



PALGRAVE CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOLING,
TEACHERS AND TEACHING

The Crystallizing Teacher

Revelations of Whiteness in
Schools Through Freirean
Critical Reflective Practice

Craig Wood

palgrave
macmillan

Palgrave Critical Perspectives on Schooling, Teachers and Teaching

Series Editors

Martin Mills

Institute of Education

University College London

London, UK

Glenda McGregor

School of Education and Professional Studies

Griffith University

Mt Gravatt, QLD, Australia


This book series is concerned with thinking about how schooling can be done differently and in ways that engage and inspire young people and teachers. The book series takes as its premise that education should be an exhilarating experience which leads to wonderment, new knowledges and seeing the world from multiple perspectives and that education should have impact beyond the classroom. It will include books that explore such conceptions of education within the context of more socially just systems, and more democratic societies. It seeks books that provoke debates about new structures of schooling; teacher education programmes; the nature of teachers' work and teaching (pedagogy, curriculum and assessment). While books in the series will provide a critique of the current grammar of schooling they will also 'imagine' – often based on empirical work – new grammars. The series will help to shape an educational field by providing authors (both new and experienced) with an opportunity to demonstrate that future practices of schooling/education do not need to be limited by conventional wisdoms.

Craig Wood

The Crystallizing Teacher

Revelations of Whiteness in Schools Through
Freirean Critical Reflective Practice

palgrave
macmillan

Craig Wood 
Queensland Teacher's Union
Moorooka, QLD, Australia

ISSN 2662-2785 ISSN 2662-2793 (electronic)
Palgrave Critical Perspectives on Schooling, Teachers and Teaching
ISBN 978-3-031-57749-9 ISBN 978-3-031-57750-5 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-57750-5>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2024

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use. The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover credit © Alex Linch shutterstock.com

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Paper in this product is recyclable.

To John, the first radical person I knew.

PRELUDE

John was the first radical person I knew.

I first met John when I was a kid, and I was fascinated by the affection other kids had for him. It didn't take long before my fascination transformed into affection and then escalated to fandom. Over the years my fandom turned to friendship and in my adult years John was a guest at my wedding.

I was halfway through writing this book when it occurred to me that John was radical.

I remember John cultivating joy and nurturing hope.

When I (re)remember John, I am aware of the strength of his struggle and resistance to dominant fatalist ideology.

John refused to accept the life that the world had programmed for him.

John fought against oppression which was perpetuated by the ability privileged world.

John lived his life in a wheelchair.

When I was a kid in the 1980s, I would watch John spin around to the passenger side of his car, open the door, bench press himself into the passenger's seat, slide across to the driver's seat, turn back and throw down the passenger's seat, reach out of the car and haul his chair into the newly created passenger seat void, reach back again to pull the passenger door shut, sit back up in the driver's seat, fasten his seatbelt, put on his sunglasses, and turn over the engine.

It was a choreographed, fluid series of movements, and an almost always flawless performance. But as I recall these childhood memories, it occurs to me that John was aware of his audience when he performed the sequence

because, from time to time, there were variations in the routine. I don't know how he edited the steps in the sequence, but one day John ended up in the passenger seat and then began a faux panic about someone having stolen his steering wheel.

It also only occurs to me now, as I (re)remember the choreographed sequence, that each time John climbed into his car, his body was performing an act of struggle and resistance against the ability privileged world. He refused to succumb to dominant fatalist ideology of the time which was a barrier to him driving a car.

From my perspective as a kid in the 1980s, it made sense that John needed to be able to drive a car because he had a job that was a twenty-minute commute from his house. Now, (re)remembering John as an adult, I also recognise that his employment in the 1980s workforce was yet another act of struggle and resistance.

In the early 1980s, John lived with his parents in a house that was 100 metres away from the school where I was enrolled with many other white kids. From time to time, on days when he wasn't working, John would roll up to the school playground during our break time; he was also a regular attendee at our Saturday morning T-ball games at the local baseball club; and, to those of us in the local cub-scout troop, he was a leader known as Akela, which is a name cub-scout leaders sometimes adopt as a name from The Lone Wolf character in Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*.

