words themselves can be interpreted as a signifier of place-space because they represent the Aboriginal concept of country and function as an identity-locater as they also represent being of a particular place. From a geographic understanding, constructions of “place” occur when a physical location or space is imbued with meaning or purpose. Marcia Langton explains that country “embraces all the values, places, resources, stories and cultural obligations associated with the geographical area. Indigenous Australians’ social and cultural attachment to a landscape or place may derive from a creation story, or from a historic affiliation such as a mission upbringing, and the association may differ significantly from non-Indigenous Australians’ associations” (Langton and Reconciliation 25). Country is established through the social value of place for Indigenous communities in that there is a “continuing social, spiritual or traditional connection to a place” and through recognition of these connections people can “reclaim their history and environmental role” as well as establish “essential reference points for community identity” (Langton and Reconciliation 25). Therefore, Anita Heiss’s use of the word “Koori” is a marker of both cultural and geographical identity, and in this instance the two are not mutually exclusive. Drawing on Langton’s explanation of country, I argue that the use of these markers reveal a sense of place that has been established through a cyclic perception of time being imposed onto particular spaces, as historical time and space interact within a present context to establish an ever-present and ongoing sense of connection and duty to a particular landscape that transcends linear

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36 As done so previously in this thesis, I continue to use the word “Landscape” as meaning artistic discourse to reinforce ideas about how land is represented and landscapes often function as a cultural construct, as noted in: Gibson, “Formative Landscapes,” 49.

37 For the pedants playing at home, I have purposefully used the word “of” here to describe a particular relationship to place that the word “from” does not entirely capture.
understandings and experiences of time. One of the key features of the sense of place that country exhibits is that time works as a conduit that imbues physical locations with meaning for their respective community groups.

In analysing this use of language I need to reconcile my geosophical positions as an Anglo-Australian academic working within colonial and international contexts with the geosophical analysis of this language usage. In doing so, I draw on an understanding that colonial constructions of “Aboriginality” and “Indigeneity” work to dislocate Aboriginal communities and peoples from their country by offering a collective or universal Australian Aboriginal identity or global first nation experience. With this in mind, I consider that the variety of words used as a means of self-identification by Aboriginal peoples and communities, such as “Murri,” “Koori” and “Noongar,” facilitate a re-connection between country and identity, as these words work to re-locate displaced Aboriginal identities to physical and cultural geographies. As such, these terms can play a pivotal role in the defining, locating, studying, and owning of literature and the stories and voices within that literature.

Embracing localised and Australian-specific identifiers in academic and literary practices is a shift towards self-determination for Aboriginal storytellers. This example of language use allows for the reconciling of Indigenous experiences within Australian contexts, which allows critics to refocus on the unique and exclusive experiences of Aboriginal Australian communities. In this way, the words act as a significant reminder that there are a number of Aboriginal peoples and cultures within Australia, and subvert understandings that there is one universal experience of being Aboriginal or a unified “black consciousness” that speaks for all Aboriginal peoples and cultures (Muecke "Aboriginal Literature and the Repressive Hypothesis" 406). The explicit use of cultural markers, when reconciled with contemporary Australian contexts, becomes a valuable act of counteracting or demystifying common stereotypes about cultural identities by explicitly naming and revealing the real instances of identity and experiences that those terms represent. Further, these cultural and geographic markers when used
both inside and outside of Heiss’s texts indicate the scope to which our critical reading practices must extend. Within an EDG approach to texts, it is important that critics consider the ways in which these terms are used to label and position texts, such as Heiss’s Chick Lit narratives.

Heiss’s work is located at an interesting intersection of literary, feminist, western, and Indigenous theoretical positions, all of which demand some level of adherence to their ideologies as a means of determining a literary work’s authenticity and value. As part of the meta-critical reading process of an EDG, critics need to be able to navigate this intersection to destabilise the dominance of any particular theoretical position when reviewing the text. Heiss is extremely self-aware about the strictures placed on her own work and her ability to speak back to these through her work. In her recent memoir, *Am I Black enough for you?* Heiss explicitly identifies how in her real life social and political onuses of cultural authenticity has affected and shaped her own experiences of what it means to be an Aboriginal woman in contemporary Australia; “in many respects whitefella created the ‘politicised Aborigine’ I am today, because I realise now that everything I have become in terms of writing and advocacy has been in a reaction to what other people perceive me to be” (Heiss *Black Enough* 90). This awareness of how social, political, cultural and media forces construct and define standards of Aboriginality in contemporary Australia manifests within the stories of her protagonists too. Ideas about what it means to be authentically Australian and an authentic Australian Aboriginal are brought into the limelight when Peta visits the Victoria Markets in Melbourne. Here she encounters stalls boasting authentic Australian wears, “where generic dot-painted everything seemed to be the flavour of the day” and there were stereotypical images of an authentic “Aboriginal man in a red loincloth, holding a spear” (Heiss *AMR* 246). These ideas about “authentic” Aboriginality are reductive in that they deny Peta’s real (authentic) lived experiences as an Aboriginal women. Peta is aware that this discourse about Aboriginality denies hers; “I was clearly alive and there as a customer, but not as an Aboriginal person” (Heiss *AMR* 247). Heiss demonstrates a critical awareness of the restrictions of discourses establishing authenticity in
her own life, her characters and in her writing. However, where does our responsibility lie as critics? Should the onus always be placed onto the text and the author to locate their work in a way that guarantees a just reading of the work for all readers everywhere? What about other texts and authors which are not as self-aware as Heiss’s work? How can we add something to Heiss’s work that continues this discussion rather than ignores it or reduces it? How can critics and readers negotiate those frameworks that Heiss is self-aware of in our own practices? As critics, what message can we take from Heiss’s work to address the restrictive and colonising traditions rooted in the work we do?

The Australian contexts in which Heiss’s work and her critics reside are simultaneously pre-colonial, colonising, post-colonial, post-Mabo, post-Sorry and pre-Reconciliation. It is these contexts that see Heiss’s fictional works from the sub-genre of Koori Chick Lit or Choc Lit exposed to two core criticisms from literary criticism and social communities. These are: that Heiss needs to account for her cultural identity; and that there is a “dumbing down” (and “whitening up”) of Indigenous issues within these texts (Bolt "White Is the New Black"; Fullerton; Heiss "Paris Dreaming Book Launch"; Heiss Black Enough; McQuire). Such criticisms work from a paradigm of recognition. Heiss’s critics focus on the recognition of difference by establishing particular expectations for “Aboriginal Literature” and Aboriginal women’s writing for her work and then locating it within these frameworks. They also represent discourses of cultural authenticity inflicted onto Australian Indigenous identities that are both rooted in Australian literary tradition and Australian societies at large (Achland; Bolt "White Fellas in the Black"; Bolt "White Is the New Black"; Flanagan; Graham; Muecke "Aboriginal Literature and the Repressive Hypothesis"). It is unethical to assess Heiss’s material purely on the grounds of some arbitrary standard of cultural authenticity, and quite frankly it’s lazy. Whether critics approach the work through a postcolonial reading or anticolonial one, they are applying essentialist standards that deny the work an opportunity to present its potential on its own terms. A geosophical approach to Heiss’s texts would allow Heiss’s novels to speak for themselves at the various interfaces they function from, and in response

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to these criticisms, ultimately destabilising the dominance of any one restrictive critical framework. It allows for viewing authentic Indigenous identities and experiences within the texts through a multiplicity of critical frameworks as critics are asked to approach the text and its contexts a-colonially. For instance, consider McQuire’s review of Heiss’s narratives, which on its own diminishes the value of the work based on the expectations of cultural authenticity informing its interpretations of the text. A critic should be able to construct a more holistic understanding of the work and its value through an intersubjective reading of the work and its critics.

Both *Not Meeting Mr Right* and *Avoiding Mr Right* are littered with social, historical and political discourses from the contexts they emerge from and are received in. In reconciling the texts with their contexts, it is clear that both novels offer a “culturally authentic” representation of contemporary urban Indigenous experiences. This very act of locating the narrative and its characters implicitly embeds into the narrative the construction of geosophical positions for Heiss’s characters. The location of Peta, moving from Sydney to Melbourne, introduces ideas about Indigenous experiences of living off (or outside of) country. These ideas are also dealt with in *Not Meeting Mr Right*, as Alice, who is a Wiradjuri woman, is also living off country on Gadigal land. Locating myself in negotiation with the texts, other critics, and our shared environments I challenge critics’ responses that Heiss’s work is not culturally authentic via discussion of these very representations. By reconciling the representation of living off-country with the contexts of the text I am forced to reconsider how the policies of protection, segregation and assimilation have dislocated and relocated Indigenous people into similar experiences of living and surviving off-country. The placement of Alice in the Sydney suburb of Coogee introduces new ideas about urban Koori experiences and the ways in which relationships to country might have evolved or stayed the same. Heiss speaks to this evolution by joking that she is a “concrete Koori with Westfield dreaming” (Heiss "Paris Dreaming Book Launch"). However, there are some implicit ways in which relationships to country manifest throughout the novels, including acknowledgement of other mobs’ country, the
respect shown by the characters to elders, and characters’ references to Biami (a spiritual ancestor). The insertion of these subtle (and sometimes very explicit) connections to country can remind the reader that for these characters such connections are seamlessly embedded into their day-to-day living experiences within these environments.

An a-colonial reading position enables critics to decentre their approach to text and think about relationships with the process of colonisation from different experiences and critical frameworks. For postcolonial literary critics, engaging with Heiss’s work, and in particular the experiences of her characters, from an a-colonial reading position, the ways in which some people in Australia are still actively colonising or being colonised might become clearer. For instance, when Alice is describing what type of man she would like to meet to her friends she highlights the ways in which she has been colonised via dating previously.

‘And I don’t want him to adore me because I’m Black. I don’t want to be someone’s ‘exotic other’. Do you know how David used to introduce me?

‘How?’ they asked in chorus.

‘This is Alice, she’s Wiradjuri’.

‘What?’

‘I know, I know, and he’d say it to whitefellas, like I was some freak. He didn’t understand it was different when I said it, to place myself. He didn’t need to do it at dinner parties.’

‘So what did you do?’

‘I’d say “This is David, he’s my own personal anthropologist.”’ We laughed some more. (Heiss NMMR 34)

In addition to conversations like this, both novels present many instances where the characters are put into a position to account for their Aboriginality. These explicit dialogues are a stark reminder to critics of the need for a meta-critical practice in which they can account for, and reduce, the ways in which their own centred reading positions objectify or colonise. These scenes become a source of colonial conflict as secondary characters politicise Peta’s and Alice’s identities.
and bodies, similar to the actions of literary and cultural critics. From a geosophical reading of text, these scenes open up an opportunity to explore the significance of the conflict ridden dialogues between different geosophical positions in colonial spaces. An a-colonial reading position allows the critic to facilitate a reciprocal dialogue between the colonised and the coloniser here, and if this is done well, the critic will be able to blend a discussion of the cultural with the literary.

**Authenticity, the body and identity in colonising literary spaces**

In analysing identity and the body in Heiss’s novels, another element to consider is the romanticising of the exotic other both literally on the page through the experiences of the characters and off the page in the reception of the texts. In a recent TEDX talk, Heiss jokes that in real life she finds that romantic dates turn “into cultural awareness workshops” where she has to “invoice the date the next day” for her services (Heiss "Oneness: Dr Anita Heiss"). This critical reflection of the sexualised other transfers into Heiss’s narratives, and in doing so reinforces the meta-Chick Lit quality of Heiss’s work while also expanding Jernigan’s ideas about meta-Chick Lit. When Alice dates Simon, their relationship deteriorates quickly once it is revealed that he intentionally was looking to date a Koori women to further explore his newly found Aboriginal heritage (Heiss *NMMR* 160-67). Simon’s intentions reveal a romanticising of Alice as the exotic other and further reduces Alice’s identity to a limited experience of what it means to be “Koori” (Heiss *NMMR* 163). For Peta, one of the failing aspects of her relationship with James is the way he approaches her Aboriginality with curiosity and by asking her about colonisation and identity, and the assumption that there is a singular Aboriginal experience (Heiss *AMR* 160-63). For the characters the exploration of their Aboriginal identity is not just limited to their romantic relationships, but manifests in their day to day relationships too throughout the novels.
Off the page, in the reception of Heiss’s novels this romanticising of the exotic other continues. The categorising of Koori Chick Lit as a sub-genre of Chick Lit is reminiscent of the positioning of Latino and Sistah women writers in North America on the literary periphery as other, as a result this othering reinforces essential western feminist ideas about women’s literature (Anzaldúa "Haciendo Caras, Una Entrada"; Guerrero). On a global scale critics can reflect on the practices of the literary traditions and treatment of first nation’s literature and the conflicting ideals of inclusion and exclusion from second wave, third wave, and post feminisms when positioning Heiss’s work in the critical literary field. Reconciling these ideas to an Australian literary context, critics must negotiate the intersection of Australian-specific feminist and colonial discourses that attempt to position Heiss’s work as other. As Lisa Guerrero warns the lack of critical engagement with the distinctions between Chick Lit and its sub-genre results in Sistah Lit being viewed “as simply Chick Lit in blackface” (Guerrero 88). This is the risk we potentially face when critics endearingly refer to Heiss’s work as “Choc Lit” because its “characters are brown” (Heiss "Onexsameness: Dr Anita Heiss"). Heiss comments that this label is “fine…because I’ve been called a lot of worse things than that” (Heiss "Onexsameness: Dr Anita Heiss"). However, from an a-colonial reading position, this critical practice is not fine, it is not good enough and it is blatantly unethical because it perpetuates racism, exclusion and epistemic subjugation. The superficial engagement that Guerrero speaks of includes the sole focus on racial difference at the exclusion of discussing anything else of value about the text. Superficial engagement would also ignore the complex cultural interfaces that a text exists, and functions, within. Superficial engagement also allows critics to elude transparency and being accountable for the privileges they exercise when engaging with literature.

