Making Tracks:

Writing Otherness in Refugee Narrative Fiction

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed. I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

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List of Publications

Two academic articles and several peer-reviewed conference presentations have resulted from the research of this PhD. I owe a debt of gratitude to the editors and anonymous peer-reviewers of these articles. They provided me with not only the confidence to continue my research, but also valuable insight into how my work could be improved. Some of this material appears in Chapters 2, 4 and 5.

Publications


Conference presentations


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Abstract

The ‘Other’ is a term used in writing to distinguish a person or character from the Self, where the Self is seen as a normative point of reference (Derrida in Kapila 1996, p.421). However, this is a term steeped in power dynamics stemming from colonisation. The coloniser is seen as ‘normal’ while the Other is rendered abnormal or subaltern (Spivak 1988). These dynamics play out in representations of refugees in fiction writing in which the dominant story is of a refugee fleeing persecution and trauma to a benevolent and welcoming Western country.

While there has been substantial enquiry into the representation of the Other in the field of literary studies (see Achebe 2016; Bhabha 2012; Hall 1997; Said 2003; Spivak 1988), there is limited academic research into the writing of Otherness from standpoint of the writer, although writings by Jessica Rose (2011), Meme McDonald (in McDonald & Pryor 1999/2000), Angela Savage (2016), Catherine Padmore (2006) and John Eakin (2004) provide important insights.

This has been complicated by criticism over how and if characters written by writers of other backgrounds may be represented ethically. Yet, in the wake of the current ‘refugee crisis,’ stories about refugees as a form of advocacy, written by or co-authored with writers who are not themselves refugees, have become more commonplace (see Al Muderis et al. 2014; Cleave 2008; de Kretser 2012; Eggers 2006; Menchú 1984; Nazer & Lewis 2003; Scott & Keneally 2013). Yet we still have little information about the process of writing refugee narratives when the writer is not a refugee (Couser 1998). Is there a difference between novels that are created while subjects are consulted and ones that are written without consultation? A look into how novels of this kind are written can significantly contribute to the current debate on writing the Other in fiction. Due to its focus on methodology, this creative practice dissertation provides unique insight into writing the Other and the issues that arise when attempting to produce such a work.

This practice-based study centres around the writing of an ethnographically informed novel manuscript entitled All the Time Lost that follows the lives of four characters from refugee backgrounds across a day in Melbourne. The novel is the culmination of three drafts, each using a different method inspired by ethnographic theory and research. The first draft is
characterised by fieldwork within the refugee community, the second draft by interviews and the third draft from feedback sessions. The dissertation examines the differences and consistencies between those drafts.

This theoretical component begins with the premise that ethnographic methodologies have established mechanisms for writing the Other. When viewed through the lens of postcolonial theory, these methodologies can be used to examine how novels of this kind may be written ethically. Through the writing of the novel, the processes and methods of producing the drafts (fieldwork, interviews and participant feedback) of the manuscript are examined. This dissertation uses the writing process of the novel as somewhat of an experiment, by examining the evolution of the three drafts of the novel, each using a different method for writing Otherness, in order to note how it changes (or remains consistent) depending on the method used. The theoretical work locates the ethnographically informed novel in the context of the politics and practice of writing the Other in fiction.

The differences in the drafts suggest that speaking to people of the backgrounds represented in the novel produces a different kind of novel to the one the writer might produce without this interaction. I argue that, before my interviews, I tended to adhere to the ‘national story’ (see Birch 2013), one which referenced existing stories told about Otherness. In this story, issues that reflected the country negatively, such as racism, were downplayed. The interviews led to a ‘post-national story’ which challenged the national story. In this second manuscript draft, issues such as racism became more pronounced. The implication is that writing without discussion with the people represented can be problematic. If not adequately reflected upon, it has the potential to reinforce the dominant cultural narrative. As such, this dissertation argues for a more nuanced framing of the debate to allow for questioning of traditional notions of what is acceptable in writing.
1. Description of the Project

_The thing is not to write what no one else could have written, but to write what only you could have written._ – Nam Le, _The Boat_ (2008, p.25)

This dissertation examines what it means to write characters that are of a background different to the writer. It centres around the writing of a novel, _All the Time Lost_, which follows four characters from refugee backgrounds across a day in Melbourne. The production of the novel is unique in that it was written in three drafts, each using a different method inspired by ethnographic methodology. After gaining RMIT University research ethical approval, the first draft was written while the author conducted fieldwork in the refugee community through a volunteer organisation that provides free university-style courses to people seeking asylum. The second was written after interviewing 15 people from asylum-seeker and refugee backgrounds. Participants were sourced from various locations, including a government-funded English language centre within a university with a large refugee student cohort. The third was produced after interview participants had had the opportunity to read the draft and provide feedback. Three interviewees participated in the feedback sessions. This dissertation is an exploration of how the novel manuscript evolved through increasing engagement with the people represented. By examining how this manuscript was written, the study aims to provide insights into how characters considered Other may be represented ethically. The results show that increasing engagement with Otherness shifts the narrative to one that deviates from the ‘national story.’ In this context, the national story refers to the dominant narratives told about refugees, which follow a similar structure and in which Western countries are seen as benevolent, racism is downplayed and the state of being a refugee is conflated with victimhood.

_All the Time Lost_ is considered a ‘refugee narrative.’ The refugee narrative features a person who identifies as a refugee and tends to illustrate the UNHR definition of having a ‘well-founded fear of persecution’ of returning to one’s country of origin (UNHCR 2014) by the telling of a first-hand account of persecution. ‘Refugee narrative’ emerged as a term used to describe the testimonials of Holocaust survivors. The term ‘refugee life narratives’ was first used by Sissy Helff (2009b) in her essay ‘Refugee life narratives: The disturbing potential of a genre and the case of Mende Nazer’ to refer to longer works that are based on the stories of
refugees. In these texts, Helff (2009b, pp.333–334) argues, the treacherous journey from one land to a new country tends to be central to the plot. She points out that refugee writing is often associated with victimhood. This may be because many existing works that could be described as refugee life writing situate the main characters in relation to trauma (Helff 2009a). Yet this is also closely associated, like the testimonial, with advocacy. According to Szörényi (2009, p.173):

Many of those who suffer such injustice are also displaced by the associated events, and ‘refugees’ thus become one of the groups for whom ‘testimonials’— defined by Wendy Hesford as ‘narratives told in the first person by a narrator who recounts the trauma of human rights violations’ offer a valuable means of recording and publicizing experiences of abuse.

Thus, for the purposes of this dissertation, the term ‘refugee narrative’ refers to stories in a narrative form based on testimony by those who have undergone forced migration,¹ for the purposes of advocacy. Yet these are typically framed within a three-act structure (Zable 2016): a refugee character flees a country, overcomes a treacherous journey and arrives in Australia – often where the protagonist finds success. This narrative forms the ‘national story,’ in which the immigrant finds refuge from persecution, and the treatment of the refugee in the country of refuge is not interrogated in any significant detail in the writing.

I take Derrida’s concept of the ‘other’ as a starting point. Derrida argues that Western metaphysics ‘is based on binary oppositions, a structure that easily subsumes the idea of the self as stable, normative point of reference, and the other, as constituted by the exclusions of this self’ (cited in Kapila 1996, p.421). Otherness itself arises out of a Western-centric view of the world. Othering, for example, is the act of making a person different and subaltern to the writer. However, the notion of the Other encompasses many disciplines. When I use the term ‘Other,’ I draw upon definitions grounded in postcolonial theory and anthropology, and as a concept used in life writing. Otherness with a capital ‘O’ in postcolonial studies also refers to the way in which people of colour are made to be different, and subaltern, to the dominant white culture. It is seen as a system by which to maintain a white supremacy. To be made Other thus means to be seen as inferior by white groups.

¹ Regardless of the author’s intention, these can serve as forms of advocacy since they tend to document abuses of human rights, a criterion of refugee status, which is the persecution of a person based on religion, politics etc.
While in this dissertation I refer as Others to those who are different from myself, I have chosen to capitalise the ‘O’ in Other in order to acknowledge the power dynamics at play within representation. This character reference takes on a different meaning, one which acknowledges a history of misrepresentation. The use of the capitalised Other in subaltern studies thus refers to the Othering of a person, representing that person as inferior. As I refer to characters, I am doing so only to differentiate the Other from the Self, not to represent the Other as subaltern or inferior.

Along these lines, Eakin (2004, p.8) sees Otherness as experiential. He argues that ‘we live our lives in relation to others, our privacies are largely shared, making it hard to demarcate the boundary where one life leaves off and another begins.’ In my writing, the Other is in opposition to the Self. However, the Self and Other are fluid, and increasingly complicated when subaltern groups are represented as Other, given that a significant power difference exists. How then can Otherness be represented or measured?

In the social sciences, ethnography has historically been used as a methodology with which to represent Otherness. Miller (2010) argues that cultural and social anthropology helped to shape Otherness as a tool for scientific enquiry by emphasising sameness, usually in reference to the anthropologist’s own normative values. This by extension refers to Western values. Thus, the groups studied became seen as ‘different’ while Western cultural was seen as the normative point of reference. Postcolonialism complicates this notion (Rea 2010), situating Otherness firmly in opposition to Western culture. Otherness as a concept in postcolonial theory sees the Other as different from the Self, the Self representing the coloniser and the Other representing the colonised (see Bhabha 2012; Fanon 1952; Said 2003; Spivak 1988). Al-Saidi (2014, p.95) writes:

> The Other by definition lacks identity, propriety, purity, literality. In this sense he can be described as the foreign: the one who does not belong to a group, does not speak a given language, does not have the same customs; he is the unfamiliar, uncanny, unauthorized, inappropriate, and the improper.

These definitions cannot be separated from the concept of the Other. However, ethnography through the lens of postcolonialism views the Other as closely linked to identity, and identity
is seen as fluid. Here, I draw on Stuart Hall’s concept of the postmodern subject, which is ‘conceptualized as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity’ (Hall 1987 cited in Hall 1996, p.598). To Hall, identity, or the question of ‘who I am’ (1996, p.1), is not unified since we have multiple cultural identities. Thus, cultural identity as we know it is constituted within representation, through history, language and culture (Hall 2011, p.4). To provide the semblance of cohesion, we construct a ‘comforting story’ about ourselves, or a ‘narrative of the self’ (Hall 1996, p.598). As Richards (2010, p.19) notes:

post-colonialism sees identities, not as fixed and rooted, but as products of a world in constant motion. Although ‘race’, ethnicity, and nationality may appear to be the solid bedrock upon which we shape a sense of ourselves, these are not, nor have they ever been, stable, but are always being formed and reformed in different patterns and combinations in a process of constant interaction and change shaped by historical circumstance. As a consequence, identities are also in a constant state of flux.

What I’m arguing is that, in order to construct the cultural identity of the Self, one constructs a comforting narrative of one’s own self. However, Otherness exists when a story of identity is created for or of the Other. When the Other is the subaltern subject, it also represents a history steeped in unequal power relations in which the Other is constructed as lacking compared to the Self. The implication of this is that historical representations of Self and Other in writing cannot be separated from the author’s representation. They exist within the same sphere in which identity is constructed. This must be taken into deep consideration with any attempt to write Otherness, as it has consequences for not just the conception of cultural identity of the Self but also that of the Other.

Due to the politics of representation and the fluidity of the concepts of both Self and Other, the study requires a point against which to measure the concept of Otherness. I have written one of the characters as of a Chilean background, similar to my own Chilean-American background. By comparing the writing of Chilean-Australian character Lucy to the writing of the characters Amar (Iran), Azra (Somalia) and Nina (Sudan), I reflect upon what it means to write Otherness. Writers such as Padmore (2006) and McDonald (in McDonald & Pryor 1999/2000) included their own background when reflecting on their writing Others. As such, my background as the ‘Self’ in this study becomes pertinent to my writing. Being of both a
white and Chilean background poses difficulty when I attempt to situate myself as either Chilean or American. Clare Land (Land 2015; cited in Sullivan 2006) discusses idea of ‘whitely’ ways of relating. She notes that these are ‘habits and dispositions that reproduce racial hierarchy and white privilege’ and clarifies that ‘not all people are whitely and not all whitely people are white’ (Land 2015, p.20). This follows from Australian critical analyses of whiteness in terms of the position of privilege that it provides by writers such as Eileen Moreton-Robinson (2004) and Ghassan Hage (1998). This is significant because of the relationship between whiteness and the maintenance of racial hierarchies, which positions whiteness as the norm against which other races are judged (Moreton-Robinson 2004, p.vii). I cannot say whether I am or not ‘whitely’ – I am both and therefore must be aware of the cultural privilege it provides, as well as the danger of supporting oppressive racial structures.

Yet being of mixed race also poses its own unique issues. Hall in his seminal essay, ‘The spectacle of writing the Other’ (1997), notes those of mixed backgrounds are seen as a transgression of symbolic boundary and ‘matter out of place.’ There is a desire to dismiss this because it threatens the normal state of affairs. To Hall, the frustration caused by this defiance of category is the same phenomenon that compels cultures to close themselves against foreigners, intruders and ‘others’ as part of a process of purification (Kristeva cited in Hall 1997, p.236). This mixture of cultural identity meant that a stable, normative point of reference for this dissertation was not easy to define.

This was admittedly difficult to put into words at the start of writing. It was through the creation of this doctoral narrative that I felt more comfortable discussing my cultural identity. My hesitation arose out of my past experience discussing identity. To say I was both Chilean and Irish-American would lead to varied reactions; in the best cases fascination and confusion, and in the worst derision for my inability to just call myself American. I was born in the United States to a Chilean father and Irish-American mother. My father did not come to the USA as a refugee, but to seek economic opportunities. The starting point for this dissertation sees my narrative of the Self, my cultural identity, as influenced by my Chilean cultural heritage growing up in the expat Chilean community, a mixture of refugees escaping the Pinochet regime and economic migrants, in the USA. I see my dominant cultural background as American, also as Latina, or Latino American, and Irish-American. I have lived for short periods of time in both Ireland and Chile, further contributing to my cultural narrative. Having lived in Australia for over eight years and gained permanent residency, I see
myself, to a certain extent, as Australian as well. The fluidity of my cultural identity means that I do not see myself as one thing but multiple, and always influenced by the whiteliness of my Western, American background. Therefore, when I write Lucy’s character, who is born in Chile but moved to Australia with her family at a young age to escape the Pinochet regime, I do see her as Other but not to the same degree that I view the characters Amar, Azra and Nina as Other. I reflect upon these degrees of Otherness in the final chapter of this dissertation, expounding on degrees of authenticity. Van Leeuwen (2001) examines the concept of authenticity from three perspectives. He starts with the idea that it is something genuine; ‘origin and authorship’ are not in question (Leeuwen 2001, p. 392), but continues that it can also mean ‘authorised’ that is to say, bearing a ‘seal or stamp of approval’ (Leeuwen 2001, p. 393). He elaborates that authenticity may also be thought to be when the truth or essence of something is captured (Leeuwen 2001, p.393). Here, I distinguish between authenticity and verisimilitude, defining verisimilitude as believability, truth or essence, and authenticity as origins that are in close proximity to the author’s own. I conclude in this section that the further the Self is from the Other, the more authenticity is decreased. Though I also find that verisimilitude may improve with increasing engagement with the people represented.