One night at cub-scouts, Akela was missing from the assembly of the other leaders on our parade. As I stood with the other boys, assembled on parade, standing in formation and at attention; all dressed in our uniforms that our mothers had carefully stitched an array of coded badges upon; as we faced inwards, looking across the timber floor with its white-painted motif "rose of the winds" with cardinal markers; as we looked across the parade at the boys in the other dens; as we prepared to raise or lower the national flag, or recite the pledge or promise faith to God and the Queen, or chant "*dyb-dyb-dyb*" and "*dob-dob-dob*," or some other part of the Grand Howl ceremony, our lone wolf Akela reappeared.

A shockwave of thunderous sound crescendoed from the entrance to our scout hall; four rubber wheels rumbled across the timber floor and climaxed with Akela's entrance, audaciously rocketing across the planks of wood and disrupting the formality of our assembled parade. He applied

the brakes—hard—skidded across the white-painted motif “rose of the winds” with cardinal markers and stopped short of the assembly of other cub-scout leaders.

The assembled parade of cub-scouts, hitherto standing at attention, were veritably amused with this performance. We all showed some degree of involuntary response that could be described somewhere on a spectrum ranging from guffaw to laughter to chuckle to snicker or just a smirk. But we were snapped back to attention by one of the other leaders with their abrupt use of a monosyllabic holler then scorching scowl on their face.

Akela’s show of irreverence had appealed to us because we were watching a person in authority misbehave. Looking back and (re)remembering this show as an adult, I think it still appeals to me because I was bearing witness to someone performing an act of peaceful and civil disobedience against a higher authority.

Many years later, as an adult in conversation with John, I recalled the night of his audacious entrance. John paused, and then confided that he had received an absolute bollocking from one of the other leaders after the cub-scout meeting had closed. He added that person was a bully who regularly attempted to intimidate him and would often discriminate against him by planning activities which posed physical barriers to John’s participation.

In my adult years, John also told me about some of the experiences that he had in his youth. His body was subjected to painful and torturous medical treatments in an attempt to get his legs to work. This was the torment of a world inflicting its power on a person whose body was outside of socio-political and cultural norms.

As best as he could, John struggled and resisted these treatments as well.

This book is about my struggle and resistance to see through privilege in my professional praxis in the field of education, and to undertake activist transformations towards liberatory hope. It is about the political relationship between one person being shaped by the wider socio-political world and about that person’s resistance, or acceptance, of the world.

This is a radical book; it embodies the spirit of John.



Fig. 1 Photograph of John watching on at the author's cub-scout initiation ceremony. (Circa 1984, from the author's private collection.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From time to time a *Peanuts* meme pops up in my social media. Charlie Brown is walking with Linus and he says, “I thought the point of life was to be happy, help others and make the world a better place.”

Linus replies, “I guess you’re right, but we can’t all become teachers.”

John made the world a better place, and I hold shared knowledges, stories, and experiences with many teachers like John who taught me, and with many more who I have taught with. To Bardhyl, Chloe, Trisha and the many teachers who made (and make) me happy, who helped (and help) me, and who made (and make) the world better, thank you—even if I am critical of our knowledges, stories, and experiences in this book.

I would not be able to engage in this work were it not for the generosity of knowledge and spirit of awesome First Nations people who I count as friends and colleagues, some of whom consented to be named in these acknowledgements and some asked not to be named. You know who you are, teacher activists, teacher unionists and life members of our union, experienced teachers, early career teachers, early career researchers, and respected professors. Thank you for your patience and perseverance. Thank you for your contributions to knowledge, to my knowledge and understanding. Thank you for inviting me to walk with you, and for walking with me.

I became a member of my teacher union, the Queensland Teachers’ Union (QTU), in my first year of teaching. In my second year of teaching, I became a workplace representative. Over the course of the last twenty-five years, I have been elected to branch, committee, State Council and Executive positions, and I am now employed by my Union as a Research

Officer. I am thankful for the support afforded to me by Kate Ruttiman and Graham Moloney, both General Secretaries of the Queensland Teachers' Union, and many of my colleagues and QTU members during my tenure as a teacher and Research Officer. Special thank you to Mandy who helped me to index this manuscript in the hours before it was due.