The labelling of these novels as “Choc Lit” because its main characters are “brown” could be considered racist. It is racist in that it draws on and reaffirms a stereotype that being Aboriginal is solely related to the colour of a person’s skin; reducing experiences of Aboriginality down to skin colour. As such, this act of labelling is an example of the second category of dialogues that construct
understandings of Aboriginality that Marcia Langton purposes – through the use of “familiar stereotypes and the constant stereotyping, iconising and mythologising of Aboriginal people by white people” (Langton Well, I Heard It 34). Part of the nature of this category of constructions is that ideas and stereotypes about Aboriginality are “inherited” (Langton Well, I Heard It 35), which is exactly the case here. The concept of Aboriginality as being determined by a person’s skin colour is not a new one; it is a legacy handed-down through Australia’s colonial contexts and political discourses. Critics therefore are revisiting this colonialist discourse on culture by once again prescribing what constitutes "Aboriginality". For such critics to tell Aboriginal people and characters who they are and why is not only prescriptive and racist, but it is also reductive. Further, it allows critics to exercise privilege as a false authority in determining what is authentic while simultaneously devaluing real experiences captured by the narratives.

In terms of feminist discourses and the ownership and participation in the literary genre, the labelling of sub-genres by critics is rather problematic, and can work towards denying Heiss her voice and intentions. Heiss is quite transparent about her intentions for writing Chick Lit novels. Anita Heiss claims that her work is about challenging the invisibility of Aboriginal peoples that racism creates, it is about self-determination and identity in that Aboriginal people can define who they are as opposed to being defined based on the distinctions made by others about difference (Heiss "Onexsameness: Dr Anita Heiss"). One of the reasons Heiss writes is to “put Aboriginal people into the Australian literary landscape where they previous have not belonged” (Heiss "Onexsameness: Dr Anita Heiss").

When reconciling our own positions with Heiss’s work here, we need to consider how critics have come at Heiss’s text via genre. From different reading perspectives the significance of using the two labels for the subgenre, Choc Lit and Koori Chick Lit, varies. I need to unpack my reading of this critical interface that Heiss’s work resides in. It could be argued that I am being prescriptive in reading the labelling of the subgenre as Choc Lit as racist. My interpretation of
critics’ act of labelling the work comes from a privileged position as an Anglo-
reader exercising my white guilt. However, within a paradigm of negotiation, it is
not the only interpretation of this act of labelling the subgenre. A paradigm of
negotiation needs to revisit different geosophical positions informing this critical
discussion in a way that privileges the geosophical position of Heiss’s work, not
one of her critics. Shifting centres, a critic would need to consider how these
labels can move beyond functioning in a binary discussion of being marginalising
or distinctive, to a view in which such labels work to empower and not just
denigrate. Critics also need to be aware of how such labels impact and colonise
their own reception of a text, in that they might influence how a reader engages
with the text and its content. Heiss’s critical shift to own and redefine the
subgenre denotes a shift from literary subjugation to literary empowerment, in
which her work can set its own terms of existence for the cultural and literary
interfaces it resides within.

Heiss calls for an approach aligned with the reconciling ethic of an Eatdirtzian
Geosophical approach, through acknowledging sameness we are then able to
share diversity (Heiss "Onexsameness: Dr Anita Heiss"). Heiss notes that
contemporary experiences of Indigenous Australia have evolved from
colonisation; it is my suggestion that perhaps it is time for non-Indigenous people
to evolve from experiences of colonisation too. In a move towards achieving this
evolution, Heiss calls for non-Indigenous people to study themselves more
rigorously with the same type of language surrounding identity that they impose
onto Indigenous peoples (Heiss "Onexsameness: Dr Anita Heiss") – echoing the
vital component of a EDG reading, which requires a focus on language usage and
meta-criticism. Australian academics and literary critics need to realise that the
divisions they establish based on difference, which ignores points of sameness,
cannot move us towards reconciliation. However, in a truer approach to
reconciliation, critics cannot ignore points of difference either while focusing
solely on sameness. An EDG approach, which fosters intersubjectivity and
negotiation, allows for critics to engage with both points of sameness and
difference.
To clarify this point, consider the ways an EDG approach would allow critics to think about Heiss’s work and its location within a network of feminist discourses. The examples of sexuality within her texts are key fodder for feminist discussion. However, discussions of feminism, gender and sexuality are not always going to engage with a universal experience of womanhood; they so rarely present as a point of sameness. In situations like this a critical reading practice needs scope for managing points of difference and diversity in an ethical way and with epistemological equity in mind. As Aileen Moreton-Robinson notes, for Indigenous Australian women sexuality involves “negotiating sexual politics across and within cultures” (Moreton-Robinson xvi), which is clearly evident in the dating scenarios for Heiss’s protagonists. In critical reading practices, the acknowledgement of sameness or difference is not enough; this is especially true when working within feminist discourses. In acknowledging difference and sameness, critics are just allowing the voice of the other to feature within “already established forums” (Moreton-Robinson xviii). True negotiation about diversity needs to decentre and destabilize those normative forums. A reciprocal dialogue needs to talk through experiences of femininity and sexuality that are not established as the norm, as opposed to just talking about them within an established norm of femininity and sexuality. This is demonstrated through Heiss’s use of narration in which Aboriginal female characters are given a voice to talk through their experiences as Aboriginal females, including their experiences of sexuality and gender, as opposed to someone else talking about contemporary Aboriginal females’ experiences. An example of this is the gender expectations imposed onto protagonists, Alice and Peta. The characters’ families reinforce expectations for the two women to marry and procreate, which are similar to many contemporary non-Indigenous Australian women’s experiences of gender expectations:

Aunt had taken to hassling me more since Alice hooked up with Gary. It was like her personal goal in retirement to make sure there were no young, single Koori women in her world. … ‘So many choices for you young girls today, it’s great, but it takes you away
from what women are meant to do, have children, raise families, and be matriarchs.’ Aunt was old school. (Heiss AMR 26)

However, the expectations for these two characters have an undertone of obligation – to ensure their mob’s survival and engage with traditional gender roles of being the matriarchs of their families. These expectations are reinforced by the Alice’s mother in both novels, who shuns lesbianism and encourages the women to seek male partners and heterosexual relationships (Heiss NMMR 55-62; Heiss AMR 28-29). Heiss presents stories in which contemporary urbanised Aboriginal women attempt to balance family expectations of sexuality and gender with social privileges afforded to women through the western feminist movements.

Heiss claims that she writes to counteract her invisibility in the Australian literary landscape as a contemporary, urban, Aboriginal woman. In doing so, her characters’ experiences of dating and sexuality reveal the ways in which they learn and know feminine experiences as Aboriginal women. The characters speak through those instances which position their bodies as a political space, as the sexualised exotic other. In doing so, Heiss’s work offers experiences that centre and privilege Indigenous heterosexual femininities. By embracing and redefining a Koori Chick Lit genre, Heiss is able to shift the dynamics or the “norm” of non-Indigenous western femininity associated with the traditionally white-centric genre, providing a space for Aboriginal women to represent themselves. In reconciling Heiss’s narratives with seminal examples of Chick Lit from the northern hemisphere, such as Sex in the City, the representation of intergenerational female relationships becomes an example of disconnect. While both examples of the genre draw on a group of female peers, Heiss’s literature offers a uniquely Australian experience of Aboriginal femininity through the relationships formed between the women and their elders, both mothers and aunties. Comparatively, the mothers in northern hemisphere literature are either absent or have a less distinctive role within the protagonist’s life.

Further, critics can learn from Heiss’s ability to speak through her invisibility in
this arena. Critics need to be able to attest to their own subjectivities and differences that are invisible in their work, whether these reinforce norms or lay outside of established forums. By using a meta-critical approach critics could evaluate the network of social, political and geographical contexts surrounding the application of the genre and its conventions. In her review of Ruth Frankenburg’s work, Moreton-Robinson states that “racial hierarchies need to be changed in material and discursive forms in order to redistribute power in society” (Moreton-Robinson xix). An Eatdirtzian Geosophy gives critics a platform for realizing this redistribution in two ways: by geosophical discourse providing an access point to ongoing critical discussion of the relationship between power and knowledge from unique subjective positions; and by enabling critics to account for their differences and the discursive frames of references which locate them in the negotiation process.

As part of a meta-critical process, critics should assess Heiss’s own use of the terms “Choc Lit” and “Koori Chick Lit”. I have already mentioned the ways in which markers of identity, such as “Koori,” can be used to locate a person’s identity. Additionally, this discussion of labels and categorizing of literature needs to consider the act of reverse discourse as Heiss uses the language of identity imposed onto Aboriginal peoples by non-Aboriginal peoples by redefining the meaning of that and holding the power over the uses of the terms. In doing so, she is able to define her identity and the identities of her characters, while combatting the invisibility constructed through the identity discourses used by westerners.

Given the legacy from the Australian colonial literary tradition of othering Aboriginal literature, Heiss’s own use of the terms “Koori Chick Lit” and “Choc Lit” becomes rather significant and could be seen as an act of resistance. Heiss claims the terms for her work by re-defining the sub-genre and what it means from a critical Indigenous gaze. Heiss’s ownership of the genre is an act of reverse discourse, one that the simple reading of text via white-centric genre conventions of Chick Lit might overlook. Further, Heiss’s work is located within traditions of writing within Australian contexts, in which the act of writing and the
use of languages became a form of colonial resistance. The introduction of books and writing English language were used as acts of assimilation by European settlers in Australia; for some Aboriginal women writers writing was viewed as using the tools of the coloniser to speak back about their experiences of colonisation (Grossman; vanToorn).

The literary works that fall into this sub-genre clearly draw upon the conventional features of the contemporary Chick Lit genre, in that they feature a female protagonist, have a humorous and entertaining tone, have a high marketability (or commercial) aspect, and target a female audience through their thematic content. Most texts feature prominent themes and experiences from women’s lives in contemporary contexts – such as politics, cultural or social themes, familial structures, the work / life balance, consumerism, feminist issues (especially those arising within a third wave feminist context), issues of relationships, and yes, they also include romantic or sexual themes.38 For instance, Heiss’s work covers everyday experiences from finding the right job, the right housemate, and the right man (Heiss AMR), to engaging with technology as a key experience of contemporary contexts (Heiss NMMR; Heiss AMR; Heiss Manhattan Dreaming). Further, the novels also present a number of contemporary cultural themes affecting women in both local and global contexts, such as debates about banning Muslim women from wearing burqas (Heiss Paris Dreaming).

As a sub-genre, Koori Chick Lit as defined by Heiss has additional conventions that distinguish it from the original genre. It is through these additional conventions that Heiss’s act of reverse discourse, and re-definition of the sub-genre, become apparent. Koori Chick Lit works at creating social awareness and

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38 However, it is important to remember that Chick Lit texts are not what I refer to as “Lady Porn” (aka romance novels or urban erotic fictions) – they are different genres; and in the pursuit of literary and scholarly value for all genres, this needs to be recognised, and individual texts engaged with accordingly. “Lady Porn” is the term of endearment I apply to texts that fall into romance or urban erotica genres that deal more explicitly with sex and sexual themes, for instance the works of Noire or Mills and Boons novels.
change by allowing audiences to engage with Indigenous Australia and Indigenous Australians. Through the inclusion of Indigenous content in the form of perspectives and experiences (both contemporary and traditional), and what I deem “Indigenous product-placement” as an adaptation of the highly commercial nature of the genre, Heiss’s readers (especially those who may not otherwise engage with Indigenous content) are engaging with Indigenous Australia, both implicitly and explicitly. Due to this key feature, Heiss describes her Koori Chick Lit texts as having “a consciousness of Indigenousness” which enables her texts, and their characters, to become politicised (Heiss "Paris Dreaming Book Launch").