This dissertation is situated within a growing controversy regarding writing Otherness. The primary argument against writing Others places it within the realm of cultural appropriation (see Alcoff 1991; Block, Haslam & Riggs 2013; Couser 1998). Cultural appropriation can be defined as ‘the taking over of creative or artistic forms, themes, or practices by one cultural group from another’ which carry ‘connotations of exploitation and dominance’ (Drabble et al. 2007). As white writers are more likely to be published than writers of colour (Stella Count 2016), this is seen as a further expression of Western dominance. Such opponents advise that writers of Others should not endeavour to do so, that it is a form of voice appropriation and does not allow writers to explore their own identity (see Alcoff 1991). In doing so, writers are ‘making space’ for those underrepresented groups to represent themselves. Still, more moderate proponents believe that the people written about should be consulted in some capacity (see Couser 1998; Helff 2009b) and given the opportunity to review the work when possible. The opposite end of the spectrum calls for writers to be able to represent characters of any background they choose, any way they choose. This assumes that Others are adequately represented by writers. Furthermore, any attempt to dictate how writers conduct their writing is equated with censorship (Shriver 2016; see Convery 2016).
At the heart of the debate remains the question of whether different methods of producing the novel may yield different results. Is there a difference between a character that has been written by a person of that background and one that hasn’t? Do varying degrees of engagement with the people represented in writing change the way the story is written? Although difficult to answer definitively, these questions have helped me to frame my research and approach to writing. Through the comparison of the drafts that have been produced using different ethnographic methods, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion on writing Otherness.

Background
In order to contextualise this study and to show how it functions as advocacy, I will provide an overview of how the language surrounding refugees and refugee policy has changed to suit an anti-immigration agenda. In this section, I argue that changes in official terminology to refer to refugees have resulted in refugees being viewed as a threat and as less than human, allowing inhumane immigration policies (such as indefinite detention) to go ahead. Novels producing a counter-narrative to the one disseminated by the government have begun to provide a different story to the one that is repeated through the media. These refugee narratives, I argue, can be seen as a powerful tool for advocacy.

When I began writing this dissertation in 2013, the language used to describe refugees and migrants in Australia was in flux, shifting dramatically in the transition from a Labor to a Liberal government. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) became the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP). The Immigration Minister at the time, Scott Morrison, then asked his departmental and immigration detention centre staff to refer to asylum seekers arriving by boat as ‘illegal arrivals’ and ‘detainees,’ rather than ‘clients’ (Hall 2013). This prompted criticism against the government, as it denoted an agenda of changing the terminology in order to dehumanise those seeking asylum. Terms such as ‘detainees’ and ‘transferees’ also came into circulation, which suggest ‘a package, a parcel in transit’ (Karapanagiotidis cited in Hall 2013) rather than people who have been displaced.

Perhaps the most controversial change happened when Operation Sovereign Borders and Australia’s Pacific Solution were instituted in 2014. These ‘solutions’ would send asylum seekers arriving to Australian shores to re-opened immigration detention centres on the
island nations of Papua New Guinea and Nauru (Karlsen 2016). Gradually, over this period of time (2014–2017), issues of border control began to dominate the media and political landscape with regards to either the threat of asylum seekers and immigrants or the plight and treatment of refugees. Reporting on boat arrivals stopped altogether, the government citing security concerns for the campaign of secrecy, and journalists were no longer allowed into the detention centres save a hand-selected few. In 2015 the Border Force Act made it ‘a criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment of up to two years, for any person working directly or indirectly for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to reveal to the media or any other person or organisation (the only exceptions being the Immigration Department and other Commonwealth agencies, police and coroners) anything that happens in detention centres like Nauru and Manus Island’ (Barns & Newhouse 2015). During this time, I came to see bureaucracy as a hegemonic force with the power to change not only how people viewed others, but how they viewed themselves. The change of a single term, such as ‘illegals,’ could reposition refugees and asylum seekers as a threat. These acts highlight the importance of those who define and represent refugees, as representations not in line with those of the government became strictly controlled. Due to the Border Force Act, the positions of those working with refugees and asylum seekers also became increasingly more precarious.

At the time of beginning this dissertation, I had been working with refugees and migrants for many years, as an English language teacher, on a professional and voluntary basis. The people I was working with did not fit the profile that was being espoused by the government. They were hardworking people facing everyday difficulties posed by language barriers and cultural differences. This duality manifested itself in conversations with people who asked about my students. I was often asked whether my students had arrived ‘illegally’ by boat or had ‘jumped the queue.’ If they had, any hardships that they had experienced which I described would be dismissed as a result of the crime they were perceived to have committed. I would hear statements like, ‘they should have waited their turn.’

Even now, anti-immigrant sentiment in the West continues to rise. Recently, the USA elected a president who ran on a strongly anti-immigration platform (Anderson 2016) and has been repeatedly accused of racism, particularly against Latinos and African Americans. As such, refugees can be understood as no longer having a sense of ‘Self’ or subjectivity but, instead,
refugee representations, particularly those disseminated through mainstream media, shape perceptions of non-Western groups as subaltern Others (Said 2003).

It has been argued by writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) that, to combat this Othering within the literary realm, a counter-narrative must be developed. Many works of fiction and nonfiction have successfully provided counter-narratives to the dehumanising language disseminated by the Australian government. Examples include Robin de Crespigny’s The People Smuggler (2012) and Michelle de Kretser’s Questions of Travel (2012). Over the years this dissertation has been written more works began to be published, including Maxine Beneba Clarke’s fictional collection of short stories Foreign Soil (2014) and testimonials such as Nicola Gray’s Facebook page New Humans of Australia (2015).

The potential for the counter-narrative to shift public perception was best exemplified when I attended a forum at the University College London (UCL) Institute of Advanced Studies and Department of Anthropology in June 2016 entitled ‘Engaging refugee narratives: Perspectives from academia and the arts.’ In the forum ‘participants explored how the arts can be effective and essential parts of interventions in resettlement and integration for refugees and local societies’ (Refugee Narratives 2016). It was attendees’ feeling that outlets such as performance, writing, art, film could be an effective way to help displaced people during the refugee crisis, which at the time was greatly affecting Europe. As the Syrian crisis deepened, the geopolitical shift caused an influx of refugees to Europe. Refugee camps, such as the one in Calais, a focus point of the discussion, were overflowing, poorly equipped and leaving people in a distressing state of limbo. As opposed to the situation in Australia, Calais allowed media and volunteers into the camps to work with the residents. Yet, like Australia, Britain was steadily closing its borders, limiting the numbers of refugees it would take. Within days of the forum, while I was still in London, Britain voted to leave the European Union (EU) in what was termed ‘Brexit,’ largely due to the public’s fears of the refugee influx causing instability in the country.

The forum suggested that the creation of counter-narratives through artistic mediums has the potential to shift public opinion. I asked one of the panellists, a photographer who had been working with people living in the Calais camp, if he had gone into the camp with the expressed purpose of becoming an advocate. He appeared to turn the question over in his mind before responding, ‘I don’t think you can go into that camp and not come out an
advocate.’ This phrase resonated with me and my own experience. I had gone into my research with the thought that, while I disagreed with the current refugee policies, I would strive to be objective. However, the very act of telling stories counter to those dominant narratives perpetuated in the media itself became a point of activism.

Advocacy, the act of persuading for another, is also connected to Otherness. According to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC, 2016), advocacy is ‘speaking out on human rights issues and taking action to improve a situation.’ As such, advocacy involves speaking on behalf of subaltern groups, or one’s own group, to raise awareness about human rights issues affecting those persons. However, several issues have been raised with regards to the ethics of speaking for Others. ‘Writing the Other’ describes a discursive practice in which the identity of the Other is assumed by the writer, usually in the first person (see Alcoff 1991). Thus, it is implied from the use of the term ‘Other’ that the writer is from a fundamentally Western background.

The writer is also speaking as the person of whom they write. This ‘speaking for’ has become increasingly controversial. First of all, advocacy implies that the person spoken for is unable to represent themselves. Due to political persecution and language barriers faced by refugees and migrants ‘speaking for oneself’ may be difficult, but it is far from impossible. On 9 April 2017, Idil Ali (2017) from the organisation Refugees, Survivors and Ex-detainees (RISE) spoke at the Walk for Justice for Refugees Palm Sunday Rally in Melbourne, which was run by the advocacy group Refugee Action Collective (2017). She accused the group of billing only advocates to speak (she herself had only been asked to speak after her group protested on social media). She said, ‘the only time where my community is invited to speak our-self is when you want to hear stories of our suffering and hardship, never for solutions, why is that? We are the experts of our narratives … it is time to listen.’ She repeated RISE’s motto: Nothing about us without us.

As can be gleaned from this section, the changing language referring to refugees has the power to impact on public sentiment around their acceptance. It became necessary for academics to think of new and more effective ways to counter these narratives. One such method is fiction, which allows for access to a wider audience beyond academia. However, it is important when advocating to consider that advocacy has the potential to drown out the voices it intends to make heard. Idil Ali’s point is a salient one; the group asks that they also
be given a platform to speak and that advocates listen. In order to write characters of refugee backgrounds, it became important to plan how to best incorporate the voices of participants inside of my work, to ensure that I listened, and to include members of the refugee community in the process of writing.

The creative project
This creative practice research centres around the production of an artefact, a novel manuscript entitled All the Time Lost. In the making of the novel, I have created three drafts. The first draft embodies a novel manuscript created through fieldwork and observation, the second through interview and the third through feedback. The final draft is the artefact presented as part of this dissertation. The process of the production of these drafts is detailed in Chapter 4.

The novel manuscript serves to raise awareness about the issues faced by refugees and migrants in everyday society post-migration. These issues include language barriers, political limbo and racism. These concepts are manifested in the manuscript through the symbol of movement, as each character moves through the city at various times on public transport. This core plot element remained the same through the drafting process, although incidents were altered or added throughout. While I intended to revise the manuscript following submission of this dissertation in order to further develop the characters, setting and sense of suspense, this was difficult to achieve within the timeframe of my doctoral studies. As such, the novel is still in draft form. I plan to work on it further following the submission of this dissertation. Therefore, All the Time Lost as part of this dissertation primarily functions a tool for research and advocacy.

The central plot of All the Time Lost follows the lives of four characters (Amar, Nina, Lucy, Azra). Amar is recently released from detention and is finding it difficult to leave his flat to see his Sudanese flatmate, Basel, give a presentation at Melbourne University on his experiences. Also presenting on her experiences is Azra, a student at Melbourne University, but on her way to the talk she finds herself at a protest with her friend and fellow student, Lucy. Lucy is dismissive of her father and the Chilean expatriate community, but slowly comes to the realisation that she has been protected from the stories of an oppressive regime, which are much worse than she had been led to believe. The final storyline centres around Nina. Nina’s
job at the University catering service becomes threatened when she finds she has a serious medical condition. These stories cross over like the lines of railway and tram tracks: they begin in the outlying suburbs but converge at the protest, set in the Melbourne CBD, where the Melbourne public transport system lines converge. The book then moves to a second part in which the stories, mirroring all of the tram lines on the main Swanston Street, go to Melbourne University.

The notion of movement is central to the concept of migrancy. Helff (2009a, p.69) argues, ‘Migrancy thus “transforms” a person, not only from a citizen into a migrant or refugee, or from a merchant into a pauper during their rite de passage, but also has a deep impact on the traveller’s mindset.’ Citizenship ties one to a country, providing a person with grounding. According to Chambers (1997, p.5):

> Migrancy [sic] involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation. Always in transit, the promise of a homecoming – completing the story, domesticating the detour – becomes an impossibility.

Migrancy then comes to represent not only a political state of being, but an existence characterised by uncertainty, fluctuation and movement. It is only through this movement that migrancy can find place. Thus, migrancy is a state of being, one that is at once grounded in place and removed from it. This became a key theme for the novel manuscript.

Yet Massey (2004) argues that the way we experience space is influenced by issues such as race and gender. She states that mobility can be restricted by fear of physical violence or simply by being made to feel ‘out of place.’ In 2012, video-recorded incidents of racism on public transport began to surface on social media and were disseminated on a global scale. In response, the VEOHRC (2013) launched an ‘anti-hate’ campaign on trains and trams. These incidents of racism led to a restriction on mobility for certain targeted groups, such as Australian migrants, excluding them from interacting in public spaces including transportation. These became the basis for the first draft and this core story remained consistent throughout the novel’s incarnations.
Changes to the drafts largely manifested in smaller instances; for example: things that happened on the train (e.g., an apple is thrown at Azra’s head); elaborations on conversations that the characters had (e.g., ‘you’re so lucky to be here’); and the way the tone and voice of the first-person narration develop (the English goes from being fragmented in the earlier drafts to more complete English in the later drafts). These will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

**Theoretical approach**

To consider how best to describe, engage with and listen to the refugee community, I looked to existing frameworks that deal with the politics of representation. I began with the premise that the method would need to be one that was detailed, measurable and compatible with literary tropes. In light of this, I adopted an ethnographic approach. This specific approach has its basis in the intersection between postcolonial studies, translation studies and collaborative ethnography. As critical collaborative ethnography has been influenced by postcolonial and translation theory, I draw upon theory that problematises the politics of representation.

Ethnography within the area of anthropology has a long history of engagement with the concept of Otherness. Pink (2015, p.26) predicted that novel forms of ethnographic writing and other techniques from arts practice might communicate theoretically sensitive representations of the experiences of one group of people to diverse target audiences. Ethnography explores underrepresented groups in depth from a discipline that ‘writes the other,’ under constant examination and re-evaluation, and is criticised for being ‘undemocratic’ in the decisions made over whose voice is represented and how (Hammersley & Atkinson 1994, p.254). Therefore, how the writing is produced is documented, evaluated and subject to scrutiny. Also, like literature, ethnography is a textual genre, and it has become more common for ethnographers to appropriate fiction and the literary to communicate the findings of their fieldwork alongside or after the publication of their studies (Laterza 2007, p.124; see also Schmidt 1984). Due to its constant evaluation of the researcher–subject relationship, it made sense to use ethnography as a methodology in order explore how novels written from the perspective of the Other are produced before and after interview, with respect to the politics around writing the Other. As the novel is fiction, the end
result would not be an ethnographic novel manuscript, but an ‘ethnographically informed’ novel manuscript (Narayan 2012, p.x).

Ethnography views translation as a process that takes place between cultures and, in doing so, seeks to understand a culture in comparison to another. As translation theory engages with these ethical questions around representation and language, it provides an appropriate lens through which to view ethnographic theory. Within postcolonial studies, Niranjana (1992, p.8) sees ‘translation’ as suggestive of movement, disruption and displacement. Within creative practice, ‘translation’ can be considered to be between genres and methods of communication (see Loffredo & Perteghella 2006). Yet in the aforementioned disciplines, translation is grounded firmly within context and subjectivity. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2007, p.127) calls it a ‘deep subjectivity’ that results from ‘collision between two worlds and two cultures.’ She points to the example of Seamus Heaney in his translation of the classic poem ‘Beowulf’, which drew on parallels between the Viking raids and the colonial relationship between England and Ireland. She argues that, in doing so, the poet can ‘colonize’ the work, taking it over for their own purposes – ‘you change it and it changes you’2 (Scheper-Hughes 2007, p.133).

It becomes important then to examine whether I am, as postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) would put it, speaking for or speaking to the people I intend to represent. Postcolonial and subaltern studies posit that the informant should be brought into the process of writing and the value notions that underlie these assumptions should be made explicit (Hammersley 1992, pp.27–28). Critical collaborative ethnography refers to ‘ethnographic practices that challenge dominant hegemonic global structures at the intersection of race, gender, sexuality and disability’ (Bhattacharya 2008, p.305). Thus, I adopt a critical collaborative ethnography as a theoretical framework and draw upon translation and postcolonial theories that have influenced this approach.