I have been blessed to be accompanied and guided on my crystallising odyssey by Dr Madonna Stinson and Dr Harry Van Issum, who were supervisors of my doctoral candidature. I am very grateful for Madonna and Harry's ability to keep calm and carry on in the face of my frequent outbursts of irritation about being made subordinate to neo-managerial practices of the academy and which were eroding my scarce time to work. I am immensely grateful for Madonna and Harry's supervision, wisdom, counsel, and patience, for knowing when and how to push me, as well as respecting my work-life-study balance and their understanding that my agreed timelines were more aspirational targets than enforceable obligations. The meals and conversations that we shared over this journey have been a pleasure. I'm also grateful that Madonna introduced me to Rachel Rolfe, who has assisted with the production of the graphics in *The Crystallising Teacher*.

I thank Alice Green and all at Palgrave for your support and patience while this book came together. Special thanks to Martin Mills and Glenda McGregor for the *Critical Perspectives on Schooling, Teachers and Teaching* book series, and for championing thinking about schooling and education which imagines beyond the limits of conventional wisdoms and urges thinking about how schooling and teaching can be done differently. Martin, thank you for your leadership that opens spaces and then encourages people like me to challenge themselves to make sense of those spaces and the adventures to be had within them.

Parts of this book have been written in Kythira, Greece, the island of my wife's ancestors. My favourite beach overlooks waters where Aphrodite first emerged from the sea, and my favourite bar overlooks the bay where Helen of Sparta and Paris of Troy paused to honeymoon while sailing to Troy. I thank Μίνα Μιράντι for the use of his property in the village of Φράτσια. I also recognise the many hours spent working at Βίτσιο in Λιβάδι, and both Μπάντα Λάντρα and Fox Anglais in Καψάλι, and the many megabytes worth of wifi uploads and downloads at those establishments.

και σε ευχαριστώ Μαρία μου που με πήγες στην Ελλάδα και την υπομονή σου στις εργάσιμες διακοπές.

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
<i>Agentic Self-literacy</i>	4
<i>Organisation of The Crystallizing Teacher</i>	12
<i>Crystallising Conscientização</i>	15
<i>Crystallising Touchstones</i>	20
<i>Crystal Defects and Other Imperfections</i>	23
<i>Making Whiteness Visible</i>	25
<i>Mystory about Sal</i>	28
<i>Mystory about Gandu Jarjum</i>	30
<i>Critical Reflective Questions and Actions</i>	33
Models of Reflective Practice, Crystallising Conscientização, and Writing Mystories	35
<i>Some Models Reflective Practice</i>	36
<i>Three Phases of Crystallising Conscientização Method</i>	41
<i>I Data Collection: Gathering Artefacts and Reclaiming Stories</i>	44
<i>Research Journal</i>	53
<i>Artefacts, Walking, and Memories</i>	57
<i>Recognising Place</i>	58
<i>II Data Collection: Artful Representations and Developing Mystories</i>	59
<i>Through-the-Mirror Writing</i>	59
<i>Six-Minute Writing</i>	60
<i>Finding the Story</i>	61