In Not Meeting Mr Right the protagonist, Alice Aigner, is a sound example of this politicised feature. As an Indigenous female history teacher Alice offers a number of political stances informed by her subjective positions. There is the promotion of feminist readings of Australian history in the lessons she conducts with her students. These include a consideration of Indigenous experiences of being female within a dominant western framework of feminism:

‘Miss Aigner, only white women got the vote in 1901. Aboriginal women didn’t get it until the 1967 referendum.’ In a class with only one Koori girl, Kerry, it was actually a non-Koori student, Bernardine, who had picked up on this fact. …I once heard feminist Dale Spender say that if a man ever made a sexist remark in public, it was up to another man to correct him, not a woman, and I totally agree. It was the same with race issues. Aboriginal people were always expected to challenge the ignorant whitefella when racist comments were made, when in fact it should be another whitefella doing it (Heiss NMMR 66-67).

These early scenes of the narrative reveal a questioning of “whiteness” that will continue throughout the text in regards to political issues concerning Australian contexts, such as the interrogation of Australian histories.

39 My use of ‘Indigenous’ refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, peoples and cultures.
40 My use of “whiteness” here refers to a dominant cultural perspective and not exclusively the colour of a person’s skin.
As a critic engaged with a reciprocal dialogue with Heiss’s work, I need to reflect on my analysis’ highlighting of this politicised convention and I can do so by reconciling it with our Australian contexts. In these examples, the effect of this questioning is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is supported by Alice’s role as narrator, which ensures that this questioning has an uninterrupted voice offering Indigenous perspectives. Secondly, it facilitates an intersubjective dialogue between characters in which they can account for their own subjective experiences of Australia and political issues such as race relations, feminism and history. Thirdly, it hints towards notions and some understandings of what “Reconciliation” for Australia might look like. This is significant given the post-Sorry41 and pre-Reconciliation42 context in which I am reading the text, and is something that contemporary critics of Heiss fail to acknowledge in her works (Fullerton; McQuire; Ommundsen). These hints towards reconciliation show a distinct movement from the tokenistic ways in which Indigenous cultural issues tend to be dealt with in Australian contexts, by providing an example of the higher level of intersubjective (and cross-cultural) engagement that needs to occur before the country (Australia) can seriously start facilitating Reconciliation proper. This is something I feel quite passionately about, and is one key motivation for my work on Eatdirtzian Geosophy.

When asked by my students, “What is Reconciliation?” I often respond with the adage “How long is a piece of string?” because for many there is no clear answer, yet. Reconciliation is something that cannot be acted on before all parties involved come to a mutual understanding of what it is that needs to be reconciled between them. The politically correct lip service approaches to reconciliation, or what are considered “Indigenous issues” found in most work places, schools and

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41 I use the term “post-Sorry” here to refer to the 2008 event where Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s national apology to the Indigenous peoples of Australia for the Australian Federal Government’s policies governing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which lead to the removal of many Indigenous children from their families and the destruction of Indigenous communities.

42 I use the term “pre-Reconciliation” here to refer to the national reconciliation movement within Australia that is currently being established. This movement seeks to establish better and respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.
institutions in Australia will not further this mutual understanding, because the approaches perpetuate dominant (mostly white and western) frameworks and continue to position Indigenous perspectives on the periphery, which is exactly the case when race relations are labelled “Indigenous issues” rather than “Australian issues”. This labelling implies that the concern or problem, and the onus of resolution, lies with Indigenous communities when really non-Indigenous communities need to start taking ownership of their part in these issues. This is the contextual mentality Australian critics face when literary critics and the community label Heiss’s work as other, as Choc Lit, and in doing so ask her to account for her Aboriginality and marry the texts’ worth to this account of Aboriginality. Politically correct strategies such as these approaches work from a paradigm of recognition. Hage notes the problematic nature of basing these practices on “the verb ‘to recognise’” because the act of recognition “always involves a recogniser and a recognised” (Hage cited in Param and Bemmel). It is not enough to be recognised, there needs to be a shift to a process of negotiation because “…to negotiate does not involve ‘a negotiator’ and ‘a negotiated’. It involves another negotiator” (Hage cited in Param and Bemmel). This is vital, as it promotes a shift from object-subject dichotomies towards subject-subject relationships.

In continuing the examination of whiteness within colonised spaces, Heiss positions her characters as sites of politicised bodies regardless of their ethnicity. In re-establishing the forum or norms for critical discussion, Heiss’s work does not stop with the examination of the Indigenous body as the exclusive site of political, social and historical discourses. Heiss’s work in its self-awareness takes postcolonial feminist readings further than their limited focus on the sexualised black body. She does so by exploring how both white and black bodies, and their interactions – sexualised or not – are both politicised sites within the colonial southern hemisphere. This is emphasised through contrasting characters’ relationship with land, such as when Mike and Peta discuss the number of generations in their families that have lived in certain areas.

‘No, that doesn’t really count in the Koori world, Mike, and to be
truthful, most Blackfellas laugh at the way whitefellas talk about their so-called loooong histories on the land.’ … ‘It’s just that Aboriginal people have been here through ice ages, and whitefellas talk like the First Fleet was the beginning of any human existence here.’ (Heiss AMR 271)

Another example of the body as a politicised site within colonial Australia is when Mike’s identity and body is viewed solely through his occupation as a police officer (Heiss AMR 143-45). For Peta, as an Aboriginal woman, police officers are a symbol for historical injustices experienced by Aboriginal peoples throughout Australia’s colonial history, including Aboriginal deaths in police custody.

This practice of politicising bodies within colonial spaces speaks directly to ideas and experiences of colonial life in that everything we do, everywhere we go, and in all our interactions, there is a legacy of colonialism shaping us. When Heiss’s narratives are reconciled with Australian contexts, this is a stark reminder that for anyone born and living in a colony: we can never escape the historical, political and social discourses that have reconstructed our landscapes. As such, Heiss continues this consciousness of Indigenousness, similar to Senior Law Man Bill Neidjie’s work and ideas in Story About Feeling, by extending it to everyone living on country. In this way, geosophical discourses emerges throughout Heiss’s novels both implicitly and explicitly. This reinforces another element of Australian Chick Lit: it exists and functions through unique connection to location, time and spaces, and the political undercurrents that inform these. As such, the need for an EDG approach for engaging with literature becomes more apparent through the need to reconcile the works by exploring these connections.

Examples of the extension of this consciousness of Indigenousness are most prominent in scenes where the texts and its characters are geosophically self-aware. This can be witnessed in explicit discussions about language and history between various characters within the text. Heiss demonstrates a critical awareness of the geosophically ambiguous nature of language use through her
characters. The ambiguity arises in this scene as Alice’s use of term “mission” is informed by western military principles, whereas Mickey’s use of same term comes out of the history of western colonial practices, and their unpleasant consequences.

I briefed him on my new mission and all he responded with was, ‘Love, unless you’re having a sex change, I can’t help you. And should you actually be calling it a *mission*?’

I’d been ranting about politics and history to Mickey over cocktails for years, so he knew quite a bit about the missions many Aboriginal people had lived on under the Protection Acts. He was right; for many Blackfellas it was a word that brought back a lot of bad memories. ‘Goal’ was definitely a better choice. It sounded more professional, too: ‘I’ve set myself a life-goal of meeting Mr Right.’ (Heiss *NMMR* 64-65)

This awareness becomes a useful technique for Heiss’s writing, because it embeds a critical Indigenous gaze that reviews socio-historical and political discourses from an Indigenous perspective. This allows for the audience to engage with that perspective and also think about their own use of language within Australian contexts, and the language inferences that might arise from their language choices. Moreover, this example demonstrates an Australian context-specific use of language by offering a critical Australian Indigenous gaze; critics or readers unfamiliar with Australian history may not have an awareness of its cultural and historical significance in this particular geography.

The characters of Heiss’s novels represent different experiences of the same Australian contexts. Heiss’s style of narration juxtaposes conflicting knowledges emerging from postcolonial and colonising Australian contexts. Heiss’s protagonists work to centralise an Indigenous perspective of these contexts and as such reveals the privileged position of the white characters within these contexts through the protagonists’ interactions with them. Using a geosophical approach, critics can assess how Indigenous Australian geosophical positions can be privileged through conceptualisations of time and space. In continuing this
analysis of this consciousness of indigenousness, I want to focus on a passage of
text from *Not Meeting Mr Right*. In this passage, Alice attends a function
celebrating a local historian and engages in a discussion with two older,
presumably Caucasian (Anglo-Australian) men, named Suit #1 and Suit #2 in the
text, about the colonial history of their local area and the terminology used to
frame different versions and experiences of Australia’s colonial past and present
(Heiss *NMMR* 280-82).

Alice’s dialogue with Suit #1 and Suit #2 reveals conflicting and different
geosophical perspectives that are shaped within the same contemporary urban
Australian context. From a geosophical perspective, colonisation is a
representation of time and the different perspectives shown here demonstrate how
our understandings of time affect and shape particular spaces, in this case the local
area of Sydney’s Eastern Suburbs.

Before I knew it I was being introduced to Suit #1, who described
himself as ‘a descendant of the people of the area’. I was fairly sure
he didn’t mean he was Gadigal – he would’ve just said so if that
were the case – but I asked him anyway, giving him the benefit of
the doubt: ‘So you’re Gadigal, then?’

‘No, don’t know *that* family. I’m a descendant of the Colllinses –
you know the Colllins family, that’s Colllins with three *els*. There’s
a park named after us.’

I refrained from commenting about the family with the misspelt
name and got straight to the important details.

‘So you’re a descendant of the first family who were *given* a land
grant after the local Aboriginal clan, the Gadigal, were
*dispossessed* of their land, then?’

Both men laughed that belly laugh again, as though I were a child
who had said something cute but meaningless. They were starting
to piss me off. I tried not to raise my voice, but continued,
‘ Seriously, this is a history association – surely you recognise *all*
history and not just that which serves the coloniser?’
‘Of course, you are right, Miss…?’

‘Aigner – Alice Aigner. I head up the history department as St Christina’s.’ They both seemed a little surprised, but impressed. They still hadn’t guessed I was Koori, though. Probably never even met one before, not knowingly anyway.

Suit #1 continued, ‘We here at the Eastern Suburbs Local History Association recognise Australian history, Aboriginal history and prehistory as well.’ (Heiss NMMR 280-81)

In this scene the characters’ discussion of history is a clear example of geosophic discourse. The general notion of history represents an interaction between time and space. In this instance, that notion is flavoured and shaped by Alice’s, Suit #1’s and Suit #2’s own geosophical positions. Heiss shapes these various geosophical positions through the characters’ usage of language. Suit #1’s and Suit #2’s use of past tense (“settled”, “was colonisation”) when referring to Australia’s colonial history reveals that their geosophical positions operate from an understanding where time and space interact through a linear scale. This is in contrast to Alice’s use of language, which emphasises an understanding of Australian history where the process of colonisation is viewed as exactly that, a present tense continuing process and not an event of the past as depicted by Suit #1’s and Suit #2’s perspectives; “Invasion is what happened in 1788 when the boats arrived…and colonisation is the process” (Heiss NMMR 282). This is emphasised when Alice clarifies the terminology for Suit #2, pointing out that invasion was the event that occurred in the past and that colonisation is the process that has been following it since. This use of language and perception of history from Alice represents an understanding of time and space interacting in a non-linear fashion. It denotes significant points; however, it concurrently suggests a continuing or recurrence of events.

In their recent article on Indigenous worldviews Kwaymullina and Kwaymullina discuss the legal and political ramifications of privileging a linear view of time in Australian contexts. Noting that linear perspectives of time possess a highly
relative nature, they allow for a “relational distance” between events of the “past” and the present to manifest (Kwaymullina and Kwaymullina 199). This distance robs the present of the very real effects of the events of the “past” by removing the connection between the two by positioning them on a linear scale, which disconnects the two by placing a significant gap between them. In doing so, it denies a dialogue between what has occurred and how that may continue to shape what is occurring, to be heard. This understanding could help explain the two different understandings of time represented through Heiss’s characters’ language use, in which time becomes a point of geosophical conflict from two worldviews. These understandings of time influence the characters’ respective perspectives of Australian history and the process of colonisation presented in these scenes. Alice’s privileged geosophical position presents the concept of “history” and colonisation from a conceptualisation of time that is defined as “on-going” by Deborah Bird Rose (Rose 26). Time is understood to connect the “distant past” to present realities; in this way it is depicted as “on-going” because events that occurred in the past and shaped the past are seen to have an “on-going” effect on shaping current realities. From Suit #1’s perspective we are offered a linear or “relational” view of time that places a distance between past and present, as discussed by Kwaymullina and Kwaymullina. By having her characters embrace these different understandings of time, Heiss exposes the reality that all of her characters, white or black, are a site of political discourse within a colonised space.