**Situation of thesis**

This dissertation is situated within the context of creative practice research and is intended to make a contribution to the field of creative writing research. According to Dallow (2003, p.53), practice-based research involves research through the creation of an artefact and

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2 More might be usefully said here about the cultural duality of translation. However, this may be beyond the scope of this thesis as the focus here is to focus on the methodologies used by the translator.
includes the practitioner engaging with their own creative work, illuminating the processes at work and situating it in a historical and theoretical context and/or the broader social and cultural situation and consumption. The artefact in this case is my novel manuscript, *All the Time Lost*. The purpose of the production of the artefact is to explore how a fictional refugee narrative can be crafted when the writer is not a refugee. Together, the novel manuscript and dissertation examine what it is to advocate for refugees in Australia through refugee narratives when the author is not a refugee.

To put this into further context, it becomes necessary to discuss creative practice as a field, which is fairly large as it encompasses many forms within the arts. This dissertation is located within creative writing practice specifically. Dallow (2003, p.49) posits that ‘to investigate and report upon creativeness in the creative arts requires us to think about artistic originality with some theoretical originality.’ Dallow (2003, p.50) sees art as a ‘mode of investigating human understanding, as much as it is of producing something new;’ therefore, he argues, it requires the charting of ‘doing’ of the making of the artefacts.

Graham Harper (2013, p.114) points out two main criticisms against creative writing as a discipline. The first is that creative writing research is not easily replicable because each writer’s situation is different. Because it is not replicable, creative writing cannot be developmental or build upon existing knowledge. Harper counters this, arguing that shared situational knowledge is the foundation of society and that the focus of creative writing is on methodology, rather than replicability. I would add that it may be likened to the social sciences in that social sciences investigate, amongst other things, the ways in which people do things and the reasons why they do them. Creative writing practice can be seen as an investigation into the ways writers write, an investigation into ‘creativity.’ As such, while the artefact may not be replicable, the process used to create the artefact may be. A writer in the future may use ethnographic methodologies to write a book that centres around the Other by following the process that I have described here. By looking at the difficulties I have identified through my reflective practice and suggestions for future practice, improvements may be made to this process and thus knowledge built upon it.
Methodology

This practice-led methodology is situated in creative practice. It is practice-led in that the research has been done through the process of writing the novel itself and has led to new understandings about practice (Candy et al. 2006). This research can also be considered practice-based in that the research is also demonstrated through the creative outcome (Candy et al. 2006), All the Time Lost. As a result, the investigation has been undertaken partly through practice and partly through the outcomes of that practice (Candy et al. 2006). Within creative practice methodology, the focus is on the practice, or the way in which the novel is written. Although there is extensive literature on the ethics of works already written (see Achebe 2016; Bhabha 2012; Hall 1997; Said 1978; Spivak 1988), there is comparatively less on how writers write or the processes used to create an ethically considered piece of writing on the Other, although writings by Jessica Rose (2011), Meme McDonald (in McDonald & Pryor 1999/2000), Angela Savage (2016), Catherine Padmore (2006) and John Eakin (2004) provide important insights. Simon Holloway (2013) compares the creative writing PhD to a pocket watch, positing that, while more traditional PhDs may take apart the pocket watch to examine how it has been created, the creative practice PhD builds a pocket watch and, through this process, examines the method of its construction. In doing so, practice is used as a means of making tacit knowledge available to research (Niedderer & Roworth-Stokes 2007).

As creative practice is a relatively new and evolving field, creative practice researchers tend to adapt methods and research strategies from qualitative traditions (Haseman & Mafe 2009, p.212). The methods, or practice, used to produce All the Time Lost were inspired by ethnographic methodology. This included using reflective practice, interviewing, participant observation and feedback sessions to write a book about four characters from refugee and migrant backgrounds. The primary reason for selecting this methodology to write the novel manuscript is because ethnographic methods have historically engaged with writing ‘the Other’ and have strategies to reflect on the ethics of doing so. Instead of using ethnographic methods to write a study, I am applying them to the production of a novel.

In order to interrogate the inner workings of the ‘pocket watch,’ I modelled each phase of my project on collaborative ethnographic methods: fieldwork, interview and feedback. The first draft (D1) was completed while conducting fieldwork (specifically, participant observation) in a grassroots organisation that provides free English and university subject courses to asylum
seekers and refugees. It was written as fiction, based on my field notes and past experience working with people from migrant backgrounds. As one of the characters is from a Chilean background, some of this story was also drawn from my personal experiences. Because it was based on these experiences, I also imagined situations or scenarios in order to craft the text, as well as fictionalised accounts. Chapter 4 explores this process in detail.

Draft 2 (D2) was created after interviews were conducted with 15 people from migrant backgrounds. D2 is characterised by these interviews, which were sourced from various areas, primarily the institution where I conducted my fieldwork and at an educational institution that provides migrant English courses. It is important to note that I was still conducting fieldwork during this time, so there is not a clear separation between the methods used here. However, because the process was detailed in journals and drafted documents, I was able to see where the methods used did and did not alter the drafts. This is explored further in Chapters 4 and 5.

Draft 3 (D3) was written after feedback sessions had been conducted. Two feedback sessions took place over September 2016, when physical drafts (D2) were given to the three participants who attended. Participants were given the option to have a private session. Participants had six months to provide feedback to be considered for the next revision (D3). This process is explored in more depth in Chapter 4. The table below presents each phase of the research project:

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<th>Overall project structure</th>
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As previously mentioned, the finished work is not an ethnographic novel manuscript but an ethnographically informed novel manuscript (a theme explored in the next chapter) and is situated within the genre of refugee narratives. Through the writing of the manuscript, the processes and methods of producing the drafts of the manuscript are examined. While I drafted, I contemplated issues of translation and interpretation with the hope of shifting the refugee narrative away from stories of victimhood or threats to the public. This draft examination has implications for the field of creative practice, in that it provides more detailed information on how refugee narratives are constructed and how translation theory can be applied to creative practice research. The finished version of *All the Time Lost* can be thought of as a palimpsest, a text in which elements of the original have been scraped off or replaced. Thus, this exegetical work is my attempt to make those layers visible in order to track the creation of the text and provide further insights into how works of this kind may be constructed.

**Research questions**

As mentioned previously, a look into how fictional refugee narratives may be written ethically significantly contributes to the debate of writing the Other. As such, applying an ethnographic framework to my own process of writing a fictional refugee narrative may provide further insight into whether this is possible. Thus, the way this dissertation has been written is from the perspective of a creative writer and advocate, rather than an anthropologist. As I am a creative writer, this dissertation is situated within the field of creative writing practice, with the novel situated within the genre of refugee narratives. Since I have adopted ethnographic methods, some of the presentation of the dissertation includes ways that ethnographic studies are presented (e.g., description of participants, researcher’s relationship to participants, sourcing, theory), but the emphasis is on the process of writing. For this reason I consider *All the Time Lost* to be a novel. My hope is that this dissertation will spark further discussion of how ethnographic concepts can be applied to creative writing in order to address ethical considerations around writing the Other in fiction in the future.

In the following chapters, I will delve into the creative practice behind *All the Time Lost*, guided by the following questions:
Primary research question:

- How might a writer construct an ethnographically informed novel, considering the ethics of writing Otherness?

Secondary research questions:

1. How do refugee narratives function as a form of advocacy?
2. How can ethnographic methodologies be applied to creative practice?
3. Does increasing engagement with the people represented shift the form of the refugee narrative?

Overview of dissertation chapters

Chapter 2 explores how the refugee narrative functions as a form of advocacy. It places *All the Time Lost* within a community of practice, to interrogate the ways that writings about refugees are produced in novel form. It reflects upon how the idea of fiction writing may challenge notions of the testimony narrative and the ‘refugee’ in refugee narratives. The literature review focuses on writers who write Otherness, separating these into three positions: artistic freedom, sensitivity and cultural appropriation. Artistic freedom suggests there should be no rules on how people are represented in fiction, while sensitivity advocates speaking to those represented. This chapter sees cultural appropriation as taking over the artistic forms of one group by another with connotations of exploitation and dominance (Drabble et al. 2007) and differentiates this from cultural misappropriation, which causes harm to the group of people represented. The chapter emphasises the importance of considering not just the politics around writing the Other, but the ethics around writing the migrant experience as well, such as the simulation of the migrant voice and the division between fiction and nonfiction. It addresses the first secondary research question: *How do refugee narratives function as a form of advocacy?*

Chapter 3 discusses the use of ethnography as a creative practice methodology. It explores the methodology used to construct the drafts of the manuscript. In doing so, it reflects upon how ethnography can be used in creative practice for the purposes of writing fiction ethically. It addresses the second secondary research question: *How can ethnographic methodologies be applied to creative practice?*
Chapter 4 marks the first of three reflective sections that contemplate the third secondary research question: Does increasing engagement with the people represented shift the form of the refugee narrative? Each section signifies more engagement with those represented than the previous. The first section centres around the making of the first draft of the manuscript during what is referred to as ‘the fieldwork phase’. It looks at ethnographic fieldwork, observation and personal narrative, and discusses participant observation and empathy as methods through the writer’s experiences in the field. I discuss my struggle to write the manuscript and my uncertainty around how to represent the characters, ultimately feeling like what I had created was a form of cultural misappropriation. It discusses the methods of empathising, fictionalising fieldwork and speaking for Others to create D1.

The second section of Chapter 4 represents a stronger engagement with the people represented through interviews, the questions for which are based on D1. This section examines how the ethnographic interviewing method can be used to alter the fictional refugee narrative, referred to as the ‘interview phase.’ It explores issues of choice and framing when selecting what research data to use and the ways characters are represented in text. It suggests that the author must make negotiations (based on translation theory) when choosing what interview data to use and how to incorporate it, particularly when taking into consideration identity representation within subaltern groups. I identify some instances where I had ‘gotten it wrong’ and how the interviews added depth to the characters and manuscript. The chapter discusses the methods of interviewing, transcribing and integrating to create D2.

The third section of Chapter 4 signifies the highest level of engagement with the people represented in the form of collaboration. It investigates how feedback can alter the refugee narrative, constituting the ‘feedback phase.’ It reflects upon the construction of D2 based on translations of feedback. I discuss my anxiety that what I was doing was cultural misappropriation and that gaining feedback from the people I sought to represent helped to alleviate this anxiety. However, the feedback was not about ‘what I got wrong’ but more about what participants wanted to see in a book of this kind. It was ultimately whether people identified with the characters. It argues that the responsibility for representation rests on the writer, rather than those providing feedback.

Chapter 5 discusses the evolution of the drafts, reflecting upon how the form changed or remained consistent during the phases of writing. It seeks to understand what the methods
used to produce fiction on the topic of migrancy mean for writing the Other. It argues that Otherness exists on a spectrum, with authenticity and authority correlating to how far the writer is removed from the Other. I take the position that increasing engagement with those represented in the writing shifted the manuscript from one that adhered to the ‘national story’ (see Birch 2013), one which referenced existing stories told about Otherness, to a ‘post-national story’ which challenged the national story. As such, human rights issues like racism became more pronounced. The implication is that, if not adequately reflected upon, representation without discussion with the people represented has the potential to reinforce the dominant cultural narrative. Therefore, I argue for a more nuanced framing of the debate to allow for questioning of traditional notions of what is acceptable in writing.
2. Review of the Literature

How do refugee narratives function as a form of advocacy?

_They seemed to be staring at the dark, but their eyes were watching God._
_Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God (2000)_

In her latest book, _The Origin of Others_, iconic author and lecturer Toni Morrison (2017, p.36) writes that, in some exalted quarters, art gesturing towards representing has ‘become literally beneath contempt.’ What I take this to mean is that it has been viewed as separate and attempts to connect the concepts may be met with derision. The discourse of who has the right to write the Other has been deeply polarising within the writing community: some writers feel that representing the Other in fiction is artistic and should not be held to any restrictions, while others believe that certain subaltern groups have been offensively misrepresented in past attempts to represent them in writing. A look into how these texts are produced may provide some insight into how this can be done ethically. This study examines the practice behind writing the Other in order to draw out the theory, or the practical knowledge, produced when writing a refugee narrative.

In order to provide an overview of the area, I begin this chapter with a look at the debate of writing the Other in order to explain my position within the controversy. I then examine how ethnography and postcolonial theory were used to provide a framework for the novel which would allow me to engage with the ethics of writing Otherness. I look at how refugee narratives function within the realm of testimonial and advocacy by examining four examples: _I, Rigoberta Menchú, Slave, What is the What and The Boat_. I then apply Humphreys and Watson’s (2009) ethnographic framework to writing refugee narratives, in order to situate _All the Time Lost_ within this community of practice. Finally, I position _All the Time Lost_ on a continuum under fiction, noting that, while these four examples begin with a true story and then fictionalse elements, _All the Time Lost_ inverts this process by beginning with fiction and weaving nonfictional elements into the fabric of the story. Through this discussion, I aim to show not only how the project contributes to our understanding of how refugee narratives are written, but that the work itself constitutes a new way of constructing a refugee narrative.
**Literary criticism of writing Otherness**

In the opening address of the 2016 Brisbane Writers Festival, writer Lionel Shriver caused a literary controversy by unleashing a tirade against identity politics in fiction writing. She argued that criticism against writing the Other, characters of backgrounds different to the writer’s own background, was akin to literary censorship. According to a transcript of the speech, Shriver (2016) claimed: ‘the kind of fiction we are “allowed” to write is in danger of becoming so hedged, so circumscribed, so tippy-toe, that we’d indeed be better off not writing the anodyne drivel to begin with.’ Subsequent articles and public commentary by writers on the topic opened up a debate centring around writing the Other in fiction (see Abdel-Magied 2016; Araluen 2017; Beneba Clarke 2016; Convery 2016; Tolentino 2016). This raised an interesting point; while there has been substantial enquiry into the representation of the Other in the field of literary studies (see Achebe 2016; Bhabha 2012; Hall 1997; Said 2003; Spivak 1988), there is no unified agreement on the ethics of producing writings on Otherness, although as mentioned previously important insights include writings by Rose (2011), McDonald (1999/2000), Savage (2016) and Padmore (2006). This has been aggravated by the controversy around who has the right to represent subaltern voices and whether this constitutes cultural appropriation.

As in Shriver’s speech, this has often been framed as white writers not being ‘allowed’ to write characters of colour. As such, arguments for and against have tended to be referenced in terms of Writers of Colour (WoCs) and nonWoCs (see Shriver 2016; also Abdel-Magied 2016; Forna in Kunzru et al. 2016). Arguments that call for caution (and at times even avoidance) of writing characters of colour cite that nonWoCs have a colonialist history of representing cultures unfairly (Musa in Convery 2016; see also Langton 2003), particularly in the context of writing Indigenous characters. Additionally, the case for WoCs writing their own stories argues that space needs to be given to WoCs to write and explore identity (Scott 2016 in Convery 2016) and that nonWoCs are more likely to be published writing these stories as opposed to WoCs (Abdel-Magied 2016; Duffy in Kunzru et al. 2016; see also Stella Count 2016). On the other hand, some nonWoCs argue that this is censorship and goes against the fundamental principles of fiction (Grant in Kunzru et al. 2016; Shriver 2016), which encourage writers to imagine the lives of others.
While these sentiments come largely from practitioners, some academic work around the question of ethics in writing Others has been produced. In her paper ‘Theft is theft: The ethics of telling other people’s stories,’ Rose (2011) interrogates what right she has as a white writer to tell the story of a Sri Lankan family, which is based on the story of a close friend. Rose touches on some claims about writing in her paper. She observes that being ethical means to be ‘in a constant state of worry’ (Rose 2011, p.5) and seems to agree (at least somewhat) with the position that political correctness may lead to the silencing of writers (Rose 2011, p.5). Her conclusion is that ‘we should always be aware of our responsibilities to the voices we represent in our fiction: to question the impact of our decisions and actions’ (Rose 2011, p.7).