<i>III Data Analysis: Reflexivity, Reflections, and Collegial Discussions</i>	69
<i>Reading and Responding</i>	69
<i>Share with a Peer</i>	71
<i>Developing the Writing</i>	72
<i>Critical Reflective Questions and Actions</i>	74
<i>Gather Your Artefacts and Reclaim Your Stories</i>	74
<i>Artful Representations</i>	74
<i>Reflexivity, Reflections, and Collegial Discussions</i>	74
Silencing Voices	75
<i>Silencing Hometown Histories</i>	77
<i>Mystory of (Re)remembering Local Histories I</i>	77
<i>Mystory of (Re)remembering Local Histories II</i>	78
<i>Mystory of School in a Jubilee Year</i>	83
<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	86
<i>Silencing Them: Growing up in the 80s as an Us</i>	88
<i>Mystory of Training to Be an Us</i>	89
<i>Mystory of Early Encounters with Books</i>	91
<i>Mystory of Mr Percival</i>	93
<i>Oh! The Places I Went: A mystory</i>	95
<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	100
<i>More Silencing Through School Curriculum</i>	101
<i>Mystory of the Sailors of the Buffalo</i>	104
<i>Captain Cook: A Mystory</i>	107
<i>Mystory of Learning About Burke and Wills</i>	111
<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	113
<i>Summary</i>	114
<i>Critical Reflective Questions and Actions</i>	114
<i>Gather Your Artefacts and Reclaim Your Stories</i>	114
<i>Artful Representations</i>	115
<i>Reflexivity, Reflections, and Collegial Discussions</i>	115
Listening to Agentic and Activist Acts	117
<i>Listening with Eyes Wide Open</i>	118
<i>Mystory of the Place of the Echidna</i>	119
<i>Mystory of a Student Politics</i>	121
<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	123

<i>Listening with an Open Mind</i>	124
<i>Mystory of Preservice Teacher Education</i>	126
<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	131
<i>Listening with Open Arms</i>	132
<i>Mystory of Gandu Jarjum (Revisited)</i>	132
<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	134
<i>Listening with an Open Heart</i>	135
<i>Mystory of Sandy Creek</i>	135
<i>Mystory of Contemplation</i>	138
<i>Mystory of Learning to Decolonise Research</i>	139
<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	141
<i>Listening as Methodology of the Heart</i>	141
<i>Summary</i>	147
<i>Critical Reflective Questions and Actions</i>	148
<i>Gather Your Artefacts and Reclaim Your Stories</i>	148
<i>Artful Representations</i>	149
Remembering Critical Stories	151
<i>(Re)remembering Mystory of a Field Trip</i>	153
<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	157
<i>(Re)remembering Mystory of EATSIPS</i>	160
<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	165
<i>Revisiting and (Re)remembering Mystory of Sal: A Letter</i>	168
<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	171
<i>(Re)remembering Mystory of Matthias</i>	174
<i>Act One</i>	175
<i>Act Two</i>	176
<i>Act Three</i>	177
<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	178
<i>Summary</i>	179
<i>Critical Reflective Questions and Actions</i>	179
<i>Gather Your Artefacts and Reclaim Your Stories</i>	179
<i>Artful Representations</i>	180
<i>Reflexivity, Reflections, and Collegial Discussions</i>	180
Practising Teaching	181
<i>Being Bold and Brave</i>	182
<i>Mystory of Judgement</i>	183

<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	185
<i>Looking Inside</i>	186
<i>Mystory of ενατένιση (Contemplation)</i>	186
<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	190
<i>Growing and Nourishing</i>	191
<i>Mystory of Two Teachers Drinking Coffee</i>	192
<i>Rejecting the Status Quo</i>	193
<i>Legacy: Lessons from a Teacher and His Father</i>	194
<i>National Importance of Critical Curriculum</i>	195
<i>Education for Active Citizens</i>	197
<i>Conclusion</i>	198
<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	198
<i>Effective Teaching</i>	200
<i>Mystory of Teaching to Become Us</i>	201
<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	204
<i>Summary</i>	205
<i>Critical Reflective Questions and Actions</i>	205
<i>Gathering Artefacts and Reclaiming Stories</i>	205
<i>Artful Representations</i>	205
<i>Reflexivity, Reflections, and Collegial Discussions</i>	206
Teaching as Solidarity Work	207
<i>Conscientização: Questioning and Educating Myself</i>	208
<i>Tuckpointing: A Call to Progressive Teachers</i>	211
<i>Becoming Hope?</i>	215
<i>Summary</i>	216
<i>Critical Reflective Questions and Actions</i>	217
<i>Gathering Artefacts and Reclaiming Stories</i>	217
<i>Artful Representations</i>	218
<i>Reflexivity, Reflections, and Collegial Discussions</i>	218
Epilogue	221
<i>Conversations with Myself</i>	223
Index	237