This scene reveals that our cultural identities and understandings of geopolitics play a large role in constructing our individual geosophical positions, and therefore shape the way we comprehend core geosophic concepts such as time and space. Further, what is of particular significance here is that when reconciling these various geosophical positions to an Australian context a question of what and who is considered “Australian” emerges. The way in which the characters define history implies a claim over the ownership of “history” and the space they are discussing. Suit #1’s defining history through categories of Australian history, Aboriginal history and prehistory enters into the rhetoric of defining Aboriginality

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as other and centring his own worldview as the norm. In doing so, his definition places Aboriginality onto the periphery of Australian history, and excludes it from what is considered “Australian”. Alice’s response about “all” history attempts to emphasise this exclusion. In a shift to be meta-critical of my reading here, my analysis is working on a local scale as such ideas about history exclude global understandings of the concept which might extend our understanding of “all” Australian history by reconciling this dialogue with global histories of colonisation or of Australia as a landscape. In order to engage intersubjectively, a more rigorous meta-critical reading here could extend to consider both global and local scales, including northern hemisphere ideas and experiences of colonial histories.

A major issue with the representation of time in Australian Literature is dealing with the postcolonial; this issue appears within Heiss’s text through the geopolitical discussions of history and reconciliation. As a literary critic, Spivak addresses postcolonial discourses as part of her discussions on geopolitics. However, Spivak’s claims to, and work on, the postcolonial appear somewhat essentialist in nature, as they often assume one common experience of the postcolonial (Spivak "The Setting to Work of Deconstruction" 1). This appears adverse to the extensive and non-essentialist work that she conducts in regards to subaltern studies. Upon an Eatdirtzian analysis of the term “postcolonial,” it appears that regardless of the context for application of the term, it is just another imperialist label, as the term panders to a singular view of Eurocentric linear time and history which does not account for its essentialist positioning of time. It offers a singular perspective on the experiences of colonisation as being a “static” occurrence that has since passed, whilst excluding alternate experiences of colonisation that may view it as being past, present or active. By excluding or silencing other views of time, such as a cyclic perception of time conceptualised by some Indigenous cultures, the term fails to incorporate how experiences of colonisation occur within a cyclic perception of history, where colonialism is still affecting the past, present and future. By using an Eatdirtzian approach to texts such as Heiss’s narratives, critics are equipped to consider unique geosophysical
positions which are informed by Australian contexts that are concomitantly viewed as pre-colonial, postcolonial and colonising by different individuals. These different perspectives are demonstrated through the dialogue between Alice and the suits at the historical society function (Heiss *NMMR* 279-83), which remind us of the need for an approach that can address the gaps caused between the disconnection of northern hemisphere postcolonial theories and the lived experiences of southern hemisphere contexts.

A geosophical reading allows the reader to focus on Heiss’s continuing development of this consciousness of indigenousness and the politicised nature of all bodies within colonial spaces through her narratives’ content that explicitly addresses key issues concerning postcolonial and colonising contexts. This reveals another feature of Koori Chick Lit as a sub-genre established and defined by Heiss, in that it has an educating nature. The texts overtly present a number of instances where the characters are explicitly educating other characters and often are simultaneously implicitly educating the reader. In *Avoiding Mr Right*, Peta is situated in a unique position to offer a number of these examples through her role as a “Manager for the Department of Media, Sports, Arts, Refugees and Indigenous Affairs.” For instance consider this dialogue between Peta and an academic linguist, Dennis, who meets with Peta about a potential research project:

‘Indigenous epistemology is just our ways of thinking and theorising, and knowledge via traditional discourses and media,’ I told her, and looked back at Dennis. ‘As a linguist, Dennis, you should be able to understand that Blackfellas who have had the good fortune of education – and in our communities people like Rodney and I are completely privileged because we’ve had an education – we understand there’s a whole language that westerners use to describe, define and locate Indigenous peoples into a particular static place.’

‘What do you mean exactly?’

‘For example, westerners are allowed to evolve and change, but when we do we’re told we’re assimilating. Westerners can become
cosmopolitan but we’re told we’re losing our culture. When westerners intermarry their communities become multicultural, but we’re told our bloodlines are being watered down. See how the language is different for the two groups? But it’s not language that we use, it’s language that’s used for us.’ (Heiss AMR 191)

In this example, Heiss’s readers are exposed to the characters’ discussion of the language used in talking about Aboriginal identity. Such exposure might inspire critical reflection about the readers’ own use of language when talking about identity, and in this way evokes an educational nature of the text. Thomas King highlights that stories have a number of functions, and one of the key functions of narratives is to educate (King The Truth About Stories). One truth about stories that King emphasises is that narratives can be, and can reveal, a key source of knowledge production and re-production, which decentres dominant western understandings that stories are used solely as a source of entertainment (King The Truth About Stories).

Reconciling these ideas about narrative with Heiss’s texts and their contexts reveals the value of these texts in that Heiss has managed to create narratives that are both entertaining and educational: they re-produce ideas about knowledge construction from her particular geosophical positions. In some criticisms of Heiss’s work, this educational feature is both praised and cautioned against, as critics note that there is a fine line between education and didactic literature, and further highlight the risk of these lessons being lost on some audiences (Dempsey; Fullerton; Richard). However, criticisms that attempt to reduce Chick Lit texts to an unredeemable source of entertainment (Mazza) demonstrate the powerful epistemological dynamic between critic and text, as these critics are imposing their own epistemological ideas about the role of narratives in learning, thinking, knowing and education. In doing so, such restrictive criticisms are working to reduce the autonomy Heiss holds over redefining the subgenre of Koori Chick Lit and its educative characteristics.

One only needs to consider recent critical readings of Heiss’s literary work to see
the need for an Eatdirtzian Geosophy in addressing concerns about postcolonial and feminist approaches to reading Chick Lit in Australian contexts. Wenche Ommundsen’s article offers a reading of Heiss’s *Not Meeting Mr Right* and *Avoiding Mr Right* from a transnational and postcolonial framework, attempting to position Heiss’s work within this framework and its expectations for culturally authentic work. From the onset of this review, the reader is introduced to a highly dichotomous dialogue. The title of the piece *Sex and the Global City: Chick Lit with a Difference* establishes this positioning by using the word “difference” (Ommundsen). In the opening line of the piece the phrase “non-Western writers” is used (Ommundsen 107). This reinforces and elaborates on the dichotomy established through the title, identifying non-Western writers as the other, the different, about whom she will be speaking about. As the article unfolds, it becomes more evident how rife it is with culturally loaded terms that are rarely unpacked to reveal any moments of accountability for the subjective reading positions that Ommundsen occupies and how they interact with the subjectivities of the work she is reviewing.

Positioning Heiss’s work as “non-western” is problematic because it denies the western ideas and influences (such as colonialism, Eurocentric Chick Lit, and western education systems) embedded in the vast array of cultural and theoretical intersections at which Heiss’s narratives and their characters actually operate.

I turn on the telly, searching for the sumo wrestlers I must see before I leave Japan. Yoshi says I should stop being such a westerner. But I’m not a westerner, I’m Aboriginal – how can I be a westerner? I am an ‘other’. (Heiss *AMR* 153)

Heiss’s work operates at intersections of western and indigenous feminisms, western and indigenous experiences of urbanised spaces, globalised and localised experiences of Aboriginality, and both within and outside of frameworks of western literary criticism, all whilst speaking to claims about Indigenous’ cultural authenticity and southern hemisphere western and colonial experiences. Critical frameworks for reading need to give critics scope to move between dominant centres and theoretical spaces especially when working with texts that operate at
various interfaces and moments of intersectionality.

From the academic subjective position that I occupy, I feel obligated to ask questions and not just accept these ideas. Ghassan Hage discusses the nature of academia in his role as a Future Generation Professor. One point he always comes back to is that the role of the academic is to elude being captured. Part of this involves not occupying a position “comfortably” or uncritically (Param and Bemmel). Eatdirtzian Geosophy asks us to speak to the positions that we (as critics and academics) occupy and offer understandings of the world we interact with, and how they may be valuable or damaging to our work, this enables us to enter a process of negotiation. Despite attempts to reconcile Heiss’s work with other examples of non-western women’s writing, the meta-critical is absent from Ommundsen’s work. She needs to be able to articulate that – justify the positions she occupies and their effect on her reading. I am not accusing Ommunden’s ideas and positions of being wrong or invaluable. However, what I am trying to emphasise is the need for reflection and accountability in our practice as critics, because the ideas and positions Ommuden moderates by positioning them as “other” through her assessment of material are just as valuable as her own, and the interaction between the two that has been denied here could reveal why.

**Negating the restrictions of genre and its criticism through a geosophical lens**

An EDG reading of text extends itself to an analysis of the ways in which a text has been received. For Heiss’s narratives, an obvious place to start this reading is through a consideration of the ways in which her novels have been and could be positioned in relation to the Chick Lit genre. From the onset, it is integral to my meta-critical process that I acknowledge the limiting frameworks of genre as a western literary studies approach.

The political and Aboriginal content of Heiss’s narratives have inspired criticism that focuses on positioning Heiss’s work as a sub-genre to traditional Chick Lit.
Anita Heiss has been credited with the invention of a sub-genre of Chick Lit, called Koori Chick Lit by a reviewer in 2007 with the release of *Not Meeting Mr Right* (Wyndham), and she has also been referred to as “Koori Bradshaw”, making a reference to the success of the *Sex in the City* essays, Chick Lit novels, and television series in which the main character is a writer by the name of Carrie Bradshaw (Warburton). When taking an Eatdirtzian approach in which the reader engages with texts within a space of negotiation, it is essential to unpack these terms, who is using them, and the implications of their use. The fact that Warburton has used the term “Koori” to categorise and position Heiss’s work in relationship to the genre proper is problematic. This act of othering literary material by Aboriginal peoples has its origins within the literary traditions of Australia. These traditions saw Aboriginal Literature removed from the mainstream production of Australian literature, categorising the works as a separate collection. In doing so, this tradition lessened the artistic focus that was placed on the texts by burdening these works with a new onus of cultural authenticity (Muecke "Aboriginal Literature and the Repressive Hypothesis"; Muecke *Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and Cultural Studies*; Narogin *Writing from the Fringe*; Narogin *Milli Milli Wangka*).

Heiss’s work is burdened by essentialist feminist ideologies about who can be represented within feminine experiences, which introduces new ideas about ownership of the Chick Lit genre and its literary value. In this initial instance of labelling, Warburton reviewed Heiss’s work through a northern hemisphere centric understanding of the genre, by positioning Heiss in relationship to Candace Bushnell’s now famous *Sex in the City* works. In doing so, critics attempt to define Heiss’s work with a standard set of criteria distinctly relevant to North American literature. Critics’ and feminists’ dialogues that perpetuate the positioning of Chick Lit through a northern hemispheric gazes restrict access to the unique experiences of femininity to emerge from colonised spaces in the southern hemisphere.

The term “Chick Lit” is used to describe fiction targeted at an audience of young
women. “Chick Lit” has been derived from the slang word “chick” meaning young woman, and “lit” as an abbreviation for literature. Literary texts of this genre feature young women protagonists dealing with issues that contemporary women face, including romantic dilemmas, in an entertaining and humorous way. Chick Lit is a literary genre that “addresses modern women’s issues with humour” (Jessica Rudd qtd. in Burke). Caroline Smith describes a contemporary version of the genre as consisting of “heroine-centred narratives that focus on the trials and tribulations of their individual protagonists” (C. Smith 2), noting Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’ Diary* as the text which has spawned this contemporary version of the genre and cementing its connection to North-American-centric experience. My understanding of the genre has been influenced by experiences with a more contemporary (and apparently, problematic) version of Chick Lit that has emerged.

In discussions surrounding the emergence of Chick Lit as a genre, there is significant academic discussion about the divergence of this contemporary understanding of the genre from its origins, which contributes to the genre’s problematic nature and devaluing within the academy. Cris Mazza, having laid claim to spawning the contemporary usage of the term “Chick Lit”, argues that there was an irony to her initial application of the term to anthologies of contemporary women’s fiction that she was co-editing. Mazza notes that there was an “ironic intention of our title: not to embrace an old frivolous or coquettish image of women but to take responsibility for our part in the damaging, lingering stereotype” (Mazza 18). In review of Mazza’s work, there is a clear expression of the desire to make a distinction between previous experiences of feminism and more current experiences. This distinction works by challenging notions of “the victim” and “the victimiser” by holding women accountable to their roles in perpetrating the oppression of women (or self) in patriarchal societies. It is this accountability that Linda Beail’s work speaks to when she suggests that one of the positive aspects of contemporary Chick Lit is that it can move past this blaming mentality by revealing the complexities of modern women’s lives in an empathetic way (Beail).
Mazza’s work distinguishes two types of Chick Lit – the sardonic collections of fiction which “were simultaneously courageous and playful; frank and wry; honest, intelligent, sophisticated, libidinous, unapologetic, and overwhelmingly emancipated” that she co-edited with Jeffery DeShell (Mazza 18) and “what is now: career girls looking for love” (Mazza 21). Following this, Mazza offers a polemic review of critics supporting the first type of Chick Lit and condemning the later, more contemporary, emergences of the genre. She concludes her discussion of the misappropriation of her genre with these comments: “But now, how is anyone to make a distinction? The chicks in commercial chick lit, along with Hooter restaurants and celebrity boxing, have stripped themselves of irony” (Mazza 28).