Like Rose, Savage (2016) describes her practice of writing the Other as a kind of theft or taking, and sees it as a dialogue between herself and the text. She takes the position that it is up to writers to set their own ethical standards, but argues that conversation between the writer and the community represented is essential ethical practice (Savage 2016). Taking this engagement a step further, Meme McDonald (1999/2000, p.2) sees her role as that of a collaborator and notes that our job as writers is to make ‘stories live as words on paper to the best of our ability,’ thus reinforcing the importance of collaboration when telling the stories of others.

Like Meme, Stephanie Honor Convery works with Indigenous stories, but unlike Meme, Convery provides very little detail about how she wrote her PhD dissertation novel Big River. In a three-paragraph note on the text, Convery clarifies that the community is ‘invented’ and as such ‘the characters do not speak the languages of any particular Indigenous group,’ instead speaking ‘a variation of Aboriginal English punctuated by Kriol, a language that is a direct result of contact between Indigenous people and the Europeans who invaded their land’ (2010, p.86). In the conclusion, she briefly mentions travelling to the Gulf of Carpentaria for practical research, where she made friends with Indigenous people who offered to read her drafts (2010, p.78). Instead of a discussion of her methods, her exegetical component is what amounts to a defence of writing Indigenous characters. It begins with an anecdote about a question regarding white writers writing Indigenous characters that she put to a panel of Indigenous writers and academics at a Writers Festival and the hostile reception that she felt she received (Convery 2010, p.9). Her main argument is that ‘non-Indigenous writers must write Indigenous characters’ in order for literature to be ‘representative’ (Convery 2010, p.74) and, if white writers aren’t allowed to write First Nations characters, ‘marginalised groups will find themselves fighting their battles with no allies at all’ (Convery & Polites 2013, p.56).
Convery’s sentiments show a lack of critical reflection on the process used to write the novel and on her own privileged position as a white person. She refers to Anita Heiss’s (2002) article ‘Writing about Indigenous Australia – Some issues to consider and protocols to follow,’ which outlines the discussion around white writers writing Indigenous characters as a key influence in her writing. However, in the article Heiss quotes Jackie Huggins’s sentiment that the ‘If [white writers] didn’t write it nobody else would’ argument is patronising. This shows that certain criticisms presented by a core text used within her thesis were ignored. Convery’s point not only ignores the significant contributions to Australian literature by a multitude of successful Indigenous authors of fiction, including Alexis Wright, Ellen van Neerven, Tony Birch, Melissa Lucshanko and Kim Scott, but it suggests that white writers would avoid supporting Indigenous movements simply because they were deterred from writing Indigenous characters. Furthermore, although Convery states she followed the protocols suggested by Heiss (2002, p.202) such as consulting with the community, using Indigenous resources and gaining feedback from relevant Aboriginal individuals, there is no information about the extent to which these protocols were followed or reflection on what such a method might look like. Although Convery states briefly that she made friends within a community and that these friends reviewed the drafts, we have no information about how community members viewed this relationship and little detail about the changes suggested.

However, when attempting to define my position within this debate, I find the difference between WoC and nonWoC, or white writer, problematic. As I mentioned previously, being of both white and Chilean background poses difficulty when I attempt to situate myself as a WoC or nonWoC. I see myself as both white and WOC. The WoC/nonWoC dichotomy negates those who do not fit within these categories, including myself. This is also problematic when it is used to describe Aboriginal writers. As author Claire G. Coleman tweeted, ‘The struggles of other POC are not the same as the struggles of Indigenous peoples. In Australia most POC (those who are not Indigenous) have settler privilege. There are struggles in common but not all our struggles are shared’ (Coleman 2017, cited in Pearson 2017). To draw on Coleman’s point, writing Indigenous characters has a unique set of issues, which I will touch on later, since much excellent theory has been published by Indigenous academics and authors on the topic. However, this study should not be taken as an insight into how Indigenous characters may be written. As I will discuss, there has been much criticism against writing Indigenous characters and with good reason. As such, I choose
to talk about the debate in terms of the key positions within the argument: artistic freedom, sensitivity and cultural appropriation. Artistic freedom, the platform which Shriver exemplifies, calls for writers to be able to represent characters of any background they choose, any way they choose. This position sees characters of other backgrounds as adequately represented by writers through their use of empathy, and criticism against how characters are represented as censorship (see Shriver 2016; also Convery 2016). A second position argues that writing the Other should be done sensitively and involve research into the character backgrounds. This often suggests that the people written about should be consulted in some capacity (see Couser 1998; Helff 2009b) and given the opportunity to review the work when possible.

A third position sees cultural appropriation as identity theft. This position deals with issues of representation, which can reinforce harmful and negative stereotypes. This is seen as a form of voice appropriation, which does not allow the people represented to explore their own identity (see Alcoff 1991). Such proponents argue that writers of Others should proceed with caution and seek approval from the community represented, or not endeavour to do so at all (see Heiss 2002; Phillips & Lucas-Pennington 2017). In Australia, this is particularly true of First Nations stories and characters, which have long been misrepresented by white writers in literature (Heiss 2002). This can go largely unchecked, as writers may publish in contexts that are ignorant of the culture and still be successful (Phillips in Phillips & Lucas-Pennington 2017). Furthermore, as nonWoCs are more likely to be published than WoCs (Stella Count 2016), this is seen as a further expression of Western dominance and suppression. The theory is that, in abstaining from writing the other, nonWoCs are making space for those underrepresented groups to represent themselves.

Cultural appropriation is the primary argument against writing Otherness (see Alcoff 1991; Block, Haslam & Riggs 2013; Couser 1998). However, critics differ on whether cultural appropriation should be viewed in a positive, neutral or negative light. Cultural appropriation can be defined as ‘the taking over of creative or artistic forms, themes, or practices by one cultural group from another’ which carry ‘connotations of exploitation and dominance’ (Drabble et al. 2007). Young and Haley (2009, p.268) define ‘subject appropriation’ (sometimes referred to as ‘voice appropriation’ when done in the first person) as when ‘members of one culture represent members of other cultures.’ This views cultural representation as a form of appropriation (for more about this, see Young and Haley 2009).
They include both ethnography and creative writing within this definition. In some definitions, cultural appropriation is defined as a ‘theft’ or ‘taking’ (see Rose 2011, p.2; also Drabble et al. 2007). This dissertation takes the position that not all cultural appropriation is ethically questionable, as items may be freely transferred from one culture to another (Asch 2009, p.4). It is wrongful appropriation that causes unjustifiable harm and is a source of what Feinburg refers to as ‘profound offense’ (cited in Asch 2009, p.4). Young and Haley (2009, p.268) discuss subject appropriation and attempt to give examples of objectionable and unobjectionable cases. They discuss harmful representations of First Nations peoples in old Hollywood Western films as objectionable and the case of Tony Hillerman’s novel Joe Chee, which was recognised by the Navajo as an accurate representation of culture, as nonobjectionable (Young & Haley 2009, p.275).

I distinguish between cultural appropriation and ‘cultural misappropriation,’ which is an attack on the identity of culture and has the potential to cause harm in that it may result in discrimination, poverty and lack of opportunity (Asch 2009, p.4). This highlights the need for writers who write the Other to be aware of whether they have created objectionable (Young and Haley 2009, p.268) or offensive (Feinburg cited in Asch 2009, p.4) characters. This would not only be considered theft, but also a violence against the group of people represented. I will discuss this further with relation to my work in Chapter 4.

I approached my writing in much the same way as Savage and McDonald, from the position of sensitivity. I wanted to ensure that the writing of the final manuscript had input from the community represented. However, I was also interested to see what kind of manuscript would be produced without discussion with the community. To Rose, whose position is somewhat aligned with artistic freedom, the writer’s actions should be questioned, although she does note the worry involved in this form. This worry is also noted by Shriver, who places the blame on political correctness for making her feel guilty about writing Otherness. The question is not whether this is cultural appropriation, but whether this appropriation is causing harm to the group represented, or whether the community finds the characters objectionable. Shriver’s novel, The Mandibles: A Family, 2029-2047, for example, features a Latino character as president, which one critic describes as ‘a pudgy, lisping Mexican, just one of the novel’s several racist characterizations’ (Kalfus 2016). The violence is that of representation. The position of cultural appropriation would argue that, because Latinos are underrepresented in American literature, this representation is harmful in that it contributes to how the readers
view Latinos and how Latinos view themselves. This, combined with a history of racist representation of Latinos and of African Americans, means this is not simply a character, but a false portrayal of a community. The community, of course, found this character objectionable. Shriver argued for her artistic freedom of representation and viewed this criticism as censorship.

To investigate these positions, I modelled my study in three phases, in order to examine the effectiveness of these approaches. The first draft interrogated artistic freedom, in that it was written without input from the community represented. The second draft wove interviews into the first draft, signifying greater engagement with the community represented and aligning with the sensitivity approach. The third draft involved giving the manuscript to the community members to read and provide feedback on. It was my hope that they would identify any content they found objectionable. This final phase, however, did not reveal any objectionable or offensive characters. Those who participated (three people) were curious to see how the book was going, but they did not feel it was their role to determine this. Rather, they did identify instances that they related to strongly. This is explored further in Chapters 5 and 6.

My need to consider representation and consequences of misappropriation resulted in my choice to use ethnography and postcolonial theory as a methodology and ethical framework. I felt that ethnography had established mechanisms for writing the Other and a focus on self-reflection that would help me to avoid writing offensive characters. However, ethnography has a colonialist history (see Bourdieu 2003). As such, it became important to consider postcolonial theory in order to provide greater awareness of my position in the power dynamic of writing and collaboration.

**Ethnography**

In order to understand how ethnography may be used to write a novel, it becomes important to look at ethnography’s historical engagement with fiction. Novels that have been written based on the findings of ethnographic research and ethnographers’ experiences in the field are nothing new. The ‘ethnographic novel’ is typically nonfiction and can be described as ethnographic research written in novel form. While the use of fiction to represent ethnographic research is hotly contested (see Ingold 2014), it is nevertheless gaining popularity. Many different labels have been applied to the blending of these genres to
Present social research, such as experimental ethnography, ethnofiction, ethnographic fiction, the ethnographic novel, literary tales, new journalism and parajournalism (Behar & Gordon 1995 and Van Maanen 1998 cited in VanSlyke-Briggs 2009, p.336). According to Vito Laterza (2007, p.125), this particular relationship between literature and anthropology lacks theorisation. Like Marilyn Cohen, Laterza reasons that ethnographic reflexivity is achieved through this different form, concluding that the techniques the narrator uses may allow for theorisation. I take this to mean that presenting theory through the creative work is central to presenting ethnographic research in novel form. In this way, ethnography can be seen to complement creative practice research methodologies.

In All the Time Lost ethnographic data was represented through the use of the field notes, interview transcripts and feedback in the manuscript. The fictionalisation of that data, and the blending of it with literary elements, allowed me to examine how these forms complement each other and at times overlap. As noted by Laterza (2007), this reflection becomes theory.

Using fiction within ethnography has been contemplated within the field of anthropology (see Atkinson & Hammersley 1994; Augé 2013; Clifford & Marcus 1986; Narayan 2012). Atkinson and Hammersley (1994, p.254) draw attention to Clifford and Marcus’s collection of papers Writing Culture (1986), which explores the complex relationship between the literary and anthropological research of people and culture. Writing Culture describes the ‘literary turn’, ‘encouraging anthropologists to take stock of how ethnicity and power were implicated in ethnographic composition’ (Byler & Iversion, n.d.). The literary turn refers to the point where ethnography began to examine its own writing processes and systems (and politics) of representation, leading to the notion that the findings of research can be conveyed through other means, such as visual, sensory or literary forms (Rapport 2012). This means a heightened awareness of the similarities between literary and ethnographic forms. Harrison (1996, p.90; cited in VanSlyke-Briggs 2009, p.335) draws attention to American canonical writer Zora Neale Hurston’s early training as an ethnographer and her representation of participant-observer ethnography in her novel Mules and Men. At the time of its writing in the 1930s, literary representations of ethnographic research were not considered academic and thus failed to be recognised by the academy (Harrison 1996, p.90; cited in VanSlyke-Briggs 2009, p.335). Although ‘realist’ ethnography was the dominant form, they predicted that the ‘postmodern turn’ would encourage sociologists and anthropologists to experiment with style and form (Atkinson & Hammersley 1994, p.257).
While innovative forms of ethnography (see Pink 2015) are becoming more common, Hammersley and Atkinson (1994, p.225) point out that ‘we still have rather few detailed examinations of the general cultural and – in the widest sense – “literary” contexts within which particular ethnographic traditions have been informed.’ Further reflection on the method of producing literary ethnography can provide further insight into how the ethnographic informs the literary. Therefore, the focus of this dissertation puts the emphasis on the method of producing All the Time Lost, rather than on the findings of an ethnographic study.

The popularity of the ‘ethnographic novel’ may speak to its ability to be accessible, to transmit cultural research to a wider audience. Fassin (2014, p.41) points out that the commonality between fiction and ethnography is their ‘endeavor to understand human life’ and ‘their shared foundation on writing.’ Thus, fiction and ethnography can be seen as complementary forms striving to reach the same goal: to understand and translate culture. In the introduction to Writing Culture, Clifford (1986, p. 6) writes, ‘Ethnographic writings can properly be called fictions in the sense of ‘something made or fashioned,’ but maintains that ‘it is important to preserve the meaning not merely of making, but also of making up, of inventing things not actually real.’

The literary turn also encourages anthropologists to explore literature that is not derived from ethnographic study as a source for exploring culture (Rapport 2012). Cohen’s Novel Approaches to Anthropology: Contributions to literary anthropology (2013) is a collection of studies using ethnographic methods to interpret literary fiction. As traditional anthropology is impossible in this context, Cohen states that literary anthropologists ‘read the scene,’ observing and interpreting the described environment and artefacts in order to provide the ‘essential empathy anthropologists bring to their fieldwork and interpretations of cultures’ (Cohen et al. 2013, p.3). Essentially, fiction is studied ‘as a form of ethnography (e.g. Banks 1990; Ortner 1991; Tall-man 2002)’ (Laterza 2007, p.124). The differences between the two forms of literary anthropology can be explained thus: one is the use of literature to produce an ethnographic study, the other is the use of the ethnographic novel to convey ethnographic findings, which take on a literary form (e.g. Perey 2005; Rose 1996; Taussig 1997 cited in Laterza 2007, p.125).
One significant question that remains is whether the ethnographic novel should be considered literature, anthropology or a cross-disciplinary work. Ethnofiction, for example, blurs the line between ethnography and literature, yet is still largely situated in the discipline of anthropology. Behar and Gordon (1995, cited in VanSlyke-Briggs 2009, p.336) see ethnofiction as ‘creative anthropological representations of meaning.’ According to VanSlyke-Briggs (2009), ethnofiction is ‘creative ethnography’ that actively seeks to elicit readers’ personal connection to the work. Aside from the use of fiction, what differentiates this from the ethnographic novel that presents ethnographic findings is perhaps that the author will not directly state what they intend to communicate (VanMaanen 1988 cited in VanSlyke-Briggs 2009, p.336). An example given by VanSlyke-Briggs (2009) is Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God (first published in 1937), an ‘entire novel of fictional work based on the material collected by the author.’ The work uses material ethnographically gathered by Hurston, who had training as an anthropologist, in what she referred to as ‘interpretive anthropology.’ Hurston collected stories during fieldwork and used a South African storytelling method to follow the fictional character Janie Crawford. While this was dismissed by anthropologists at the time, it is now considered a work of anthropological literature by literary critics (see Kalb 1988) and is argued to be a work of ethnofiction by VanSlyke-Briggs (2009).