LIST OF FIGURES

Models of Reflective Practice, Crystallising Conscientização, and Writing Mystories

- Fig. 1 Three phases of crystallising conscientização. (Note: From Wood (2022, p. 211)) 43
- Fig. 2 Teacher-researcher journal excerpt. (Note: From *The Author's Teacher-Researcher Journal*) 56

Silencing Voices

- Fig. 1 Photograph of the author at playgroup. (Note: Circa 1977–8. In the author's private collection) 92
- Fig. 2 *Frog's Paradise*. (Note: Oct 2022. Image from the author) 97
- Fig. 3 Photograph from the author's class 1/2B. (Note: In the author's private collection) 108
- Fig. 4 Back cover of the author's class 1/2B school photograph. (Note: In the author's private collection) 109
- Fig. 5 From the website of the author's primary school. (Note: From the website of the author's primary school, located on traditional lands of the Kurna people) 113

Listening to Agentic and Activist Acts

- Fig. 1 Western Creek plaque on Bicentennial Bikeway. (Note: In the author's private collection) 142

Fig. 2	The author near Maiwar on Bicentennial Bikeway. (Note. In the author's private collection)	143
--------	--	-----

Teaching as Solidarity Work

Fig. 1	A process of cultural identity and teacher–student relationships	210
Fig. 2	Representation of Freire's pedagogy of indignation	213

LIST OF TABLES

Models of Reflective Practice, Crystallising Conscientização, and Writing Mystories

Table 1	A comparison of models of reflective practice	40
Table 2	Mystories as data in <i>The Crystallizing Teacher</i>	45



Introduction

From time to time, I remember John, but in the *Prelude* I (re)remembered him.

I revisited memories of John and interrogated some of those stories through a radical frame, and I represent my (re)remembering as reclaimed story. My process of (re)remembering John, and many other stories, is just one reason that this book has taken a lot longer to write than I had planned. In fact, this book might have been written months or even years earlier, and while I could chastise myself for not setting and meeting daily writing targets, that would miss the point.

The Crystallizing Teacher is not a product of neoliberal processes of professional learning which require goal setting, action plans, proficiency scales, and targeting of resources to meet predetermined goals (or at least, producing communications to give the appearance that goals have been achieved). Nor is *The Crystallizing Teacher* professional learning that conforms to the standards of a national framework, and it is unlikely to be a method of teacher professional learning that is reported in the OECD's *Education at a Glance* series.

I originally sought to frame my teacher-reflections with the formulaic structures of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's (AITSL) Professional Standards for Teachers. However, following a casual conversation with a colleague, who now holds a senior position in the

Queensland Department of Education, I was encouraged to turn my critical gaze onto the professional standards. In my colleague's view, AITSL's standardised templates and proficiency scales would not satisfactorily support me to understand the impact of whiteness on my praxis.

That conversation was a moment of epiphany.

This epiphany awakened me to understand that critical reflection of my praxis meant no part of the education system was fixed nor exempt from being submitted to questioning. I was awakened to the possibilities of multiple truths and became increasingly cognisant that nothing is stable. I had already shifted questions from developing technical understandings of classroom incidents towards improving agentic self-literacy through interrogations of my teacher praxis. But my colleague had prompted me to open my questioning beyond the personal and professional, and to ask political questions about systemic instruments of education policy in Australian schools and the historical and socio-political forces that shape those policies.

As I submitted AITSL's standards to questioning, I realised that my colleague was correct. Applying Joe Kincheloe's critical writing on teacher professional development to the standards and other AITSL tools, I now view AITSL's professional standards as devices that are used to "study down" the subordinate teaching profession, and "later using their information to manipulate and control" teachers and principals.¹ The AITSL standards lack the capacity to reveal hegemony which is described by Stephen Brookfield² as the ideas, structures, and actions that benefit a small minority in power, and that are viewed by the majority of people as wholly natural, preordained, and work for their own good. In other words, AITSL standards are blind to whiteness and they lack the capacity to deal with systemic racism.