A concern some critics of Mazza and DeShell’s work have expressed is accusations of ambiguity and the failure to provide a clear definition of terms such as “Chick Lit” and “post-feminist” in their establishment of this movement (Goodman). The clarification of their understanding of “post-feminism” is rather important as feminist (and potentially anti-feminist) agendas informing the movement could significantly impact the way in which the genre positions women, or works to exclude or privilege particular feminine experiences over others. Further, Ferriss and Young offer the notion that the Chick Lit genre provides an arena for an “intergenerational discussion of feminism” but do not offer a means for carrying out this discussion (Ferriss and Young B14). Mazza’s defeated conclusion also offers no means for addressing the distinction between understandings of the genre and the varied experiences of femininity that inform them. These situations show how one feminist perspective is working to subjugate another, just as valid, feminist perspective, all of which have been constructed by their contextual discourses (i.e. that our subjectivities are the products of discursive regimes). Jenny Gore in her analysis of critical and feminist pedagogy highlights a number of problems that arise when there is internal conflict within discourses (Gore). In particular, she notes that there is a significant danger for discourses, such as feminist discourses, to normalise when used unreflexively.
Ferriss and Young’s critical research into the area of women’s literature surprisingly revealed hesitancy towards contemporary Chick Lit in academia. This hesitancy stems from a lack of scholarship in the area and a reluctance to attach academic careers to a “presumably lightweight – and possibly short-lived – pop-culture trend” (Ferriss and Young "A Generational Divide over Chick Lit" B13). Ferriss and Young also note that a number of established academics who have dedicated their careers to women’s fiction are now denying the same opportunities to their successors and students who want to pursue contemporary women’s fiction, especially in Chick Lit. Ferriss and Young conclude that classic women’s fiction is preferable to contemporary Chick Lit, noting that their students overwhelmingly preferred the classic fiction. They weren’t completely certain if that was because of the older novels’ intricate plots, subtle characterizations, memorable language, or some other factor. But they were convinced that although chick lit raises fascinating cultural issues, it can’t compete with the work of Jane Austen, the Brontës, Virginia Woolf, and Zora Neale Hurston. (Ferriss and Young "A Generational Divide over Chick Lit" B14)

Despite these criticisms, it is interesting to note that areas of women’s fiction that older academics specialise in were once excluded from or undervalued by the academy. However, older women’s fiction, such as the works of Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf and the Brontë sisters are now recognised as canonical texts.

It has been argued that contemporary forms of the Chick Lit genre have their origins in the writings of the Brontë sisters and Jane Austen, and that these connections to canonical works contribute to the literary value of Chick Lit texts, and the genre itself (Ferriss and Young "Introduction" 4-5). These origins solidify a connection within the genre to the northern hemisphere and the Eurocentric. The popularity and success of works within the contemporary version of the Chick Lit genre should demonstrate its value within contemporary contexts. However, despite mainstream media producing works belonging to this Chick Lit genre (in films, television shows, blogs, and novel series), and the rapidly growing audience demographic engaging with them, literary critics are still sceptical of the genre.
This scepticism is due to a number of reasons, including the commercial nature of the genre.

One of the key features of this contemporary version of the Chick Lit genre is its marketability. Smith argues that Chick Lit has a high marketability due to the issues of consumerism that the texts broach within their content and their “commercial viability” (C. Smith 2). The explicit content focused on issues of consumerism increase the texts’ potential to be adapted to the screen (television or film) which contributes to this marketability, their profitability and mass-production. However, in reconciling this feature with contemporary western and capitalist contexts in which reading and writing of Chick Lit women’s fiction occurs, the feature of marketability is fitting. If the texts were to remain non-commercial for the sake of consistency with the women’s writing before them, would they really be so culturally significant and connected to place and time? Limited critical exploration into cultural moments surrounding the texts could be responsible for academics’ and critics’ scepticism of the genre and its literary value. An EDG approach in which the texts are reconciled with their wider contexts could assist critics in painting a more thorough and detailed picture of contemporary Chick Lit.

Heiss recognises the benefits and restrictions that the commercialisation of the genre imposes onto her work. One restriction Heiss highlights is involved in the publication process, in that the book covers need to be designed in adherence to publishers’ expectations for the genre. These designs are used to promote a particular perception of the texts and their general marketability (Heiss "Paris Dreaming Book Launch"). As a result, the books all look very similar in design, using a stock bold colour as the base background for the cover and a stylish female figure located in the foreground. The cover can then use small images or symbols to emphasise components of the commercial or consumer content of the narrative, such as shopping bags, a symbol of the narrative’s location, or items of clothing. For Not Meeting Mr Right (NMMR), the consumption focuses on navigating the dating market or the consumption of men which is represented.
through a conveyor belt production line of generic male stick figures (Heiss NMMR). For Avoiding Mr Right (AMR), the cover emphasises the restaurant and food consumer culture of Melbourne, where the narrative is set, through the images of a café table and coffee mug (Heiss AMR). However, despite improving the marketability of these texts, these restrictions limit a promotion of the texts’ individual content, and in Heiss’s case, the unique stylistic and political qualities, and the Aboriginal content of her work (Richard).

In a lecture conducted by Heiss at the launch of Paris Dreaming, another one of her Chick Lit novels from the Dreaming series, she discussed some of the key benefits of the commercialisation of the Chick Lit genre. In particular, Heiss noted that her work is able to reach a wider audience that may not normally choose to engage with texts whose content focuses on Aboriginal experiences both past and present, Aboriginal women’s lived experiences, and reflections on reconciliation and the relationships between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians (Heiss "Paris Dreaming Book Launch"). Heiss commented that the majority of the general public “wouldn’t read an Aboriginal book about deaths in custody that you can get at Big W” (Heiss "Paris Dreaming Book Launch"), but her books offer an implicit avenue for these audiences to do so. By increasing the marketability of her texts, she is able to access a wider audience who will then be able engage with the Indigenous consciousness of the characters within her texts. Further, by having her protagonists within the Dreaming series narratives travel to famous northern hemisphere cities, such as Manhattan and Paris, Heiss argues, she is not only expanding her readership to an international audience, but she is creating scope for Aboriginal Australian women’s voices and experiences to be heard on an international scale (Heiss Manhattan Dreaming; Heiss Paris Dreaming; Richard; Heiss "Paris Dreaming Book Launch").

An Eatdirtzian approach to genre reconsiders literary critics’ scepticism through its reconciling ethic and meta-critical approach. It is important for literary critics to reconsider the value of Chick Lit texts by reconciling these commercialised aspects of the genre with the environments from which these aspects and the texts
both emerge from. The texts work by speaking to the consumerist contexts and cultures in which they are being produced and consumed by their audiences. In the globalised and capitalist “place” in which I reside and have been conditioned, the mass-produced (and often electronic) dissemination of art has become commonplace. For me, the content that deals with these circumstances brings an element of realism to the narratives. The consumption of mass-produced music, television, literature, film, fashion, food, love, and technology is a condition of this globalised and capitalist “place” in which I reside, in urbanised, westernised and capitalised parts of Australia. I use the word “consumption” here, because that is exactly what I mean in terms of how I have been geographically located – consuming these things is a condition of my survival within this “place”.  I use the world “place” here with particular meaning to distinguish it from the concept of space. This understanding of place is drawn from geographic definitions which recognise that “place” is a sense constructed by attaching a particular emotion, function, or meaning to a physical location (Thrift "Chapter 5 - Space: The Fundamental Stuff of Human Geography”; Castree). An extremely common example of place is the sense or idea of home that individuals hold. In this particular instance, my sense of place is being constructed through social and economic conditions.

This sense of realism within the genre is being developed further through emerging examples of meta-Chick Lit. Jessica Jernigan discusses the ways in which contemporary meta-Chick Lit narratives are self-reflexive through the manipulation of conventional content and features of the genre. Meta-Chick Lit narratives are able to explore certain conditions of popular and consumer cultures by engaging with this subject matter and how it is utilised within the genre in a critical, self-aware or hyperbolic way. In doing so, these texts challenge the “jumbled, half-fantasy version of reality” constructed within other Chick Lit narratives (Jernigan 74). From an Eatdirtzian perspective, I have to examine Jernigan’s points here because it presents as a point of difference from my own engagement with the literature. In negotiating between myself and Jernigan’s positions, I consider whether this uncritical romanticising of consumer culture that
she assumes is present in Chick Lit narratives that are not self-reflexive extends itself to Australian Chick Lit and experiences of consumerism. Although Australian contexts do operate from a western worldview, with a consumerist and capitalist economic structure similar to North American countries such as Canada and the United States of America, these two experiences diverge in a number of ways. The meta-critical approach that enables an a-colonial reading position of Eadirtzian Geosophy asks for Jernigan to assess the relationship between her critical assumptions and her geosophical positions. For Jernigan, meta-Chick Lit parodies and exaggerates the “frustrating” elements of contemporary Chick Lit, such as: the “sameness” of the characters, in that they are “predominantly white and middle- to upper-class…well educated” and professionally successful; and treating love as “just another commodity”(Jernigan 71). Further, Jernigan’s ideas about the quality of meta-Chick Lit are shaped by undisclosed feminist ideologies, as she moralises that a distinctive feature of meta-Chick Lit is that it creates undesirable protagonists who fall short as potential role models through the narratives deployment of “the genre’s most objectionable traits in extravagant quantities” (Jernigan 72). Jernigan focus on criticism of consumer cultures and a parody of the genre as the main means of defining self-reflexive Chick Lit limits the possibilities of what meta-Chick Lit could be.

Jernigan’s criticisms reflect a local scale, that when applied internationally present a gap in current practice. Further, Jernigan’s expectations for a higher standard of critical self-reflexivity from authors is not consistently applied to her own work, which fails to disclose own practices and subjective positions. In reconciling the gaps between Jernigan’s and my own critical work I would expand through an international scale by reconsidering the notion of meta-Chick Lit as informed by Australian contexts too. As Chimamanda Adichie warns us there is a danger in the single story (Adichie). This danger prescribes who and what can exist within the story, while the single story crushes culture and identity. There is no one single experience of culture, feminism, storytelling or the world, which complicates the ability to hold onto some universal standard or conception of authenticity. As critics Adichie’s discussion about the single story is an important reminder that
we do not become too complacent in retelling a singular story in our own work. Our modes of practice, genres, and theoretical ideas need to search out multiple stories.

In searching for multiple stories surrounding Jernigan’s criticisms, there is a disconnection between Australian experiences of consumer culture and the North American consumer culture that is familiar with. As a person who visits the United States of America (USA) regularly, with a key goal of taking advantage of their consumerist culture, for me it is a very real experience to get caught up in the abundance of cheap and accessible items while shopping in North America. However, I can safely say that the USA’s mastery of capitalism is a quality not experienced to the same extent in any Australian context I have experienced. Neither of Heiss’s novels delves into this American-style consumerism, as they present a level of consumerism more akin to that experienced within Australia: the main forms of consumption of their characters focus on food, alcohol, technology and men. Furthermore, due to this disconnect between contexts, it would seem unfair to apply the same strictures of perceived quality and literary value imposed on to the genre by North American critics such as Jernigan to an Australian text that has emerged from a different context to the North American ones that informs the critic’s position.

In reconciling Jernigan’s claims with Heiss’s narratives and my own critical contexts, where is Heiss’s work to be positioned in regards to this concept of meta-Chick Lit? Heiss’s narratives could add a critical Australian perspective to this idea of meta-Chick Lit, and expand the notion of meta-Chick Lit to include narratives that are self-awareness in different ways, such as through the use of self-conscious content on race relations and Australian contexts. However, if we were to assess Heiss’s work through Jernigan’s framework as it currently stands, Heiss’s work would fall short. Critics would run the risk of misinterpreting the work as un-reflective and not self-aware when using Jernigan’s conditions. Heiss’s work would be excluded because it does not fit prescriptive North American and Western strictures about how and what women’s fiction needs to be
reflective of (i.e. consumer culture). Further, in terms of critical reflection of consumer cultures, Heiss’s narratives provide a scope for critics to reframe their ideas about consumerism by engaging with the Australian Indigenous product placement littered throughout Heiss’s narratives.

Heiss is very explicit about her promotion of Indigenous Australian artists and products both inside and outside of her narratives. Current criticisms of this feature of Heiss’ work position such commercialism as insignificant and superficial. In reviewing *Avoiding Mr Right*, Amy McQuire comments on the references made to Australian products and brands and Indigenous Australian icons and work. Particularly, McQuire makes the claim that references to “Aboriginal icons” are “shallow” and do not provide “enough background and analysis” (McQuire para 21-23). Further, McQuire notes that the references to the Qantas Club and discussion of the Gold Coast do nothing more than “serve as an unwilling travel advertisement” (McQuire para 13). From an Indigenous critical perspective, McQuire’s analysis of the narrative imposes an expectation of cultural authenticity onto Heiss’s work, placing these criticism of commercial references into a steadfast rhetoric about the need for Indigenous issues and references in a narrative to have depth, purpose and “overcome white prejudices,” otherwise they just fall into the publishing trap of whitening-up indigeneity (McQuire 21).