Marc Augé’s No Fixed Abode (2013) is self-consciously a work of ethnofiction, which, according to Augé, is ‘neither an academic study nor a novel’ (p.vii) but a ‘narrative that evokes a social fact through the subjectivity of a particular individual that is “imagined”.’ To him, what differentiates ethnofiction from the novel is the emphasis is on the reader’s witnessing of a place and time, rather than their identification with the protagonist.

Typically, ethnofiction is a blending of the field notes, interviews and collected data but told through a fictional method with the inclusion of detail to round out the tale. Significant events should not be researcher created, but developed directly from the observed events. New characters do not emerge from the miasma of a writer’s mind, but evolve from one’s fieldnotes (VanSlyke-Briggs 2009, p.341).

Essentially, what differentiates ethnofiction and the ethnographic novel from literary fiction is that the story is written after the data collection and it focuses on time and place, rather than the individual character. As I was intending to create literary fiction that was informed by
ethnographic practice, it became important to examine how novels with refugees had been written previously. However, *All the Time Lost* deviates from this form in that the characters were created before the inclusion of field notes. While some significant events were created, many paralleled the experiences described later by participants. Therefore, the ethnographic data informed the novel, rather than being the basis of the novel. Thus, I describe the manuscript as ‘ethnographically informed.’

**Refugee narratives**

As mentioned previously, within the field of writing stories about refugees are referred to as ‘refugee narratives.’ Refugee narratives focus on the migration story of a person who has undergone political persecution. While writers often work with one person to discuss their experiences, these texts usually fall within the genre of life writing. When examining these narratives in detail, it becomes clear that, like the ethnographic novel, they can offer varying degrees of fictionalisation. This caused me to think about how fictionalisation would be used in conjunction with ethnographic data in my own writing. In this section, I discuss the genre of refugee narratives using four examples: the nonfictional account *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, the selectively fictionalised narrative *Slave*, the highly fictionalised story *What is the What* and the fictional short story ‘The boat.’ I situate the genre within Humphreys and Watson’s ethnographic taxonomy, which analyses ethnographic writing in four forms depending on the levels of fictionalisation used to construct the narratives. In order to situate my own writing within this field, I apply a fifth designation, fiction, to this taxonomy.

Because refugee narratives often involve the witnessing of human rights abuses, they have their basis in the testimonial. Yost (2011, p.149) uses the term ‘testimony narratives,’ derived from the Latin American *testimonio*, to describe ‘collaborative acts involving a speaker who has witnessed injustice and violence and an academic or other professional writer in order to raise awareness in US or European readers.’ Testimonials can focus on a single event or involve the life story of a person. This is assumed to be a written account of a refugee’s experience. With the use of the word ‘testimonial’ a nonfictional, autobiographical account is implied, as the name of the subject is attributed as the author. However, refugee narratives challenge the idea of autobiography in that they require two authors: one to tell the story and one to write it (Helff 2009b, pp.333–334). In doing so, these narratives blur the boundary between fiction and nonfiction.
The refugee narrative can be considered a form of life writing. As a literary genre, life writing is often referred to as, or grouped within, auto/biography (‘auto/biography’ first used by Olney cited in Moore-Gilbert 2009: xi). Smith and Watson (2010, pp.1–3) claim that terms such as autobiography, memoir, life writing, self-life writing and self-biography are terms for self-referential works that have been used at different points throughout history. They do, however, attempt to delineate the terms by pointing out that autobiography ‘privileges the autonomous individual and the universalising life story as the definitive achievement of life writing,’ while the memoir involves more ‘density of language and self reflexivity’ and at times focuses on ‘unacknowledged aspects of people’s lives’ (Smith & Watson 2010, pp.1–3). They define life writing as writing that takes a person’s life as the subject (one’s own or another’s). I use ‘life writing’ as a general term to refer to works that are in some way autobiographical. Collaborative life writing refers to work in which an author tells the story of another person or ‘subject.’ Couser (1998) attempts to place collaborative life writing in context with the autobiography. He describes the collaborative autobiography as paradoxical in that there is both a biographer and an autobiographer combining to create life writing.

In her article ‘Refugee life narratives – The disturbing potential of a genre and the case of Mende Nazer,’ Helff (2009b, pp.333–334) posits that ‘refugee life narratives’ recount stories derived from collaborations with people who have fled their country of origin (see Eggers 2006; Menchú 1983; Nazer & Lewis 2004). Helff (2009b, p.334) suggests that these stories may bring up ‘painful experiences and memories over and over again until the story is completed’ and that there is a risk of the subject becoming ‘visible in the eyes of the authorities.’ Furthermore, these traumatic events may overshadow the more ‘ordinary’ events which may better emphasise individuality and identity (Marlowe 2009). Thus, it is imperative that there is an awareness not only of the politics of collaborative writing, but of the risks involved in writing the refugee narrative as well.

This sentiment is echoed in Couser’s (1998) work on collaborative life writing. Collaborative life writing has a distinctive voice which is a combination of writer and subject. The subject communicates the story to the writer, who then transcribes and even translates what the subject has said into the written word. Couser (1998, p.344) notes that collaborative life writing is ‘inherently ventriloquistic’ as the writer writes in the voice that is attributed to the subject, yet the voice can also be seen as the combination of writer and subject. Furthermore,
the collaborative autobiography is often told in a simulated narrative voice by the author, although the subject’s voice can be present in the preface or epilogue as a sort of testimonial to the authenticity of the story. However, this is not always the case. As I will discuss, in the texts I examined this section was at times replaced with the methodology the author used to create the text.

Furthermore, in testimonial, while the subjects may see themselves in the fictional text as the witness upon reading, the readers can be seen as witnesses to the events described. Kate Douglass suggests that readers become second-person witnesses to the text’s traumatic events and ‘in this act of reading, the second person sanctions and empowers the testimony’ (Yost 2011, pp.151–152). Upon bearing witness to the event, the audience is endowed by the story with greater reader responsibility. The reading also provides power to the testifier, as that person is now being ‘listened to’ and amassing an audience. This speaks to its ability to enact change, and empower testifiers. However, this does raise questions about authorial ownership, voice appropriation and authenticity. As discussed earlier, this is because the writer appropriates the voice of the subject. But this raises the question of whose story is being told. Is it an authentic, nonfictional account told directly by the subject and transcribed by the writer, or has the writer taken artistic licence to manipulate the story using fictionalisation? In order to examine these questions, I look at four texts which use varying degrees of fictionalisation. I will then compare them to the writing of All the Time Lost.

I, Rigoberta Menchú

The first example of refugee writing is one of collaborative life writing. It follows the activist struggle of Indigenous Quiché woman Rigoberta Menchú. Menchú’s name appears in the title of her book, I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala (2008), and as the author. In reality, the book was the result of a collaboration with writer and ethnographer Elisabeth Burgos-Debray after a week of interviews in Paris (Burgos-Debray 1984, p.xv). Burgos-Debray details in the Introduction how she was approached through a friend to write for Menchú, who wanted her story and the struggles of the Guatemalan people told. The Introduction describes how Burgos-Debray reflected upon how best to tell Menchú’s story and eventually decided to use the form of a monologue, ultimately excluding Menchú’s interview questions from the text. She insists that the majority of the book is Menchú’s words, although linking passages were inserted in order to help it read more like a narrative, and information was
reordered and grouped together to form the chapters (Burgos-Debray 1984, p.xx). This gives the reader the impression that they are listening to a story as told by Menchú herself, with the words translated and transcribed by Burgos-Debray.

Burgos-Debray’s method is an empirical, ethnographic one. Through this methodology, she hoped to get as close to an authentic story as possible. I thought very highly of this story for that reason and hoped to also take a very scientific approach to my writing. However, the more I began to write, the less it became possible to maintain the voice of the speaker, as I discuss further in Chapter 3 in the ‘Interviewing phase’ section. The fictional voices of the characters had been written prior to fieldwork and interviews. As a result, the interviews introduced elements of authentic nonfictional voices into the fictional character voices.

**Slave: My True Story**

The book *Slave: My True Story* (2003), a collaboration between journalist Damien Lewis and Sudanese-born subject Mende Nazer, also states that little in the original testimonial was changed, but concedes to some revisions to the story. In the epilogue, entitled ‘A note from Damien Lewis,’ Lewis describes his method of collaboration with Nazer, who lived as a guest in his home during his revisions. He writes that he worked with Nazer through interviews, casual conversations recounted in a notebook and even roleplaying. He acknowledges that ‘no story is complete’ and that Nazer’s has been through a ‘creative process of selection and condensation’ in order to make the form of the novel more compelling and accessible (Lewis 2003, p.340). He describes Nazer’s English language as limited, although she read through the drafts to ensure that ‘every word and nuance of the story was as intended’ (Lewis 2003, p.340). Although some of his methods can be seen as unconventional, the fact that Nazer has read and approved of the text is enough to affirm for the audience that Lewis has represented her story authentically. Nonetheless, the true extent of how the text was fictionalised is not completely known, as ‘some condensation’ implies that minor changes took place but Lewis provides no actual record of what was changed from the original.

Lewis’s approach influenced my writing in that I wanted to document the changes that took place with fictionalisation. Following Lewis, I decided that at the start some condensation and fictionalisation of the interview accounts would be necessary to fit them into the fictional narrative, but I was as yet unclear on what form that might take. As discussed in Chapters 3
and 4, there were elements that were written into the first manuscript as fiction that turned out to align with what participants described in interviews during the second manuscript’s drafting process. The line between fiction and nonfiction became blurred in this respect. This reaffirmed my plan to write a third draft of the manuscript in order to attain feedback, as Lewis had done. This also revealed that some of the fictional elements resonated with participants or ‘rang true,’ as I discuss in the ‘Feedback phase’ section in Chapter 4.

What is the What

*What is the What* (2006) constitutes a fictional version of collaborative life writing. Dave Eggers has a similar method to that of Burgos-Debray in that *What is the What* was written over three years of interviews with the subject, a Sudanese ‘lost boy’ named Valentino Achak Deng. As Yost (2011, p.150) points out when comparing the texts, ‘Eggers actively forces the recognition that he and Deng worked together collaboratively.’ Aside from being referred to as fiction, the text is labelled the ‘autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng,’ giving the reader the impression that it is based in reality. The Preface, written by Deng himself, states that he approves of the finished work, further adding to the authenticity of this fictional tale. In the Preface, Deng concedes that Eggers fictionalised his story but maintains that the world Eggers created is not that different from the one in which he lived (Deng 2006). It struck me that the level of fictionalisation in this text is much higher than that of the previous texts mentioned and that my text would involve the fictionalisation of entire events, rather than smaller instances as Lewis’s had.

This had a significant influence on my writing in that I had hoped to construct a fictional text with ethnographic elements. This clarified that, rather than telling a true, scientifically objective story, the fictional elements may retain some truth. The authenticity of this text lies not in the retelling of testimony, but in the realistic portrayal of the character. Again, in this text the feedback from the participants becomes important in that it shows that there may be authenticity despite the fictionalisation.

The Boat

This raises the question of whether it is necessary to document all changes in the text. Unlike the other examples, the short story ‘The boat’ represents a story that is not collaborative. However, it is an interesting study of fictionalisation and challenges the idea of authenticity.
While What is the exception, fiction does not often include information on how the text was produced. Although authors may incorporate factual elements from their personal experience or their family’s experience, the made-up and the biographical are not expected to be explicitly documented. For example, Australian author Nam Le’s short story, entitled ‘The boat’ (2008), the title piece of his book The Boat, is based on Le’s father’s experiences travelling from Vietnam to a Malaysian refugee camp. Reading the stories, it is almost impossible to tell the fictional elements from the factual without prior knowledge of the author’s life and Le offers no explanation in the text. We only see glimpses of this through subsequent interviews. For example, in the New York Times (S Cohen 2008) Le describes creating the fictional character named Nam Le, in ‘Love and honour and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice,’ who drinks Johnnie Walker Red and is struggling with the genre of ‘ethnic literature.’ Le says in the interview that ‘One of the chief ambitions of the story was to play with that idea of what we consider to be authentic, how much autobiography is implied or assumed, how we read something differently if we think it’s been drawn from the author’s life.’ Le says in the interviews that he still receives bottles of Johnnie Walker Red as gifts, although he doesn’t drink it. Although the text is fiction, the audience assumes the character ‘Nam Le’ is autobiographical because he has the same name as the author. As a result, the audience becomes confused.

While Le is successful in his attempt to challenge the notion of authenticity, there is still the danger of the audience feeling manipulation or betrayal. As such, some documentation and examples of major changes to the text become crucial. Therefore, I decided to keep the drafts and to journal my process of writing them in order to more easily compare and examine the changes between them. This dissertation serves as that documentation, while on publication the preface or prologue may serve this purpose.

**Authorship and authenticity**

While there are some similar elements in the ways these collaborative refugee writings have been produced, it is worth noting that the relationships between the writers and subjects are described differently. This raises questions about how a writer should define themselves in relation to the subject as author; in other words, how the Self should compare to the Other. Menchú is listed as the author of her story, and therefore the novel. Burgos-Debray’s description of the interview process implies her role as a ‘listener’ rather than an interviewer –
she gave Menchú a chronological outline (childhood, adolescence, etc.) and asked as few questions as possible (Burgos-Debray 2008, p.xx). On the other hand, Lewis and Menchú are both listed as the authors of *I, Rigoberta Menchú*. Lewis’s interview process seems to have been more investigative, as he consistently describes inventing ways of getting more details from Nazer in his epilogue, citing language difficulties as a primary motivation (Lewis 2003, p.338). While Burgos-Debray recorded interviews, Lewis did not, choosing to type notes from his conversations with Nazer on his laptop. His methods also included drawing pictures, having Nazer look at images of her home village and acting out scenes, including having Nazer re-enact how her master threw her down on a table and cut her leg open (Lewis 2003, pp.338–339). Conversely, Eggers is listed as the only author of *What is the What*. Deng (2006, p.5) himself describes his contribution to *What is the What* in the Preface as solely oral\(^3\) and taking place over several years:

> To that end, over the course of many years, I told my story orally to the author. He then concocted this novel, approximating my own voice and using the basic events of my life as the foundation. Because many of the passages are fictional, the result is called a novel.

Thus, in fiction the writer changes what the subject says, fictionalising elements to a larger degree than in nonfictional texts. Yet the fact that they change to varying degrees suggests negotiation.

These examples of collaboration show that the roles of writer and subject are not as clearly defined as they appear. It is difficult to determine whether the subject or the writer is the author of the text. The preface or epilogue often serve to discuss the process of writing, in which the author and subject come to an understanding of what the writing is and what their roles are when constructing the text.

An example of conflicting interpretation can be seen in *I, Rigoberta Menchú’s* reception. Menchú’s efforts to raise awareness about the plight of the Guatemalan people earned her the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. The prize was awarded ‘in recognition of her work for social justice and ethno-cultural reconciliation based on respect for the rights of Indigenous

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3 While oral history is relevant and deeply significant to the ways in which testimonials are viewed in a historical context, I have decided to focus on the testimonial as a literary genre in this section.
peoples’ (Nobel Media AB 2016). However, *I Rigoberta Menchú* later faced criticism. Stoll (1999) published a book arguing that some of the events Menchú describes are inconsistent, such as how her brother was murdered in Chajul. Even so, he believes it to be Menchú’s own account of her life (Stoll 1999), believing that she justified her narrative strategy in order to denounce the murders by the military. He also famously calls into question the opening line, ‘This is the story of all Guatamalan people’ (Stoll 1999; Yost 2011), as the story told by Menchú excludes many people, including other indigenous groups. Because Burgos-Debray aggressively argues that she did not change anything in the account, this universalising language brought criticism of Menchú. As Yost notes, Burgos-Debray became an example of the ‘pitfalls’ of speaking for the subaltern Other (Yost 2011).