On the other hand, *The Crystallizing Teacher* provides insights into personal identity and professional praxis, and offers a process to reveal hidden, racialised understandings of power in schools.

The Crystallizing Teacher is professional learning through a rigorous process of critical reflective practice. It is activist research that I have felt a professional and moral obligation to undertake, but it required

¹ Joe L. Kincheloe, *Teachers as Researchers: Qualitative Inquiry as a Path to Empowerment*. (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 1991), 13.

² Stephen D. Brookfield, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2017), 16.

development of a process that was not readily available to me. I abandoned the master's tools that can be used to justify inequality and, as Aileen Moreton-Robinson suggests, I am racialising whiteness to find “insights about power relations in Australian society,” and to “inform practice and theory.”³ Paulo Freire recognises such praxis-knowledge of the integrated duality of teacher and researcher, writing,

As I continue to teach, I continue to search and re-search. I teach because I search, because I question, and because I submit myself to questioning. I research because I notice things, take cognizance of them. And in so doing, I intervene. And intervening, I educate and educate myself.⁴

As a method of professional learning, *The Crystallizing Teacher*

- embraces knowledge making through creativity, curiosity, and criticality;
- makes self the text to be studied,⁵ to improve agentic self-literacy;⁶
- shows a process of asking questions and submitting self to questions about personal and professional constructions of knowledge and experiences;
- asks more questions about the wider socio-political world;
- applies writing as method of inquiry to develop cognizance of praxis and the world;
- restores teacher-as-researcher agency and voice that is often eroded by neoliberal process;
- promotes interventions in praxis through a crystallising odyssey of choices and actions;
- shows both successes and flaws in teacher-as-researcher attempts to enliven interventions in praxis;

³ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power and Indigenous Sovereignty*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 35.

⁴ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*. (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 35.

⁵ Paulo Freire, *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*. [Trans. D. Macedo, D. Koike & A. Oliveira.] (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998).

⁶ Sharon M. Ravitch, ‘Foreword’ in *Becoming Transformative Storytelling for Education’s Future* ed. Laura Colket, Tracy Penny Light, and Adam Carswell (New York: DIO Press, 2021), xii.

- encourages development of local and global communities of progressive teachers that educate selves and others; and
- charts a course of personal, professional, and political transformation towards hope.

AGENTIC SELF-LITERACY

The Crystallizing Teacher is a becoming of hope. In *Between Autoethnographies*, Marcello Diversi and Claudio Moreira write,

We, teachers, decolonising intellectuals of all stripes, must be hope, not the farce against which Paulo Freire (1970) warned educators even before the takeover of neoliberalism.⁷

The Crystallizing Teacher is also about power relations. In *The White Possessive*, Aileen Moreton-Robinson writes,

Power relations are at the very heart of the white national imaginary and belonging; they are postcolonising.⁸

And, *The Crystallizing Teacher* is a struggle against racism. Professor Lester Irabinna Rigney, a descendant of the Narungga, Kaurna and Ngarrindjeri peoples writes,

The struggle against racism is not solely the fight against racist lunatics on the fringe. The struggle must also include the fight to de racialise micro and macro social formations left to us by colonisation which continue to effect and shape the lives of my people.⁹

Writing about a becoming of hope, power relations, and a struggle against racism, and as an act of agentic self-literacy, I extend my earlier acknowledgements. I acknowledge that I was born on the traditional lands

⁷ Marcello Diversi and Claudio Moreira, *Between Autoethnographies: Path Towards Social Justice*. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 90.

⁸ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power and Indigenous Sovereignty*, 18.