As an Anglo-Australian reader myself, I find it both refreshing and off-putting to actually see local names, celebrity and brands in narratives. Such references challenge the conditioning from corporate globalisation and engaging with northern hemisphere literature, which I am used to seeing references to American brand names and descriptions of far-off places that I am encouraged to imagine and romanticise about. After I move past this initial discomfort, seeing references to Emma Donovan, Qantas, Archie Roach, Coogee Beach, Redfern Park, Mambo shirts and the deliciousness of Acland Street in St Kilda offers something more to me as an Australian reader. The local knowledges I bring to these references actually can make their inclusion deeper and less shallow, because those words
act as signifiers for meaning constructed through my knowledge of Australian history, locations, cultures and personal experiences. I cannot read a scene taking place in Redfern Park lightly, without conjuring up feelings and thoughts about the significance of Redfern as a historical symbol of colonial oppression of Indigenous Australians and memories of Prime Minister Paul Keating’s iconic speech that also shapes the park as a symbol of political potential for reconciliation (Heiss NMMR 120-24).

Further, as a reader, these references romanticise and speak to Australian life, placing my home and my experiences on the same glamorous international scale as other Chick Lit narratives. It offers distinctly Australian voices and experiences to the arena, subverting the readers’ gaze and imagination to the southern hemisphere. In doing so, Heiss’s work offers a notable trend found in other examples of contemporary Australian Chick Lit in which constructions of Australia as place is offered through the representation of Australian capital cities and unique popular cultural references (Foster; Heidke). Perhaps Australian critics need to review this feature of Heiss’s work through an expansion of Jernigan’s meta-Chick Lit framework, in which this product placement becomes rather important for Australian literature and Australian readers’ engagement with texts. In order to do so, the theoretical concept of meta-Chick Lit needs to be reconciled to the Australian contexts in which we work and operate, because as it stands it is currently North American-centric.

The contemporary Chick Lit genre draws on a range of features and circumstances that allow texts to engage with their audiences, most of which centre around issues of consumerism. Chick Lit texts often speak to the reader directly, commonly addressing the reader as a person facing the same issues as the protagonist (C. Smith 1-5). Chick Lit texts often use literary devices that act as a form of pseudo-self-insertion, in that the reader additionally becomes the subject of the text, a co-character of the narrative. In Not Meeting Mr Right, Alice’s role as narrator is pivotal in positioning the reader in this way, as she consistently addresses the reader. One of the ways that Heiss’s text constructs conversational
tones to engage the reader is through the use of rhetorical questions that subtly invite the reader into the narrative action:

I’d felt embarrassed and shamed, and since then I hadn’t asked anyone out again. I’d gone from one extreme to another, as my brother Dillon would say. How could I tell my students that I hadn’t had a real date for months, that men didn’t ask me out, and I didn’t ask them, and now my friends stayed up late workshopping the problem and my family all thought I was a lesbian? (Heiss NMMR 69)

Further, the use of first person narration from Alice’s perspective reinforces the conversational tones throughout the text by promoting a direct dialogue between the reader and narrator. Alice, the protagonist, is a relatable figure, which promotes an element of self-insertion as it allows for the reader to position themselves as a subject within this conversation, a co-character of the narrative.

These qualities of being realistic and relatable are further emphasised with the growth of subcategories or sub-genres emerging from contemporary Chick Lit. These subcategories appeal specifically to different audiences through their different focuses such as Mommy Lit, Sistah Lit, or Lad Lit (Ferriss and Young Chick Lit: The New Woman's Fiction). These subcategories move away from the traditional Chick Lit convention that the protagonists belong to a set of (usually) four “every women” character types within their narratives (Beail). The main characters of Heiss’s two texts, Alice Aigner and Peta Tully (from Not Meeting Mr Right and Avoiding Mr Right respectively), are two characters from a recurring group of four close female friends: Peta, Alice, Dannie and Liza, who feature in both narratives. Despite adhering to this unrealistic character group structure of the genre proper, Heiss uses humour extensively as a device to create realistic and relatable characters. Humour becomes an essential feature of the narratives and a mode for portraying the fallible nature of the characters. The notion of “fallibility” becomes synonymous with “realistic” within this application. A sound example of this “realistic” nature is Peta’s inner monologue during her visit to an art exhibit:

To look busy, and to show my interest in the artist and his work, I
put a deposit on a blue metal sculpture worth three weeks’ wages. I didn’t even really know what it meant, or have my own space to put it in. It was titled ‘Untitled’, which I thought was just lazy of the artist. I’d always been mesmerised by dot painting from Papunya and the stories they told, but there was no story attached to this sculpture to help me understand it. Of course, I could never say that out loud, not in the job I was in, but it was true. I only bought the piece because the artist saw me eyeing it, but he didn’t realise that the look on my face was confusion, not admiration (Heiss *AMR* 167).

This inner monologue of the character is relatable to audience members who themselves may have experienced awkward social situations. The use of exaggeration through the sculpture costing “three weeks’ wages” and the confession of having no space to physically store the sculpture creates a hyperbolic awkward social situation. The humour lies within this exaggerated social experience. Further, it is possible to find humour in common experiences of attempting to navigate cultural and social expectations within awkward social situations presented in this example, as Peta felt she was expected to have a cultural understanding of the work and was expected to purchase something from the exhibit. The use of humour here could also be explored from a critical Indigenous perspective. The humour exposes a conflicting interaction between Indigenous and Western geosophical positions in depicting the purpose and value of art. The hyperbolic cost of the art work becomes representative of the monetary value the western world places on art, whereas Peta’s explanation of the storytelling and narrative features of Papunya dot paintings introduces an Indigenous perspective.

In her discussion of Chick-television series (which have originated from Chick Lit novels), Linda Beail notes that although these texts often use humour to highlight a character’s flaws and their everyday “dilemmas”, they do so in a way that is “empathetic and respectful…not mocking or condemning” (Beail 95). Jernigan reinforces this notion, claiming that humour is a source of liberation: “these
characters give us the freedom to be less than perfect, and we laugh with them, not at them” (Jernigan 70). Beail goes on to highlight the significance of this treatment of characters and their dilemmas, stating that “instead of somehow trying to blame these modern women for their own problems, using the narrative to punish or re-contain them into more ‘appropriate’ feminine roles, Sex in the City showed them as complex, likeable heroines groping toward understanding and fulfilment in their lives” (Beail 95). Beail positions humour as a survival technique, a geographic knowledge, from a feminist perspective within this global and western patriarchal context. Female characters use humour as a mode of survival (learning to survive / conditioned into survival) within a context driven by consumer cultures, in which they have limited control over the economic and societal structures constructing these contexts. Beail’s point here highlights an example of geosophical knowledge, as these characters learn how to adapt or function within particular geographies. These ideas are also pertinent to our continuing discussion of Chick Lit as differing feminist perspectives enter into debates over the genre and its texts.

Heiss also uses humour to subvert social norms or taboo topics. For instance, Heiss is able to play on the concept of political correctness and cultural tokenism from an Indigenous point of view through Alice Aigner’s narration. An example of this occurs early in Not Meeting Mr Right, when Alice is introducing her group of friends, Liza, Dannie and Peta:

Liza works for the Aboriginal Legal Service in the city. She’s white like Dannie, but with Italian heritage. I call them my token white friends; I reckon everyone should have at least one or two. It’s politically correct. (Heiss NMMR 30)

This use of the phrase “token white friends” uses humour to explicitly offer a critical Indigenous gaze in which whiteness is cast as the other. Humour becomes a useful tool in everyday life for rationalising awkward or unfamiliar circumstances that we face. However, to credit the use of humour here as purely a generic convention of Chick Lit would be doing Heiss’s narratives a significant injustice, because humour also offers crucial ideas about geographic knowledges,
modes of survival, and ways of understanding and responding to contexts from critical feminist and Indigenous geosophical positions. Heiss’s use of humour to study whiteness is not typical of the humour exchanged within generic northern hemispheric Chick Lit texts. Heiss’s use of humour is inherently linked to the local – it is deeply rooted within time and space, within the colonial Australian contexts from which it emerges and is received. As Heiss’s narratives sit within both feminist and Indigenous experiences, a purely genre-focused reading of her work would not allow critics to explore the significance of deploying humour from her various geosophical positions. Humour is distinctly geosophical in its operation.

An Eatdirtzian Geosophical reading of Heiss’s work allows the critic to consider if this use of humour was exclusive to the features of Chick Lit as a genre. If we, as critics, assume so and limit our investigation of a text to the genre level, we may be denying the geosophical positions embedded within the text and the use of humour as geographical knowledge. As an Australian literary critic I can reconcile this reading of Chick Lit with the other knowledges I hold within my unique subjective positions, in particular the knowledge I have about the use of humour within Australian Aboriginal literature. The tradition of using humour in Australian Aboriginal literature is a form of geographic knowledge, because it demonstrates the ability and knowledges Australian Aboriginal communities use to survive in, and negotiate, colonial environments. In an intersubjective assessment of Heiss’s work it is crucial to explore both the legacy of Aboriginal writing and contemporary women’s writing in her work.

Larissa Behrendt explains that comedy and humour are an important aspect of contemporary Indigenous experiences. Humour is a “powerful antidote to the trauma, harm and hurt that comes with racism” (Behrendt para. 1). Kevin Kropinyeri, an Aboriginal comedian, claims that humour and comedy are “the flip side of tragedy” because comedy and laughter promotes healing and a way of coping (Kropinyeri qtd. in Behrendt para. 4). More critically, Adam Shoemaker, a non-Indigenous scholar, notes that the tradition of humour in Australian
Aboriginal literature works in two distinct ways, noting that “when Aboriginal people define themselves in literature, they emphasise not just the shared experiences of oppression but also the shared enjoyment of life” (Shoemaker 233). Shoemaker goes on to note that the use of humour in Aboriginal literature works to mock oppressive European lifestyles while simultaneously celebrating Aboriginal “independence and capacity for endurance”, and in doing so creates a sense of cohesion or solidarity amongst Aboriginal communities while also resisting depressive circumstances (Shoemaker 233). The plays of Jack Davis, such as *The Dreamers* and *No Sugar*, are seminal examples of this unique style of humour created through the juxtaposition of tragic circumstances of colonisation with the celebration of culture and the endurance of identity. By engaging with ideas and information from geosophical positions of other than my own, I am able to develop an understanding about the use of humour in storytelling in Aboriginal cultures; however, I have limited knowledge or experience of these uses. As critics we cannot deny other connections to culture that may be inscribed within a text just because they are unknown to us, nor can we speak for them. The reconciling ethic of an Eatdirtzian Geosophy allows us to navigate unfamiliar terrain in our practices as critics, by giving us scope to acknowledge the limits of our geosophical positions.

In reconciling my geosophical positions with the texts’ positions, I also bring to the forefront of the discussion my own western epistemologies which enable me to interact with the written text here, the book itself, but may also reduce my ability to move beyond that. As Stephen Muecke notes, there is a distinct contrast between traditional and contemporary mechanisms of literary production for Indigenous Australians, a production of narrative that shifts “from body to book; from Aboriginal to European ceremony” (Muecke *Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and Cultural Studies* 38). Muecke’s sentiments here remind me that within an Australian context I cannot ignore that the act of writing is within itself a colonial act, and as such, works to reshape traditional Indigenous epistemologies in which uses of humour may be located. Additionally, Indigenous Australian literature is often seen as a form of resistance by contemporary Aboriginal artists, because the
act of writing is littered with colonial socio-historical and political discourse (Watson; Grossman). In an Eatdirtzian reading of texts critics need to work to reconcile a text with its own environments and geosophical positions, rather than just assuming the critic’s default position for reading the text, which is more often than not an unreflective colonised (and colonising) position, like a purely literary genre focused reading of Heiss’ work is at risk of doing.

Reconciling critical literary practices and theories further with Australian contexts, one ongoing problem for Aboriginal Australian literature is the use of genres within Eurocentric literary criticism and the categorising of Indigenous literature as other or a genre of itself. This is also true for the categorisation of American Chick Lit, where “critics of chick lit more often cite novels by women of color as ‘variations’ on Chick Lit, separate from the white, heterosexist mainstream” (Konchar Farr 203). This has also been the case for Anita Heiss’ Chick Lit texts, which have been categorised as Choc Lit and Koori Chick Lit by her critics. The notion of a genre variation when applied by a critic implies a dominant reading position which expresses an ownership of the truer, more pure version of the Chick Lit genre. However, the ownership of that genre variation when applied by an author carries a different implication, in that the adaption of genre and the meaning of the labels or terms used for it can be shaped by the author, adding an element of autonomy to their practice – as in the case of Heiss’s Chick Lit work.