On the other hand, *What is the What* had a largely positive reception. Of *What is the What*, Yost (2011) argues that ‘Eggers’s use of testimonial narrative is a powerful example of this potential for literature to engage in cosmopolitan activism.’ Likewise, Helff (2009b) does a close reading of Nazer and Lewis’s *Slave*, discussing the power of literature, referred to as ‘refugee narrative,’ to go beyond its usual sphere and interact with politics. She reviews its structure in relation to other refugee stories, claiming it is intrinsic to a ‘genre of refugee life narratives’ (Helff 2009, p.335). Nazer’s narrative eventually resulted in her bid for asylum, originally refused, being granted.

Nam Le’s *The Boat* was ‘widely reviewed and praised’ (Goellnicht 2012, pp.197–198), Goellnicht citing that Le ‘addresses the concept of cosmopolitanism, but he rethinks it via the figure of the refugee in ways that challenge and redefine accepted notions of these terms.’ While Goellnicht acknowledges the central short stories, written about Others, and that Le’s book is able to ‘raise questions of cultural authenticity, authorial ownership and voice appropriation, responsible representation of trauma,’ s/he does not go beyond this acknowledgement.

**Levels of fictionalisation**

What can be drawn from these examples is that, when fictionalising true accounts, an awareness of the process of fictionalisation is necessary. The issue with Menchú’s account shows that, when an audience believes a story to be true but this is later shown to be contradicted, it could adversely affect the way the text is viewed – the audience feels misled.
or confused. As Lewis posits, creative writing does require some reordering of events and condensation in order to make the story more readable and appealing to the audience. If the story has been changed too much, however, difficulties will arise with referring to it as nonfiction.

Ethnography makes it possible to document this process through reflective writing and detailed notes, which allow for an interrogation into the process of creating. Like the texts described in this chapter, ethnographic compositions can offer varying degrees of fictionalisation. Without explicit knowledge of how the text is produced, the fictional elements are difficult to separate from the nonfictional. When Humphreys and Watson (2009) examined ethnographic writing, they placed these texts on a continuum of text manipulation – from minimally manipulated written accounts to highly manipulated ones.

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<tr>
<td>I, Rigoberta Menchú</td>
<td>Slave</td>
<td>What is the What</td>
<td>All the Time Lost</td>
<td>The Boat</td>
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adapted from Humphreys & Watson 2009

On this line, the texts discussed have been placed under the estimated level of manipulation. Using the novels discussed above, I have adapted Humphreys and Watson’s continuum of textual manipulation to show the levels of fictionalisation used when writing Others.

What is the What, highly fictionalised, still offers its readers a glimpse into what elements might have been fictionalised by providing a prologue. To position All the Time Lost in relation to these texts, however, I needed to add the heading of ‘fiction’ to the right of ‘fictionalised.’ This text, highly fictionalised, incorporates elements of factual accounts into fictional ones. This fictional manuscript is therefore positioned beyond What is the What and before The Boat, in that it has been written as fiction, with nonfictional elements incorporated into the fabric of the novel and characters afterwards. As more drafts were produced and interviews integrated, it moved closer to ‘fictionalised.’ Despite never achieving fictionalised status, it became increasingly ‘nonfictionalised’ as interview data from transcripts was added.

From the texts examined, the appropriation of voice is the central issue when the writer takes the voice of the subject. This can be seen in Couser’s use of the term ‘ventriloquistic’ to describe collaborative life writing. The idea of ventriloquism is that the audience does not
know who the speaker is. Yet the writer is often visible in these texts. This term also fails to take into consideration writing that does not incorporate original interview content. If the language, as claimed in Menchú’s case, is what the subject actually said, I would argue that the subject’s voice is present in the text. Bakhtin (1981) uses the term ‘heteroglossia’ to describe the existence of two or more voices within a text, a sort of ‘double-voiced narrative.’ To Bakhtin (1981, p.288), language is ‘heterglot’ and ‘never unitary’ and is only considered so as an ‘abstract grammatical system of normative forms.’ It contains multiple meanings, verbal and ideological. Bakhtin’s theory of heteroglossia contradicts Couser’s ventriloquism in that the texts examined are in some way multi-voiced, the combinations of the author’s voice and the subject’s, in the form of sources of information such as interviews. This is not to imply that the voices are combined equally; the voice of the writer occupies a stronger and more privileged position in the telling of the narrative, as I will discuss further in the next chapter when I introduce ethnography as a methodology.

Conclusions

Writing the Other is deeply controversial within the creative writing community, rooted in a history of misrepresentation and cultural appropriation. While refugee life writing has the potential to shift public opinion and enact political change, the power relations between the writer and subject can be problematic since they may reinforce exploitative power structures. Voice appropriation, through the collaborative life writing process, presents the opportunity for a dominant group to exploit a subaltern group. However, when a writer is incorporating the accounts of a subject, the voice becomes a combination of writer and subject. The idea of appropriation in this case is not so clear, but the issue still remains that the writer’s voice is stronger and more privileged in the telling of the story.

Like ethnography, refugee narratives offer varying degrees of engagement with fiction and nonfiction. As can be seen from the examples of Rigoberta Menchú and Nam Le, the audience wants to know how much of the story is fact and how much is fiction. Using ethnography as a method to write Otherness allows the creative writing researcher to focus on approaches to writing fiction and examine which elements change or remain consistent depending on the methods used. In All the Time Lost, the ethnographic data produced through fieldwork, interviews and feedback has informed the novel at different stages of development. By examining these methods, this dissertation produces a useful theoretical
framework through which Otherness may be written ethically. A detailed look into how refugee narratives are written has the potential to contribute to the ongoing political debate of writing the Other. To do this, a clear methodology that engages with the political issues of writing Otherness is required. The next chapter will explore my ethnographically inspired creative practice methodology, to elaborate on how my study was conducted.
3. Methodology

How can ethnographic methodologies be applied to creative practice?

In this chapter I address questions around the methodology used to undertake my research into Melbourne’s refugee community. Although my research process took a practice-led approach, it used ethnography as a data-gathering method and theoretical framework within this approach. Here, the methods and the research experience are intricately intertwined. Therefore, the community in which I conducted my fieldwork and interviews is described in detail. The findings of the ethnographic study are conveyed through fiction in the creative practice artefact *All the Time Lost*. The creative work results in research insights (Smith & Dean 2009, p.2) through the documentation and theorisation of that work. The work therefore generates practice and ‘praxical’ knowledge (Barrett & Bolt 2007 cited in Smith & Dean 2009); the former focuses on the processes used to create the artefact, while the later focuses on the particular form of knowing that arises out of our handling of materials and processes. It is therefore both practice-based and practice-led: the investigation is undertaken partly through practice and partly through the outcomes of that practice (Candy et al. 2006). This creative practice approach allows me to convey the findings from my research in the form of the novel *All the Time Lost*, while this theoretical component expounds on the processes used to write refugee narratives when the writer is a non-refugee. Thus, this chapter addresses the question: *How can ethnographic methodologies be applied to creative practice?*

To scrutinise the processes used to create the *All the Time Lost* required that the method used to create the manuscript be interrogated in detail. I did this by examining the method using ethnographic and translation theory through a postcolonial lens. The first draft is characterised by fieldwork. Traditionally, fieldwork involves both journaling and participant observation. The second draft is marked by interviews. Specifically, I used semi-structured interviews, the questions for which were based on the first draft of the novel. The final draft represents the results of the feedback sessions and meetings. In this section, I describe my data-gathering processes in detail. While the methods I used here were inspired by ethnographic studies, the problem still remained of how to transfer the knowledge ascertained during my research into fiction writing. I argue that translation provides a helpful framework which enables the writer to articulate this practical knowledge. I provide examples
of what I mean by this argument in the following section, where I discuss the methods used to create *All the Time Lost*.

In this section, I differentiate between ‘attendees,’ those who attended English language courses where I conducted my fieldwork, ‘interviewees,’ those who participated in interviews, and ‘participants,’ those who participated in interviews and may have participated in feedback sessions. Primarily, when designing this study, I needed to take into consideration the vulnerability of the group I was working with. I followed strict guidelines which were laid out in my Human Research Ethics Application, which was approved by RMIT University on 11 August 2014 (see Appendix 1). I designed my research methodology with the mantra ‘do no harm.’ However, through this process I found it was impossible to avoid traumatic topics: although I did not include them in my questioning, such topics were regularly brought up by participants. In case participants appeared distressed or anxious, I had the phone numbers of counselling and other services to give to them. Luckily, I did not find occasion to give these out during interviews. Participants seemed to want to tell these stories, perhaps finding catharsis in the telling and in the action of being heard. I conclude that listening to such conversations and including them were essential to the practice of writing, as it became clear that participants wanted them to be included in the manuscript.

**Using ethnography to write fiction**

As discussed in the previous chapter, although there are parallels that have been drawn between fiction and ethnography, this is still somewhat problematic in the field of anthropology. Hammersley (1992, p.3) discusses the possibility that ethnography could represent one reality rather than ‘reality’ itself, lending itself to the notion of being perceived as a rhetorical device such as fiction (see Krieger 1984; van Mane 1998 cited in Hammersley 1992). However, he does so somewhat cautiously, as he acknowledges the problems this could face in relation to anti-realism and those who advocate a direct relationship between ethnography and practice.

In the last chapter, I discussed fiction’s use within anthropology and established that there is relatively little research into how fiction has been used to write the Other within creative practice methodology. Similarly, while ethnography can have applications for novel writing, the examination of its relationship to the field of creative writing is limited to a few pages in
the prologue or epilogue of these novels (as discussed in Chapter 1). Recently, with the debate sparked by Shriver’s keynote address, writing the Other in fiction has come under increasing criticism. Previous critiques focus on the inaccurate and colonialis
ed representation in historical and literary contexts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (see Langton 2003; Heiss 2002), although not on refugee representation specifically. While I draw on this seminal ongoing debate, refugee representation also has its own set of issues, due to the politically sensitive nature of being an ‘asylum seeker’ or ‘refugee.’

In Chapter 1, I established that the political climate intensified during the time period in which I wrote this dissertation. It became more hostile to people working with refugees and to those refugees who chose to speak out about conditions within the increasingly secretive detention centres. It must be noted that I was working with a vulnerable community, many persons of whom have experienced some form of trauma. The first concern was that informants viewed me as a teacher rather than researcher. As I conducted fieldwork in an organisation that provided free English lessons, at times I taught or facilitated classes in English language. Dewalt and Dewalt (2002, p.273) point out that participant observation raises the greatest number of ethical concerns; ‘even if field workers make it clear they will “write a book” or report on their experiences, informants may not realise that what they share as “gossip” during informal conversations will form part of their report.’ However, short of taking notes constantly, this is difficult to avoid. As writers, we must make ethical choices as to what should be kept confidential and what can be used within our writing. It is thus important to consider the role confidentiality played at the time – whether it be that of teacher, writer/researcher or confidante. It is also important to take into consideration whether the information is likely to endanger the informant, given the political vulnerability of awaiting a decision on visa status.

As Hayano (2001, p.77) points out when describing autoethnographic research, concerns arise when publishing data that is politically sensitive or describes illegal, confidential or ritual practices (see Becker 1964; Cassell 1977 cited in Hayano 2001). As such, it became necessary to ensure informants were not identifiable by keeping the location of the fieldwork vague and de-identifying informants. However, ethnographers have pointed out that, even if informants are de-identified, it may still be possible to identify them. Hopkins (1993, p.129) argues in her writing about working with refugees in the USA that ‘our wish to include informants more intimately in the research process by sharing with them prepublication drafts will surely
jeopardise the anonymity of some other members of the community.’ In her writing, Hopkins claims that the information is still identifiable to the community, despite attempts to de-identify. However, fiction allows for the characters to be changed to a level that would avoid identification. Even if participants recognise a story as similar to that of an individual, the characters convey multiple stories from various backgrounds, so they cannot be attributed to a single person. Furthermore, as my focus was on the everyday, some people had similar experiences. This will be explored later in Chapter 4, where the feedback sessions are detailed. Primarily, I observed that there was a fear from participants that speaking negatively about the government or country might lead to a negative outcome in visa applications. These issues needed to be considered while designing this study, which resulted in de-identification of participants, vagueness when describing research locations and careful storage of data.

In the next section, I discuss how ethnography can be used to provide a framework within which to observe how practical knowledge can be applied ethically, by making factual and value assumptions that underlie descriptions explicit (Hammersley 1992, pp.27–28).

Fieldwork location
The data in this dissertation is based on my time writing All the Time Lost, which began in January 2014 and concluded in April 2017. It is based on my fieldwork in a small grassroots volunteer organisation working with Melbourne’s refugee community where I had been volunteering since February 2014. My fieldwork was conducted from August 2014 to December 2015, interviews were conducted between November 2015 and 2016, and feedback sessions were conducted in November 2016.

My fieldwork began when I approached a volunteer organisation providing free English and other subject courses for asylum seekers that I had been involved with, and asked if I could conduct fieldwork as part of my research. The classes, and many others throughout Victoria, were established in response to Australia’s harsh visa restrictions on study and work for people seeking asylum that had recently come into effect. Most people seeking asylum were on bridging visas, which allowed them to study at volunteer organisations and neighbourhood houses as long as they did not receive any formal qualifications or pay. They were often directed to these classes by caseworkers, so that they could practise their English.
Many had recently been released from immigration detention centres, where they were held for months to several years. Others had refugee status and wanted a forum to practise their English, with most free English courses run for those with basic English-speaking abilities. The courses I attended and taught within as a volunteer as part of my fieldwork typically consisted of two parts: one was a university-style lecture delivered by an academic and the other was an English language class that took place before the lecture. These lectures were offered in several subject areas, including law, environmental studies and Australian history.

While there was a core group who attended most classes, the people who were present tended to fall in and out, volunteers included. There were several challenges to teaching and volunteering. First of all, I observed that many attendees complained of headaches and lack of concentration. The main concern of those with asylum-seeker status was getting a visa that would award them refugee status, which would in turn allow them some study or work rights. But shifting public sentiment and government policies left most with asylum-seeker status in limbo. For some, it would be a year until their bridging visa would be reviewed and, even then, the restrictions might be extended. Worse still was the possibility that there could be a determination that their application did not meet the definition of ‘refugee’ under the current government guidelines, and so they would be rejected and either provided with the means (such as a flight) to return to their home country or have to appeal the decision in court.

During this time, there was talk that a temporary visa was being considered which would not give permanent residency or allow visa holders to bring family to Australia. These policy shifts often resulted in shifts in the moods of the attendees and participants. A student who was optimistic one day might be despondent and uncommunicative the next. Attendees were from several different countries, including Pakistan, Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Syria, Afghanistan, Colombia, Yemen, India, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. I distributed flyers to the group and was contacted by three attendees for formal interviews and focus groups during this time.

Classes were conducted once a week, for about three and a half hours. I usually participated as a volunteer, sometimes in the capacity of an English teacher and English teacher coordinator, other times just as an observer or there to help facilitate. Each ‘course’ ran for approximately eight to ten weeks. Volunteer facilitators sat in the audience and helped the attendees individually. The subject courses were organised, planned and taught by local lecturers and academics.
Attendees appreciated the courses, complaining that there was nothing else they could do during the week since they had been denied work or study rights. The government did not provide much in the way of basic living expenses, so even paying for transport to attend the classes was difficult. Still, attendees often asked for more classes. In 2014, a few more classes run by volunteers appeared during the week, including a newspaper reading group which was held at the State Library Victoria and involved reading the newspaper with volunteers who would explain the language, cultural and political context of the articles.

