Title: Nomad Strategies; Artists, travel and personal transformation

"You cannot step into the same river twice."
Heraclitus of Ephesus, circa 500 BCE

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Statement of originality

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ABSTRACT

If we were to explicate further the anatomy of a traveller, we could say that it is precisely in the very process of negotiating ‘the between’, traversing the threshold and crossing boundary, that she/he makes her/himself a traveller.

Syed Manzurul Islam

In this exegesis I explore the transformatory and self-liberating possibilities travel offers to artists who choose to travel, including myself. I propose that in the process of negotiating ‘the between’ and traversing the boundaries between the individual and the ‘other’ whom a traveller inevitably meets in the space of travel, the individual will confront internal boundaries which, when crossed, offer a true possibility for self-liberation.

I have concentrated on artists because I have called myself one for thirty years; as well I have travelled and lived outside Australia for considerable periods of time. The experiences of travel and developing my work in a variety of other spaces is reflected in my past and current practice as a contemporary artist. This will make this exegesis partly autobiographical, however I will also explore the travels of other artists, notably the work of Ian Fairweather and affect of travel upon their practice as artists.

Syed Manzurul Islam proposes that the crucial difference that separates a truly nomadic traveller from those he describes as ‘sedentary travellers’ is the acceptance of the opportunity to change, to peel away the layers of preconception that we all carry and to ‘become-other.’ That is, to bridge the space between our external lives and our internal state of being in the unique space of the journey. Maurice Merleau-Ponty proposes art as the bridge that can join the ‘other’ and us through the creation of personal, creative languages flexible enough to be that bridge.

I will refer to my own and other artists’ journals to explore the ramifications of my and others’ journeys as a way to self-liberation and creativity. This is a pathway that writer and

1 Syed Manzurul Islam, The Ethics of Travel from Marco Polo to Kafka: (UK: Manchester University Press, 1996), 5.
2 ibid., vii.
lecture Rob Pope proposes, as leading to an ongoing process of ‘coming-to-be’ which is both unpredictable and only ‘ever fully graspable in the event’. This Pope describes as ‘invention’ over a ‘discovery’ model of creativity.4 Travel, I propose, is a way to self-liberation and creativity as a complex series of interactions within the space of the journey.

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