Genres work to colonise the ways in which people approach, read and think about the meaning being communicated within a text, and as such become an important topic for consideration within an EDG approach to reading. As Mudrooroo Narogin\footnote{I draw on the work of Mudrooroo Nargoin (aka Colin Thomas Johnson), despite the controversy regarding the authenticity of his claims to Indigenous heritage. I do so because the works themselves are still valued as seminal texts for the study of Australian literature.} notes, “the problem with this, and the use of genres such as romance, is that they organise the kinds of meanings to be realised from the text, and under ‘kinds’ we may place the representation of Indigenous people” (Narogin Milli Milli Wangka 59). The meta-critical approach of Eatdirtzian Geosophy allows
critics to constantly strive for an a-colonial reading position which involves acknowledging the ways our own individual epistemologies and academic discourses and practices function, and in what ways they operate which could potentially colonise the text we engage with. In this instance, the use of a focus on genre, the use of humour within the narrative, and the written mode of production become exposed to me as modes which might limit my access to Heiss’s texts’ geosophical positions or become avenues for my ongoing colonisation of those geosophical positions. Being able to recognise one’s limits to knowing is an essential part of an EDG critical reading practice.

Using a reconciling ethic allows me to accept these positions, and reconcile myself with the boundaries of my own knowledges and the greater framework of interfaces that we (myself and my knowledges) are located in and interact through. This is a pivotal step for entering into a reciprocal dialogue with the text, a paradigm of negotiation, that encourages the critic to either consult geosophical positions other than their own which may move the reading past the critic’s own limitations or to clearly identify the positions from which the critic and the text negotiate so that any gaps between these geosophical positions are disclosed through the reading process. In this way, the critic’s reading position is decentred. If critics do not have the answer or cannot find the answer through negotiations with other geosophical positions, then it needs to be clear that something remains unanswered. This is an important contribution to academic practices because too often when something is unanswerable critics and academics hide that gap or attempt to speak for it. A reconciling ethic helps us to avoid this trap by allowing something to remain unanswered after a process of meta-critical reflection. Leaving something unanswered further enables negotiation post-reading of the text, because it leaves an open discussion for others to participate in and possibly contribute answers to later. In this practice, meta-critical reflection, an a-colonial reading position, and transparency promote academic rigour and accuracy when working within a subjective field.
Conclusion

By examining the case of Anita Heiss’s Koori Chick Lit, we can see how an EDG approach not only provides us a scope for negotiating literary self-determination for authors, but it also provides a means for critics to address new literary terrain where traditional methods of reading may be limited. It particular, an EDG approach can move critics forward from critical frameworks that place an onus on expectations of cultural authenticity, which are so divorced from the experiences of Aboriginal Australian women offered in Heiss’s narratives. Instead an EDG promotes a level of autonomy for literary works, via the promotion of an a-colonial reading position and intersubjective practice. This is particularly pertinent when the critic is faced with literary works that are self-aware, as it would be unethical to resort to reductive or colonising reading approaches for these texts.

Through an EDG reading of Heiss’s narratives and reconciling the works with their wider contexts, we are able to shift the centre of critical discussion of Heiss’s work from one of dominant literary or cultural approaches to the texts to centring Heiss’s work itself through an intersubjective discussion of dominant ideas, discourses, and critical approaches surrounding the text. Such an approach gives Heiss’s work due consideration and justice for what the work is potentially achieving despite the colonising strictures placed onto it by literary, feminist, and cultural approaches.

Heiss’s ownership and redefining of the subgenre Koori Chick Lit or Choc Lit is rather significant given the location of her texts at these particular cultural and literary interfaces. It demonstrates her ability to be autonomous with her work rather than being silenced by critics’ ownership and application genres, labels, and expectations about cultural authenticity. As a critic engaging with Heiss’s work and caught in the midst of this literary and cultural conflict, what an EDG reading affords me here is the ability to centre Heiss’s work through a negotiation of these various approaches, in which Heiss’s work is privileged and reconciled with the various approaches and its uniquely Australian circumstances. This ensures that
the autonomy that Heiss’s work functions with remains intact through the critical reading process.

Eatdirtzian Geosophy acts as an example of how we (Australians) can combat tokenism, objectification or lip-service approaches to cross-cultural ideas and perspectives which emerge within a paradigm of recognition by pushing towards engaging with intersubjective dialogues between parties. Eatdirtzian Geosophy provides strategies that are rooted in a paradigm of negotiation. And part of this negotiation is accounting for our own subjectivities, and how they might influence or shape what is being negotiated, before engaging with the subjectivities of others.

The process of negotiation is one of decentring and multiplying, rather than reducing discussion to one way or set of strictures, which is a risk when we apply the conventions of a genre, essentialist feminist discourse or cultural authenticity to a text uncritically. This process is different from Spivakian notions of unlearning or ideas about subjugating dominant gazes; instead it draws on unlearning for a critic and promotes accountability through applying that unlearning to a reciprocal dialogue between critic, text, and their contexts. In doing so, it works to validate a multiplicity of subjective positions, not just dominant ones.

This scenario of the critical reception of Anita Heiss’s Chick Lit novels presents a gap in postcolonial studies and literary criticism that the theory of Eatdirtzian Geosophy can occupy. An Eatdirtzian Geosophy approach would help guide literary critics to an a-colonial position from which they could engage with literary texts. Forgive me for the use of terminology here, but I wish to capitalise and play on this current buzzword, in terms of ethics for critics’ practices an Eatdirtzian Geosophy approach facilitates the practice of “cultural safety”, and (what I deem) “artistic safety” in literary criticism at its theoretical level, through the occupation of an a-colonial position. “Cultural safety” or similar phrases like “cultural competency” are current buzzwords emerging in a variety of workplaces,
institutions and government contexts, such as health service areas. The terms denote that an environment that is respectful and non-discriminatory and that people within said context are competent in navigating points of cultural difference. By “artistic safety” I denote an approach to criticism that is not didactic, an approach that can offer a balanced consideration of both the artistic and cultural features of a text and their worth. In doing so, an Eatdirtzian Geosophy recognises the interesting paths writers need to walk in order to produce the work and the paths that critics must weave in order to respond to those texts. It does so by opening up intersubjective and reciprocal dialogues between critics, the authors, and the texts that are reconciled to the contexts that they occupy, and offers the discourse of geosophy as an access point to begin these dialogues.
Figure 16 Geosophy and the Meta-critic survey this new territory before seeking a new vantage point (image created by Gareth Bryan ©2013 Emma Joel)
Figure 17 Shifting their position, Geosophy and the Meta-critic re-examine the territory (image created by Gareth Bryan ©2013 Emma Joel)
Conclusion – “It’s okay! It’s just an intersubjective reading lens...”

Can we ever decolonize Australian institutions? Can we ever decolonize our minds? Probably not. But we can try to find ways to undermine the colonial hegemony. (Langton Well, I Heard It 8)

I have to start this chapter by thanking my supervisor, Dr Brooke Collins-Gearing, because she has inspired the chapter’s title, and unknowingly, its structure; it’s just another one of the seeds she has planted as an educator. One day when I was stuck in an overwhelming loop of obsession about reifying and clarifying my ideas and the significance of an Eatdirtzian Geosophy theory, Dr Collins-Gearing said to me, “It’s okay! It’s just an intersubjective reading lens” (Personal communication with Collins-Gearing "Personal Communication ") It was throw-away line in a passing conversation that I could not resist laughing about as it put things into perspective. I laughed because the concise simple statement juxtaposed my experience. As PhD students we often get caught in a vicious academic cycle of over-complicating things, especially at a research student level where we are constantly being assessed. This comment was exactly what I needed at the time, as it allowed me to refocus and it reminded me what this conclusion needs to concentrate on, what Eatdirtzian Geosophy (EDG) is contributing to literary practices. The main contribution is that an EDG is offering a theory that inspires an intersubjective reading lens.

Geosophy, as an epistemological position, purports that everyone has individual sources of geographic knowledges; it opens up the idea that there are a multiplicity of positions that contribute to knowledge about the earth, whether these be similar, different, or unexpected. In this way, the concept of geosophy offers an EDG theory a process of subjectification. This is not an entirely new contribution in the areas of literary criticism, post-colonial theories, and cultural studies. However, by harnessing geosophy within the theory of EDG this process of subjectification is located within a reading framework that promotes
interactions between these subjectivities. This framework for interaction is the significant and new contribution that EDG offers to literary criticism. This is the intersubjective reading lens that Dr Collins-Gearing was referring to.

This intersubjective reading lens is established through the a-colonial reading position and reconciling ethic rooted at the core of an EDG theory. The process of reconciling critics and texts to their geosophical positions, and a meta-critical reading practice are two key tools of EDG that are transferable within the discipline, in that other academics, critics, students, and readers can use them in their own work. The meta-critical reading practice is vital, because at the initial level of reading it asks that the reader or critic to subjectify themselves in the reading process. This ensures that the dominant view of the critic, academic, or reader no longer remains invisible and unexamined. It allows the reader to undertake the first step towards occupying an a-colonial reading position. It is the first step needed for critics to “undermine the colonial hegemony” embedded within western reading and academic practices that often remain unaccounted for (Langton Well, I Heard It 8). Further, the meta-critical reading process then offers a continuing strategy for reading that allows readers to critically consider and expose the various power relationships surrounding geographic knowledges, knowledge construction, and their own reading practices as they read. A shift to a meta-critical approach, allows readers to critically assess and reflect on their own criticisms. The reconciling ethic then provides readers with a scope to evaluate their criticisms in relationship to the text, and both the critic’s and text’s various geosophical positions. It is through the combining of the meta-critical process and reconciling ethic that an a-colonial reading position can be achieved.

For an Australian context, a theory that operates from ideals of a-colonialism and reconciliation is invaluable. It allows readers to critically engage with Australian myths of harmonious experiences of multiculturalism, myths and stereotypes about the experiences of and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and populist myths about refugees. Further, it places Australian academics in a unique position to reconcile academic theories and
practices with both international and Australian contexts and circumstances. EDG does so by encouraging readers to work continuously at decolonising their own positions while simultaneously engaging with multiple geosophical positions surrounding their work. These ideals allow EDG readings to move literary critics towards sound ethical practices by operating in a manner that strives to be non-exclusive and non-colonising. It allows a reconciling ethic to be applied to epistemology, moving us forward to a space where multiple stories not only co-exist but also have a chance to communicate.

In her Brisbane TedX Talk, Anita Heiss challenged the audience to “start considering what connects you to someone rather than what separates you. Focus on what makes you the same, not what makes you different...” (Heiss "Onexsameness: Dr Anita Heiss"). Challenges such as these are emerging within Australian contexts as a means to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Heiss’s Chick Lit explicitly deals with cultural interfaces experienced in Australian contexts, with her answer to navigate interfaces being a focus on sameness as a way to connect with another person. Heiss challenges her audience to think about what world views, experiences or values they share as human beings, that might connect them to other people who they assume are completely different to themselves (Heiss "Onexsameness: Dr Anita Heiss"). A focus on sameness is an important starting point for cultural interfaces within Australian contexts because it can engage everyone. However, it is also limited because once we have established a dialogue about sameness how do we move on to discuss differences? Further, how do we navigate cultural interfaces in a way that safely addresses risks of assimilation and cultural appropriation?

In an academic arena, geosophical discourse becomes an avenue for connection, within which we can start having more meaningful conversations about difference and sameness simultaneously; it promotes intersubjectivity, interaction between unique subjective positions. Geosophy places us in a starting position not of sameness but of equity, in that everyone has a way of constructing knowledge
about the earth, ways of knowing how to survive in their contexts, and that these knowledges and modes of knowledge construction are going to cross-over by having points of similarity and points of difference. It places us in a starting position that accepts and expects multiplicity, and more importantly, values it as part of existence. Developing an epistemological understanding of geosophy is the first step in an EDG process.

The ideals of a-colonialism and a reconciling ethic that are embedded in an EDG theory can be located within academic dialogues. The work of EDG is informed by postcolonial theory and focuses on moving postcolonial ideas forward through the proposal of reading practices that allow critics to do so. In particular, it draws on Spivak’s subaltern studies in that she highlights the need for critics and westerners to be introspective and consider the constructions of the subaltern (Spivak "Can the Subaltern Speak?"). The use of a meta-critical reading process and the striving for an a-colonial position becomes a response to what Spivak has called for.