I began to feel that I was part of a community that had only formed at the start of the program. Attendees would see teachers and volunteers regularly. Many had no family in Australia. Some had gone to spend the weekend at volunteers’ houses in the country. I maintained a distance, however, only seeing attendees at the classes and for regular coffees. I felt that I wanted to be clear about what I was using in my studies. Also, in training sessions teachers and volunteers are encouraged to maintain clear boundaries when working with traumatised and vulnerable communities (see Appendix 2a) due to the risk of secondary trauma posed by hearing traumatic stories from other attendees.

Despite my interview questions being about the everyday in Australia and careful consideration about the topics we chose to present on in the courses, instances where attendees recounted traumatic experiences were not uncommon. One day the group decided they would meet at a free public talk at the University of Melbourne. The talk was by Indigenous civil rights activist and professor Dr Gary Foley. After the talk, a reception took place upstairs in a grand room which provided drinks and canapés to attendees. Across the room I observed one course attendee, whom I had interviewed only a day before, in a heated discussion with a stranger. In our conversation the day before, he had hesitantly asked me what I was going to interview him about. I had told him just everyday things, like public transport, and showed him the list of interview questions. He had expressed relief and that he had been concerned we were going to discuss why he came to Australia. As I approached him chatting with this man at the public talk, however, I could see his behaviour was becoming more and more erratic; his arms were waving and the tone of his voice had risen. I surmised from the conversation that they had touched on a traumatic topic; the stranger seemed to have asked him for more details about why he had come to Australia. I interrupted, complimenting the attendee on a recent paper of his I had read for his free
course. As I did, the stranger gathered his things, shook our hands and all but ran out of the room. Outside, the attendee opened up to me that he had been very depressed and his housemates did not seem to be able to help him. When I left, he seemed a bit more optimistic, feeling better at having had the opportunity to talk about his feelings. Several months later, however, I received a text message in the middle of the night that said, ‘Thank you for everything. Goodbye.’ It was only after asking other volunteers that I learned that he had asked the government to send him home to Iran and that it had occurred late at night. Despite it being unsafe to return home, his current situation in Australia had been emotionally overwhelming.

The complexity of the political situation, the mental health states of some of the attendees and the framework of the interview questions meant that I did not talk in any great detail about these traumatic experiences. However, other interviewees did discuss difficult political situations in Iran which could be considered traumatic, such as being arrested and time spent in prison. Because interviewees were aware of the project and what I was using interviews for, it became apparent that this information needed to be included in the story. Thus, the story shifted from one that focused on only the everyday in Australia to one that more fully included the complex nature of these traumatic stories. Still, when writing such stories in my field journal, I often wondered if there was something better I could have said at that time to make the participant feel better. Surely there was a perfect phrase I could have uttered to make their pain disappear.

However, as I reflected upon my time working with refugees and asylum seekers, I realised that there was no perfect thing I could say to change the feelings of the persons to whom I spoke. Furthermore, the recordings of the interviews showed that the participants were not distressed when telling me these stories – the trepidation I felt was actually my own. I had made it very clear what I was using the stories for and how they would be used and, still, participants continued to relate traumatic stories to me. I realised that those who had entrusted me with such stories were looking not only to be listened to, but also to be heard. The acknowledgement of those feelings and stories seemed to be much more cathartic than any phrase I could have spoken.

By the end of 2015 attendance at the sessions had significantly dropped off, since the government was transitioning people onto Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and they had
gained some work and study rights. Those who wanted to continue attending were directed to other sessions run by the organisation open to the general public. After the program ended, I kept in contact with some of the attendees. I offered my help if they needed to apply for jobs or university, or had difficulty doing any paperwork. They often asked after my project and writing. They were very enthusiastic for the book to be published. Still, when I offered to send the manuscript to them for the feedback phase of the research, many seemed uninterested. I gathered they were excited by its publication and happy to have helped me achieve my writing goal, but they were not necessarily interested in the writing itself.

My time in the field was documented using the ethnographic method of participant observation. According to Ingold (2014, p.389) this method of data gathering, description and documentation involves both observing and engaging with people. While I taught and volunteered to assist attendees with their understanding of the lectures, I was reflecting upon my time there through this research method. Participant observation is one method of ethnography that allows the researcher to learn with or among the people studied and to do ‘his or her thinking in the world’ (Ingold 2011, pp.241–243 cited in Ingold 2014, p.391).

As an analytical tool, participant observation enhances the quality of data and the interpretation of data, regardless of the level of participation (Dewalt & Dewalt 2002, p.264) through its ability to engage with participants in context. This can be seen to be done in phases (see Howell 1972): the first is to establish a rapport by getting to know people within the community. The next phase involves blending in with the field and recording observations and data, such as making field notes, conducting interviews and keeping journals for reflection. Following this, data analysis – in my case in the form of narrative analysis – can take place using the data from the interviews to construct a story.

I believe that being a language teacher was integral to how I was viewed by informants. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983 cited in Atkinson & Hammersley 1994, p.250) note, ‘In a sense, all social research is a form of participant observation, because we cannot study the social world without being part of it.’ My role of teacher cannot be separated from subjects’ perception of me as researcher: either they had participated in courses which I taught, had been informed or I had identified myself as an English language teacher. From my experiences in the field, I gleaned that English language teachers and caseworkers tend to be some of the first people asylum seekers and refugees meet when they arrive in Australia. Due
to their regular appearances in their lives and their willingness to explain perplexing aspects of culture, language and bureaucracy, language teachers are a trusted and familiar group of people.

Yet, despite my many years’ experience working with refugees, much of this context was new to me. First of all, this was the first time I had worked with a group for such a long time. In my past teaching roles, I was either at the front of the classroom or I was running the program, and there were also formal rules around student and teacher conduct. Here I was behind the scenes, in the seats with the attendees. The courses had the same core group attending and this went for about two years. Because we were volunteers, there was more freedom around what we were allowed to do as far as teaching and meeting attendees outside of the courses, because we didn’t have to worry about it affecting overall marks (since there were no marks). As such, we could tailor the courses around what students needed or expressed that they wanted to learn. This also meant that the attendees had more opportunities to approach us about personal issues they were dealing with in their daily lives.

I attained trust with the group very quickly as I was viewed as an expert in English. Attendees would tell me funny stories about miscommunications they had with Australians or vent frustrations about the visa process. I noted these down in a reflective journal that documented my fieldwork, as well as my writing process. To Davies (2008, p.5), ethnographers ‘help to construct the observations that become their data.’ As mentioned previously, I found myself writing significant events of the day as though they were stories. These I considered to be a different form of reflection. Although a single notion of reflection is difficult to define, Clarke points to Dewey’s idea that it is ‘controlled, directed thinking toward some conclusion’ (1933, cited in Clark 2001, p.86). ‘Reflection’, Clark (2001, p.85) argues, ‘must not be conflated with “observation,” then since it is not a kind of empirical enquiry.’ Spradley (1980) warns that deeper levels of participation within a group carry the risk of losing objectivity. Yet Davies embraces the incorporation of reflexivity and the subjective into ethnographic research methods, citing Powdermaker’s (1996, cited in Davies 2008, p.5) assertion that the ethnographer must step in and out of society.

I was inspired by a journal I had kept while I was working, made up of nonfictional subjective and reflexive accounts told in narrative form. As an example, the following is an account of meeting some students for the first time:
Reflective journal excerpt, 19.02.14

As more students filtered into the room, I began chatting to some other English teachers. They looked at us awkwardly and we looked at them much the same way. Other volunteers were also present that would not teach. These would act as ‘helpers,’ and sit in the audience during lectures to aid students who did not understand. I ventured a guess that most volunteers had not worked with refugees or people seeking asylum before as they appeared quite shy. I, myself, had only worked with people from refugee backgrounds, who, as far as I knew, had never been in offshore detention. I eventually walked over and sat with a group of people who I later learned were from Iran. There were about four of them, one woman and three men. ‘Hi,’ I said to the group. ‘My name’s Tresa. What’s yours?’

We exchanged names, then they became silent. ‘What course are you going to take? History or Politics?’ I ventured.

‘Which is easier?’ one person asked.

‘History most likely,’ I said.

One man said, ‘I hate politics. But I think I should know about it.’ He laughed. ‘But history I think is important.’

‘History,’ everyone else responded.

I noticed that, when I told stories, I used quotation marks to mark what people had said in the conversations that I had had or witnessed even though I could not recall what was said exactly. Therefore, the subjectivity of the account is interesting to consider. As I reflected upon this account, I was forced to acknowledge that what I had written was already subject to interpretation and was in and of itself an interpretation of lived experience. As I mentioned, the ethnographer helps to construct the data or the story. This particular section of my journal raises an interesting question: What did the man mean by saying he hated politics?

Using translation as a method

The difficulty in interpreting what certain phrases, such as the one above, meant became an issue when it came time to incorporate research data into a manuscript. While this journal entry was not used as part of my data collection, nonfictional accounts such as this would need to be translated into a fictional narrative. Translation provides a helpful framework to describe how these were moulded into fiction. According to Gal (2015, p.228), ‘anthropology and ethnography have always relied on [translation] as part of method. Language learning, note-taking, interaction, transcription, and the effort to make findings intelligible to
colleagues all require translations of various kinds. But reflexivity about such practices has been rare.’ Thus, I began to reflect on this process of translation by drawing on translation theory, specifically that of Umberto Eco.

As I had no other information in my notes, I was left with only my interpretation of what phrases such as ‘I hate politics’ may have meant. According to Eco (2003, p.5), ‘a text is a machine conceived for eliciting interpretations.’ To Eco, the emphasis of the interpretation lies in the audience, as opposed to the author. Nonetheless, the author frames the ways in which the texts are presented. Patel (2012, p.238) begins with the assumption that ‘human rights researchers and advocates … act “as collectors, filterers, translators, and presenters of information regarding alleged violations”’ (Metzl 1996: 705).’ Patel (2012, p.238) goes on to clarify that the human rights researcher ‘ferries its knowledge’ and ‘curates’ its meaning, combining the accounts with their own ‘normative understanding.’ The human rights researcher, therefore, must understand the significance of the ordering and framing of knowledge, and the ways in which these frames may be interpreted by the audience. The author operates as ‘the translator,’ through choices of words, framing and contextualising information. As such, the author’s interpretation dramatically affects the way information is positioned and relayed to the audience.

Conversely, just as the writer influences interpretation, so does the reader. In his book Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation (2003), Eco discusses homonymy, when a single word can express two different things or concepts, as opposed to synonymity (a single word for the same concept). Words, or groups of words, can have multiple accepted meanings or senses, a series of interpretations, what Pierce would call ‘interpretants’ of that sign (Eco 2003, p.11). Thus, the reader may interpret the text any number of ways. The narrative operates as a frame for the author. Meaning is made in the space between the author and the audience.

I began writing the first draft of All the Time Lost with the initial premise of four characters who travelled at various times on public transport. I decided that they should be going to the city at some point, to follow the lines of the railway and tram tracks. During my time writing the draft, I attended a protest in the city and this became the point where all the storylines intersected. The last part of the story was based on my experience at the University of Melbourne, described earlier in this chapter. I thought this would make a good addition,
since most tram lines end at the University of Melbourne. These aspects formed the ‘core story.’

However, the character backgrounds that I initially chose shifted during the writing and fieldwork. I had in mind that each character would be from a different country. The countries that sprang to mind were Tanzania, Iran, Sri Lanka and Chile. This was because I had most contact with people from these countries. I had at the time been volunteering with a family from Burundi (next to Tanzania) and was familiar with this setting although, because I did not encounter many people from Burundi or Sri Lanka in the field, I changed the backgrounds of the characters. I chose countries that were more representative of the group of people who were interested in participating in the project, and eventually settled on Sudan, Iran, Chile and Somalia. I grouped each of the character’s stories together so that they would be easy to review later, particularly for the participants who would give feedback on them, in case they would prefer to only review part of the manuscript.

**Participant sourcing for interviews**

As the program in which I did my fieldwork ended, I began to recruit participants for the interviews for the second draft of *All the Time Lost*, targeting other places that provided language instruction. I put up posters and enquired about possible interviewees through contacts in the Chilean community. As I was requesting permission to put up recruitment posters at an English language school, the director invited me to come to the classrooms to discuss my project and invite attendees to be participants. Most of my interview participants came from this group.

Interview participants ranged from those who had recently resettled in Australia (i.e., those seeking asylum who had been in the country only a few months) to those who had migrated to Australia and been here for a significant amount of time; in the case of some participants, this was decades. However, no gender or countries of origin were favoured during recruitment of participants. Advertisements called for any participants who had moved to Australia from another country. Participants were made up of seven females and six males. Countries of origin were Yemen, Afghanistan, Sudan, Iran, Chile, Lebanon, Turkey, East Timor and Iraq. All were Melbourne residents and had some experience with public transport in Melbourne.
Because the participants required a good level of English in order to be interviewed in English and understand the Participant Consent and Information Form (PCIF), they were primarily sourced from institutions that provide education to migrants. Institutions from which participants were sourced include the organisation that provides courses for asylum seekers where I conducted my fieldwork and a tertiary preparation program with a high number of refugee students. In each institution, I explained the project in detail, took questions and provided flyers. Therefore, a majority of the participants were completing English certificate courses offered to refugees and migrants. Those with asylum-seeker status could not study formally but were attending free university-style classes provided for them by volunteers. All had a high level of English and education and were able to read the PCIF. I also sourced participants from the Chilean community by asking community members who might be interested. Participants contacted me by email or text message to set up an interview.

The participants seemed to express interest in participating for different reasons. Some had felt that they had a story to tell and that it was important that people hear it. These stories at times were related to abuse on public transport, which I had discussed when I was answering questions about the project in a language school, and some were about the ways asylum seekers are treated – for example, not being allowed to work or study which they were waiting for their visa. To interview these participants, I modelled my interview process on methods used within ethnography. This took the following form: While ethnographic interviews may generally include interviews conducted during work in the field (Platt 2012; Spradley 1979), this interview process was undertaken in a formal setting and participants were provided with information on what the project was about, its aim and how the interviews would be conducted. The role the interviewer plays at the time is important to ensure the participant does not relay information that they consider confidential. This is important because, as I mentioned, some people from refugee backgrounds are reluctant to publicly criticise Australian society if their residency status is tenuous for fear that this may affect their application outcome. The interviews that characterise D2 came from a formal setting.

As mentioned previously, a potential problem with this form of interview and focus group is that participants may, unexpectedly, bring up something that they are not comfortable discussing in detail or something that may cause them to remember a traumatic event. The act of undergoing an interview can also cause unexpected stress. Furthermore, any time interviewees are expected to perform an interview in a language other than their primary
language, this can cause undue stress and anxiety. To minimise the possibility of unexpected stressors, participants were told at the start of the interview that they did not have to talk about anything that caused them discomfort. They were reminded of this throughout the interview. Participants were also provided with a list of contact information of providers of free counselling services. Participants chose the location, which has been shown to put interviewees at greater ease (Schutze 2008, cited in Svasek & Domecka 2012, p.108).

Examples of safe locations participants chose are conference rooms at RMIT and cafes near to the participants' home or school. I also utilised techniques acquired while completing my MA in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and through my experience in the field to minimise interviewee stress and anxiety. My MA TESOL degree involved intensive study into cultural sensitivity within global contexts. I also drew on my several years’ experience working with refugees and asylum seekers, both as a volunteer and professionally.