⁹ Lester Irabinna Rigney, "Internationalisation of an Indigenous Anti-colonial Cultural Critique of Research Methodologies: A Guide to Indigenist Research Methodology and its Principles," *Journal for Native American Studies* 14, no.2 (1997): 109–121, 113.

of the Kurnu people, and many of the weekends and school holidays of my pre-teenage years were spent playing on the lands and in the waters of the Ngarrindjeri people. I was nearly forty years old before I learnt the names Kurnu and Ngarrindjeri, and whose names, histories, stories, cultures, and languages were omitted from my white, postcolonising education. Today, I am writing on the traditional lands of the Gubbi Gubbi people, and I have also written parts of this book on the traditional lands of Jagera and Turrbal peoples, Kurnu people, Yugumbir people, Githabal people, and the Wurundjeri and Woi-wurrung peoples. I pay my respect to elders past and present of these First Nations, and I thank all First Nations peoples who have extended the gift of their knowledges and stories, and who have shared experiences with me. I try to apply your gift in the spirit with which you generously gave it: with truth, authenticity, honesty, compassion, sensitivity, and with the intent of provoking activist and liberatory hope to make our world better.

I acknowledge the importance of reconciliation to both the lives of First Nations peoples and non-Indigenous people, who are living on this continent that is now called Australia. Reconciliation is fundamental to a just and prosperous Australian society. I am committed to walking towards hope, with my eyes and ears open, with my heart and head open, and with my hands open to the necessary lifting work of truth-telling. I recognise my non-Indigenous body is undertaking this becoming of hope, work of revealing power relations, and this struggle and resistance to racism on lands of First Nations peoples that were never ceded but were stolen.

This book is testimony that bears witness to postcolonising, white possessive logics, busily promulgating micro and macro social formations. Aileen Moreton-Robinson writes, “nation-states are extremely busy reaffirming and reproducing this possessiveness through a process of perpetual Indigenous dispossession.”¹⁰

This book is not a confessional tale, but I recognise the times and places in which I have contributed to both Indigenous dispossession and to the transgenerational failings of colonisers to see, hear, experience, respect and love the richness and diversity of the world’s oldest continuing cultures, and whose stories are of and about this continent we now call Australia.

In part, this book is a response to Pierre W. Orelus’ piercing words about people who benefit from whiteness. Orelus writes,

¹⁰Aileen Moreton-Robinson. *The White Possessive: Property, Power and Indigenous Sovereignty*, xi.

Someone with a heart, who is endowed with human compassion and respect for his or her fellow human beings should not tolerate the injustice inflicted on people who happen to be from different races, ethnicities, and cultures.¹¹

I recognise that my multiple and intersecting layers of privilege complicate my claims that I am undertaking resistance work which aims to end domination and deracialise social formations. I expect my claims will be received with suspicion because I am often dressed by hegemony, and I wear the tailored suit and tie of privilege. In truth, there are days when I have been sitting in meetings, or typing this manuscript, or sitting still listening to my thoughts, when I have doubted myself. As I have interrogated my memories, I have wondered about white experiences I have shared with “racist lunatics on the fringe”¹² and which cannot be erased. I am cognisant of Paulo Freire’s observation about one’s past which “can be, understood, refused, accepted, but it cannot be changed.”¹³ In those moments of wondering, I also remind myself of Albert Memmi’s observation, “One cannot change one’s past, but one can (re)remember it.”¹⁴

I know that racist lunatics, who are similarly dressed by hegemony and who look like me and sound like me, will reject the claims that I make about domination and whiteness. These lunatics and others will be hostile to my showing, labelling, and dismantling privilege because they would rather that I adapt to an unjust reality. More concerning than outright hostility of those people who look and sound like me, is that I know I remain susceptible to the surreptitiousness of their hegemonic dominance which often manifests as whiteness. These hegemonic forces are forever shifting and reinscribing themselves. They work hard to stifle awareness of their presence by strengthening barriers which box in and snuff out struggle and resistance.

I know that my multiple and intersecting layers of privilege make me vulnerable to the clandestine nature of the oppressor’s monologues which

¹¹ Pierre W. Orelus, *Whiteness and Linguoracism Exposed: Towards the Decentring of Whiteness and Decolonisation of Schools*. (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 11.

¹² Lester Irabinna Rigney, “Internationalisation of an Indigenous Anti-colonial Cultural Critique of Research Methodologies: A Guide to Indigenist Research Methodology and its Principles,” 113.

¹³ Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of Indignation*, (London: Routledge, 2004), 53.

¹⁴ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* [Trans. H. Farrington.] (London: The Orion Press, 1965), 72.