Similarly to Spivak’s work, there is an element of unlearning within the meta-critical practice, as readers account for their own subjective positions. However, EDG theory differs on two parts here. The first point of difference is that the readers not only identity their subjectivities as part of a broader accountability of their geosophical positions, but they also reconcile themselves with these positions through identifying their relationships to environments through considering how particular subjective positions locate them, their knowledges and ways of knowing. The second part on which EDG differs is that it offers a nexus for interaction between subjective positions, which shifts practices forward from what Ghassan Hage calls a paradigm of recognition to a paradigm of negotiation (Param and Bemmel). This nexus of interaction allows critics and academics to navigate limits and boundaries within their work, knowing that some material is not open access. These limits and boundaries can be evaluated through a meta-critical practice that promotes an a-colonial reading position. The intersubjective reading lens then give critics an opportunity to address these limits by reconciling
them to their geosophical position and acknowledging that they do not know and it is okay to have an idea go unanswered rather than ignore it or speak for it. Alternatively, critics can also address limits they encounter by drawing on other geosophical positions located at the nexus that do speak to the concern. The intersubjective lens means that the critic does not always get final say; critics are destabilised from the position of being the sole authority on a text. This results in embedding the ideal of a-colonialism within the work of EDG discourages critics and academics not to commit acts of epistemic violence (which has similar intentions to Spivak’s work in subaltern studies) and to navigate multiple knowledges and knowledge sources safely and ethically. Consistently using a meta-critical practice is the second step in an EDG process, allowing critics read through their own subjectivities in a shift to an a-colonial reading position and providing a scope for dealing with the multiplicities of knowing that emerge.

In Chapter 4 a geosophic approach to Senior Law Man Bill Neidjie’s *Story about Feeling* explores the narrative thread that emerges when the multiple stories of text, author, reader, and contexts interact. The chapter blends the work of previous chapters by demonstrating a reading of geosophic discourse with explicit meta-critical and intersubjective practice. It demonstrates that geosophy can become a vital access point to seemingly inaccessible texts, and that critics can employ a reconciling ethic to access a deeper consideration of the epistemological positions informing the text and reading.

EDG provides academics and critics with the scope to acknowledge and navigate that the world, identities, and cultures are constantly changing. For Australian contexts, these processes of change are not just limited to interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, but needs to consider the ways in which all peoples of different ethnicities, ages, places, genders, and educations have claims to knowledge and are victims of epistemic violence. In our current point of time, the theories and thinking of Australian academics and critics cannot be limited to the postcolonial, but must also consider the transnational. EDG provides a framework for academics and critics to avoid being reductionist in their
work, by negotiating a space for intersubjective dialogues between various subjective positions interacting with the literary critics can expand the ideas surrounding any one idea by drawing on the knowledge from different geosophic positions.

Chapter 2 of the thesis focused on how instances of language usage can flag various geosophical positions for critics, and as such highlight a crucial source for the study of geographic knowledges and how geosophical positions inform language and language use. Language plays a massive role in the construction of otherness; it is a powerful colonising tool. Therefore, word nerds, academics, and literary critics have a very important job in unpacking language and language use. Thinking about geosophy at a discursive level enables this job to be undertaken. It does so, by facilitating a practice where we read through our subjectivities that inform geosophical positions. A focus on language and reading through our own subjectivities allows us to deal with instances when theories and conventions are not helpful. In light of this, EDG offers an interesting default theoretical position through the ideal of a-colonialism, it that it assumes theories and conventions are restrictive and colonising. EDG recognises that we can never be free from colonisation; all that we are and all that we do are essentially involved in a relationship with colonisation. However, from this theoretical position EDG offers strategies for negotiating those colonial circumstances. Here-in lies part of EDG’s real value because from an a-colonial operating position we can as people, academics, students, and educators critically think about how we can treat and value knowledges, not just in reading but in real life applications such as in education systems. We can critique through our own subjectivities and be aware of our own functioning and epistemology from within. Unpacking geosophical discourse as it appears and functions in language and language use is a crucial third step in the EDG process.

Ultimately, as a by-product of the application of geosophy to literary criticism, Eatdirtzian Geosophy also contributes to the body of work that already exists about geosophy. It does so by furthering understandings of the geographic nature
of knowledges through studying examples of geographic knowledges located in
texts and considering how knowledge about the earth develops and can be
communicated. An EDG works to identify what a geosophic discourse entails; this
knowledge can then be used by academics and literary critics. This is
demonstrated in the first chapter of the thesis which discusses the nature of scale,
time, and space as core emergences of geosophy. Geosophic readings of texts are
further developed in Chapter 3 of the thesis in an analysis of Tom Cho’s short
stories from Look Who’s Morphing and the film, Lucky Miles. Chapter 3 draws on
Wright’s work to further develop an understanding of the concept of geosophy
and how geographic knowledges might emerge in texts and acts of reading
through promotional, intuitive and aesthetic imaginings. In study examples from
Lucky Miles and Look Who’s Morphing the use of navigational tools, the
construction and representation of place, elements of human geography and
culture, and temporal and spatial language emerge as common literary
appearances of the geosophical. Further, the appearance of humour can emerge as
an indication of geosophical conflict. As part of step three of an EDG process, the
unpacking of discursive appearances of geosophy extends to studying how
geographic knowledge is constructed and communicated, which involves a focus
on language and representations.

A significant contribution of EDG to academia is that it works towards developing
and using geosophy as a discourse. It develops two aspects of geosophy as
discourse. Firstly, EDG recognises that geosophy works by studying the
relationship between power and knowledge at the intersection and nexus of
multiple sources of geographic knowledges. Secondly, EDG identifies standard
representations of these relationships and nexus through a discursive reading of
various texts and their contexts. In Chapter 5, a study of the various critical
intersections surrounding Anita Heiss’s Chick Lit novels allowed a critical
exploration of the power northern hemisphere knowledges and theories held over
Heiss’s work and, more locally, the way the texts were being colonised within
Australia criticism too. In reconciling both the texts and these northern
hemisphere knowledges to the Australian contexts surrounding Heiss’s work an
EDG provides scope for literary self-determination.

Striving for an a-colonial reading position is essential to facilitate geosophic
readings of work and to access various geographic epistemologies that are
different or similar. An a-colonial reading position is enabled through meta-
critical practice and a reconciling ethic, which allows a reader to move, so they
are not held in one inflexible position. Readers can move beyond the restrictive
boundaries of their own positions to consider multiple positions (like gender, race,
class, sexuality, ability and also constructs like nationhood). In this way, EDG
offers an intersubjective reading lens as a new way of reading text that is non-
prescriptive and non-reductive. The forth step in an EDG process involves the
critic shifting their centre which allows them to navigate intersections of power
and knowledge in a text, in acts of reading, and in their surrounding contexts in an
a-colonial fashion.

Once upon a time I made a mistake regarding a symposium for research students.
Yes, I say “mistake,” because as an educator I think mistakes are one of our best
tools or opportunities for learning. So, my “opportunity for learning” was this: as
a favour to the woman organising the symposium I agreed to fill a space in the
program after another student had suddenly pulled-out of giving a presentation. I
thought to myself, “hey, why not? I’ve got a conference paper I am working on
and this gives me a chance to workshop it. Plus, what else am I doing that
afternoon?” As a PhD student, you also learn to seize opportunities for productive
procrastination quickly.

The day arrived and the session I was due to present in was straight after lunch. It
was a session on creative writing, and we had drawn a big crowd for our audience.
The two students presenting before me offered readings of their current narrative
works, both of which were extremely personal stories. The crowd responded
kindly to the students, offering encouraging suggestions. Then, it was my turn.
The random sections of the paper I had prepared were loosely woven together in
my presentation: giving a quick explanation of what geosophy was, what I was looking for within Eatdirtzian Geosophy, and a quick reading of some sections from an Anita Heiss novel. This reading was the beginnings of my work with space and time.

After the presentation had concluded, the chair of the session opened up the floor for discussion with all three presenters and the audience. I was academically lynch-mobbed. Perhaps, I thought, the crowd had been holding back their criticisms with the previous presenters, given the personal nature of the presenters’ work before mine? Then, I started to worry and doubt what I was doing. Halfway through the discussion time, as I was explaining and defending my work, something happened. I started taking notes whilst I was talking and listening to others. The vigorous discussion that occurred forced me to pin-down what it is I was doing with these concepts of time and space in my work, and where that was located in regards to the work of other literary critics who have dabbled with these concepts. More importantly, the resulting discussion, and the conflicting responses from various people in the room, made clear to me how real multiple geosophical positions are. Everyone in that room had a particular experience and opinion about time and space, or that they subscribed to a particular theorist’s ideas about time and space. Further, they felt safe, entitled and obliged to share their ideas and opinions with the group, with some people claiming they held the authoritative answer more loudly than others. I think this is a good example for alluding to how my work functions – me (as the critic) facilitating a discussion with the knowledges provided from various geosophical positions while concurrently navigating my own responses to those ideas.

Unlike scale, there are numerous literary critics and cultural theorists who have considered the nature of time and/or space and how they relate to our engagement with texts and culture. However, my intention was not to conduct a major literature review recounting all of these. This is not my purpose or job here. Contact Zones, Third Spaces, Hazes, Chronotopes (Bahktin; Collins-Gearing "The Haze"; Huddart; Lefebvre; Rutherford; Pratt) – I am not concerned with making
one of these spaces or arguing about these theories or privileging one of these theorist as the ultimate authority on these geographic concepts. Nor am I arguing a case for any of these theories as a cultural or textual reading position. From an a-colonial reading position it is essential that I INTENTIONALLY avoid prescribing the use of these theories in my work as they reduce geographic knowledges and their sources. By using a theoretical framework of a reconciling ethic, combined with an a-colonial reading position, Eatdirtzian Geosophy offers a non-reductionalist approach to understanding understandings of scale, space and time, in that it moves past the work of those theories that offer classifications of spaces and time, to consider and re-value geographic knowledge constructions based on various relationships with environments. It does so by focusing on the individual knowledge source and accepting that knowledges can be local, global, universal, or a combination of these, and can vary. This fact is not being argued or debated in my work; a geosophic discourse removes that necessity. My work offers a discussion about how geographic knowledges are formed, how ideas about scale, space and time are conveyed and how they can be studied, valued, and thought about, and literature’s role as a source of geographic knowledges. It might not be perfect, it may even seem chaotic and confronting, but we need to start somewhere.
Figure 18: Reappraising the Eatdirtzian terrain, Geosophy and the Meta-critic recentre themselves within the landscape (image created by Gareth Bryan ©2013 Emma Joel)
Epilogue

On their return journey to the academy, Geosophy and the Meta-critic decide to have a party in order to catch up with all their school chums – the Isms and the disciplines. They are very keen to share stories of their travels and about all the ideas they have learnt. Being a bit of a word nerd, the Meta-critic suggests that their party be *Alice in Wonderland* themed, and that it can function like a Mad Hatter’s Tea party. Geosophy thought this was a clever idea, because they could turn the tea party into a game, and share what they had learnt through the game.

As they continue to walk, the two plan in greater detail how such a game would function, imagining a tea party with all their friends. Geosophy suggests, “I think you should play the role of the Mad Hatter. That way you can teach all of the guests about shifting centres yelling at them to ‘MOVE DOWN! MOVE DOWN!’” The two laughed at the thought of being able to boss Colonialism and Structuralism in such a way. Through a strained breath from giggling, Meta-critic murmurs his thoughts on the idea; “that’s a really great idea. The physical movement would be symbolic of our journey to find an a-colonial reading position because it would literally destabilise everyone’s position, allowing them to constantly change the perspective and angle of the table from which they participate in the party. Plus, it would be even funnier for us if we only get them to move down once they are comfortable and set up with their afternoon tea in their places at the table.” The two begin giggling again at the cheeky thought.

Always reflective the Meta-critical kept discussing the tea party idea, weighing up its pros and cons. “I really like the notion that guests can join the tea party when needed like Alice and the white rabbit do. Unlike a formal dinner party, it’s flexible, so people can come and go as they please; AND we can link it back to what we have learnt! We can explain to them that in the case of an EDG reading the guests symbolise other theorists or critics, with some empty seats that symbolise the questions unanswered, the unoccupied subjective positions, as no-one is there to speak from that position.”

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“Absolutely,” agreed Geosophy. “I’m not trying to feather my own nest here, but don’t forget the geosophical,” warned Geosophy. “Guests need to accountable for their geosophical positions while participating in the tea party, just as the white rabbit justifies his perception of time and ‘running late’ according to his clock. Perhaps, there needs to be points in the conversation that allow the guests to compare ideas about time, space, and scale or ask questions about our adventures. We can’t just dominate the table.”

“Well,” the Meta-critic replied, contemplating Geosophy’s request. “Maybe during the party we can point out to everyone that the concept of geosophy as an epistemological position is embedded in the idea that many guests have the opportunity to participate; varied participation symbolises that there are numerous voices that can be involved in the discussion of a text. The multitude of ideas about the text enables a well-rounded discussion of text and potential for a deeper knowledge.”

“And,” Geosophy interrupted, “the critic or the reader, like the mad hatter, is in the unique position to managing this multiplicity of ideas, while the table that everyone meets at is a metaphor for the reconciling ethic.”

Geosophy and the Meta-critical continued planning the intricacies of their homecoming tea party while marching towards the academy. As they reflected on their journey, all the people they met, all the places they had seen, all the obstacles they overcame, and their newfound negotiation skills, they became more and more determined to share their story with others.
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