The reason I favoured formal interviews was because there were a series of procedures that required explicit consent to use the information provided by the participant. Several aspects ensured participants understood that this information would be used in the project. First, the participants had to sign participant information forms to ensure they understood the project. Second, they were invited to review the questions before beginning, to ensure they would not have to talk about anything they did not want to. Third, an audio-recorder was present as they consented to recording, which was a physical reminder that the information was going to be used for research.

The interview method I chose was the biographical method using semi-structured interviews, as the interview questions were based on D1. According to Miller (2003), the biographical method is ‘the collection and analysis of an intensive account of a whole life or portion of a life, usually by an in-depth, unstructured interview.’ This includes informal chats and semi-structured interviews. Gubrium and Holstein (2012) point out that ‘A more reflexive appreciation of knowledge production in general, not just interview knowledge, has prompted a reassessment of the procedures of empirical inquiry, including the interview.’ The challenge with this method, however, is that the semi-structured approach still involves framing by the interviewer since they provide the questions and direct the course of the conversation. While the biographical method is still favourable, less interference by the researcher tends to be viewed as ‘more authentic.’
However, the concept of authenticity is also problematic. Gubrium and Holstein (2009, cited in Gubrium & Holstein 2012) argue that ‘authenticity itself is a methodically constructed product of communicative practice.’ To them, authenticity relies on many factors, including gestures and emotional expression. These are not present in data itself and, therefore, the form of interviewing is not the only concern. This brings the discussion to the ways in which the data is conveyed. Spradley (1979) argues that ethnographic data is the least authentic (see Appendix 2b); the most authenticity can be found in the ethnographic novel, due to its ability to convey subtle signs, gestures and situations free from epistemological constraints. I take this to mean that the story itself allows for levels of subtlety to be conveyed that may be lost in traditional academic writing, as this may require information to be made more explicit.

Although it is gaining in popularity, I chose not to use the ‘life story’ method, which involves as little intervention from the researcher as possible, opting for the ‘semi-structured interview’ instead. The life story method puts ‘a very high value on the subject’s own version of events while, on the other hand, permitting the interviewer a considerable editorial role. Note that this, interestingly, shifts the stage intended as active researcher intervention from data elicitation, as with a questionnaire or interview guide, to data presentation’ (Platt 2012). While the semi-structured interview is similarly biographical, it asks for specific information. This is because the questions were developed based on what happened in D1 of All the Time Lost.

Questions included:

What country did you migrate from?
How long have you been in Australia?
What did you think about Australia when you first arrived? How was it different from your country?
What do you think now, are you more comfortable in Australia?
What was your first house in Australia like?
What was your first experience with Australians when/before you arrived? Did they understand you/you understand them?
What were your first experiences with the public transport system like?
What was public transport like in your home country?

The questions were open-ended and focused on the everyday in Australia, but also made general references to the everyday in the participant’s home country.

According to Parker (1997, p.169, cited in Platt 2012), Terkel sees his own ethnographic work as that of a sculptor. ‘The most important part of the work,’ he says, ‘is the editing of the
transcripts … the cutting and shaping of it into a readable result. The way I look at it is I suppose something like the way a sculptor looks at a block of stone: inside it there’s a shape which he’ll find.’ However, the idea of sculpting is also problematic in that All the Time Lost had already been written and the interviews were being integrated into it. In this way, the text was becoming ‘multi-voiced,’ what Bakhtin refers to as heteroglossia, as this text, in a sense, had already been shaped. This introduction of interview data to the novel reshaped it and, in doing so, re-created it. This has more to do with the way translation works, to convey one set of information into another form. I will explore more about how translation reshaped D1, in relation to multivocality, in Chapter 4.

**Conducting feedback sessions**

I scheduled two feedback sessions for participants by sending out text messages and emails which informed them of when and where the sessions would be. All 15 interview participants were invited. I also advised them that they could meet with me privately or have me mail them the draft if they liked. I only expected two participants, as I had only received two responses: one from a woman from Sudan who could not make it to the sessions but wanted to meet privately for coffee, and one from a Sudanese man who congratulated me on finishing the novel and said he hoped he could make it.

However, in the first session I did have one participant from Iran. I provided him with the printed manuscript and the bullet-pointed treatment by chapter (see Appendix 4). We had a conversation about what the novel was about and he asked me several questions about the book. Predominantly, he wanted to know about the character from Iran and where I had used his interviews. I asked him if there was anything he thought I should change and he gave me some recommendations, which are included in Chapter 4 in the ‘Feedback phase’ section. I took handwritten notes, which I documented in my field journal. The second session took place on the following day. This time a participant from Sudan came, as well as the same Iranian participant from the session the day before. He said he was curious about this session. Again, I followed the same procedure as I had the day before. A third session took place over coffee, when another participant from Sudan met me to chat about the manuscript. I followed the same procedure again. All feedback participants expressed interest in writing their own story one day, and were curious about the writing process. This is perhaps why they decided were willing to dedicate time to coming to the session. This will be discussed in more detail in
I asked the participants to provide feedback or recommend changes within six months. When I did talk to participants in that time, they seemed keen to read the manuscript but hadn’t actually read it. By the end of the six months, I didn’t receive any changes, so the changes to the third draft of *All the Time Lost* were primarily based on those three feedback sessions.

**Conclusions**

In this chapter, I have discussed how ethnography can be used to write fiction and how ethnographic and translation theory provides a helpful framework to analyse the method of writing the Other. I have taken an ethnographic approach to data gathering, with an emphasis on the ethical guideline of ‘do no harm.’ Translation theory also allowed me to examine how knowledge is framed by the researcher and how this may be interpreted by the audience. This enabled me to better examine the unequal power relationship between writer and subject, and to take this into consideration when making decisions about what data to include in the manuscript. This was most notably applied to traumatic stories told to me by participants and the decision about whether to include those stories in the manuscript.

In the next chapter I give an overview of how the three phases were conducted to create an ethnographically informed novel. Translation theory is again used in order to tie together the ethnographic research methods within the creative-writing drafting process. I discuss the differences between the drafts based on the methods used, which provide some insight into the effectiveness of writing the Other. In this way, I outline how this creative practice methodology can be used to interrogate writing the Other within the field of creative writing.
4. Phases of Writing: Fieldwork, Interview and Feedback

Does increasing engagement with the people represented shift the form of the refugee narrative?

This chapter interrogates the question: Does increasing engagement with the people represented shift the form of the refugee narrative? This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part, ‘Fieldwork phase,’ will examine D1 of the manuscript, which constitutes the draft written with the least amount of engagement with the people represented. The second part, ‘Interview phase,’ signifies increasing engagement with the manuscript, as participants were providing interview responses to the questions derived from the manuscript. The last part, ‘Feedback phase,’ represents the most engagement, as it is built upon D1 and D2 and includes feedback as a form of collaboration.

I begin by describing my anxiety about ‘getting it wrong’ as I finished writing the first draft of the novel during the feedback phase. Particularly, I feared that what I was writing was cultural appropriation and might be offensive in its inaccurate representation. I detail how I used translation to document the transfer of semiotic information from experiences in the field into the draft. For the interview phase, I discuss how the content was changed and the difficulties over how voice is represented. I note that the writer’s voice is stronger and occupies a more privileged position in decisions about how the voice is represented. I conclude that an ethics of translation and the creation of ‘counterstories,’ stories which resist colonialist representation, are important to consider when making decisions about incorporating interview data from subaltern groups. For the final phase, the feedback phase, I discuss how my fears of ‘getting it wrong’ were lessened by gaining feedback from participants. However, the role of participants was to give advice, so the responsibility of any misrepresentation ultimately falls to the writer. In the end, the manuscript was received well. I attribute this to ‘listening,’ which I argue includes enabling participants to review the finished work as well as incorporating the feedback suggested despite reservations the writer may have.
Fieldwork phase
As I began my fieldwork in February 2014, in an organisation that provides university-style courses to asylum seekers in the city, I was interested in how the documentation of this experience would inform the writing of my characters from refugee backgrounds. I thought I would be able to empathise with characters of these backgrounds more easily if I had increasing contact with them. As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, empathy has been used as a method to write characters that are considered ‘Other’ to the writer. My intention was to document accounts from my fieldwork in order to inform the writing of my first draft. I would then consider how ethnographic field journal accounts could be ‘translated’ into fictional writing.

I began by exploring how ethnographers view field notes and if that differs from writers’ perception of writing Others. In ‘Partial truths,’ James Clifford (1986, pp.1–2) muses that ‘Participant-observation, the classic formula for ethnographic fieldwork, leaves little room for texts,’ but he admits that, ‘writing has emerged as central to what anthropologists do both in the field and thereafter,’ meaning that, while the emphasis of fieldwork is on the experience, it is typically conveyed through writing. To Clifford, the boundary between art and science is blurred: science advocates objectivity and reporting of observed facts in writing, while art is associated with subjectivity, metaphor and allegory – the discourse in literature and fiction that plays on meaning. The fieldwork itself represented observed ‘truth,’ while its translation into writing would render it allegorical and subjective.

Allegory is defined as the ‘expression by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human existence’ (Merriam-Webster 2017). It is the representation of a truth. My research sees translation as a way to move between these two spaces: the scientific observation of facts and the subjective allegorical writing.

This can be seen to be an effect of the translation between the experience and the writing. According to Susan Gal (2015, p.225), translation points to a family of semiotic processes in which different social worlds emerge through ‘forms of communication in which practices, objects, genres, and texts are citable, recontextualizable.’ To Gal (2015, p.227), translation is ‘one semiotic system translated into another. It is a metasemiotic activity.’ In this way, signs and symbols in the real world are translated into the written form; the very act of translation is marked by recontextualisation, by displacement and replacement.
A key difference between ethnography and translation is that ethnographic studies seek to translate culture and work with notes, while translation studies primarily work with a written text (Valero-Garcés 1995, p.556). However, both must operate with ‘a certain degree of subjectivity’ (Valero-Garcés 1995, p.556). To the anthropologist Crapanzano (1986, p. 51), the ethnographer is a translator but must first produce the text before it can be translated. He points to the metaphorical and methodological significance of Geertz’s (1973) description of a Balinese cockfight, at once a figure of disorder and how that disorder is overcome. To Crapanzano, Geertz is cast as the awkward hero, ‘betwixt and between worlds’ (p.69). For Crapanzano, however, seeing the cockfight as ‘image,’ ‘fiction’ and ‘metaphor’ does not get rid of the problem, as cockfights are likely just cockfights to the Balinese (p.73). When describing ethnography, Spradley (1979, p.5) notes that a core concern is to understand the systems of meaning that constitute culture; he says, ‘Some of these meanings are directly expressed in language; many are taken for granted and communicated only indirectly through word and action.’

In order to demonstrate the translational relationship between the field experiences and field notes, I examined an entry in my field journal of one event I recalled with much trepidation. It described a young girl who had brought the group an origami boat. I remembered it causing the group much distress. As I wrote the first draft, I returned to my field journal to see if my memory of the event was accurate:

[Reflective journal excerpt, 11.02.15]
The volunteers paired off with a student, and the student chose an article that we would read together. I was partnered with a man from Iran ... 

At the end of the session an Asian woman came over with an origami boat that her young daughter had made. She didn't speak much English, but she said, ‘for you,’ to a volunteer. Her daughter shyly hid behind the small children’s table. It seemed, for some reason, her daughter wanted this volunteer to have it. He was a white-haired, kind looking Australian man. He thanked the woman, and she and her daughter went out.

‘It’s beautiful,’ I said to the volunteer.

‘You can have it,’ he told me and handed me the little boat made of brown scrap paper with crayon scribbles. It had three different sized cranes inside, lined up in order of height. I took it happily. Everyone approached me to get a closer look. Then, some people recoiled when they realised what it was.

‘I hate boats,’ the man I was working with said, with a half-smile.
‘You hate boats?’ I asked. The class was still standing around us and they agreed, ‘Yes!’ I smiled. ‘I’ll just put this away over here then,’ I said, moving it behind me. They began to laugh. ‘Thank you, thank you,’ I heard many of them say.

I remembered vividly the man saying, ‘I hate boats.’ To me, it seemed he said this because he had been through a traumatic boat journey. However, I could not tell definitively whether or not the hatred of boats was just a matter of personal preference or whether he had been through that journey. This is an assumption I made based on the fact that he was in an organisation that provides support for people seeking asylum, many of whom arrive to Australian waters by boat. What I had written would certainly tend to suggest the reason was the journey, but that meaning was made somewhere between the writer’s framing and the reader’s expectations, what Geertz (1973, p.9) calls ‘winks upon winks upon winks.’ This ‘wink,’ or the expression of the hatred of boats, becomes a semiotic sign that exists both within social practice and within the fabric of my field notes, then within this exegetical work, each occupying a different context contributing to its meaning and nuances, thus affecting the way the text is interpreted.

But still, I asked myself why I had had recalled the attendees as unhappy when the boat was brought out. In actuality, I had noted in my journal that they had been laughing and joking through the session. Did I really understand how people seeking asylum felt when they said they hated boats?

**Empathising**

Empathy is defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Embedded within the Shriver controversy of cultural appropriation, writers have discussed empathy as central to writing characters of other backgrounds (see Bunch 2016; Gee 2016; Kent 2014; Mintcheva 2016). This remains relatively unexplored in detail as a writing methodology, although many issues with empathy have been flagged in relation to the field anthropology. What a researcher perceives as empathy may also be confused with transference. Transference (Transference 2009 can be described as an ‘unconscious redirection of feelings from one person to another.’ According to Robben (2007), this can cause feelings to arise

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4 To ask about this would have been to ask about a potentially traumatic experience, and therefore unethical in that it could lead to retraumatisation.
when highly emotional issues are brought up, thus influencing our interpretation of the conversation.

This becomes particularly difficult when the people researched are in a politically sensitive or vulnerable position. In his forward to Engaged Observer: Anthropology, advocacy and activism (2006), Phillipe Bourgois states that ‘Anthropologists cannot escape physically, ethically, and emotionally the suffering or the brutality of their research subjects and the historical epoch in which they live’ (p.xii). In her introduction to the volume, Sanford (2006, p.3) discusses how ethical issues relating to politics and advocacy continue to be debated in the academy. According to Warden (2013, p.151)

Despite the important works by Lee-Treweek and Linkogle (2000), Lee (1995), Hume (2007), Punch (2012), and Nordstrom and Robben (1995) the available literature often remains non-explicit about researchers’ emotions in ethnography and there is very little awareness about the prevalence of secondary trauma or PTSD among researchers.

On the other hand, professions working with refugees and asylum seekers ideally have established protocols for dealing with trauma. Teachers such as myself are expected to undergo training before working with migrants, one section of which deals with issues of ‘vicarious trauma,’ defined as ‘a common phenomenon in the helping professions that comes about because the empathy that workers need in order to engage effectively with their clients leads them to internalise their clients’ trauma and in so doing, become traumatised themselves’ (Piper 2011, p.113). They provide a diagram (see Appendix 2a) for volunteers which advises on the optimal amount of empathy. This has a direct correlation to maintaining clearly defined boundaries with refugees, as it does with anthropology. According to the diagram, it is over-empathy which runs the risk secondary trauma. Over-empathy describes my feeling towards the allegorical boat. I was seeing the boat as I was feeling, as a surge of negative emotion. Had I written about this instance before re-reading my journal description of the event, I would have written characters distraught at the sight of a boat.

According to Robben (2007, p.160), this calls for a heightened psychological reflexivity about data gathering and even preparatory therapy before entering the field. Although I had this training before entering the field, instances where people became visibly agitated during my
fieldwork, such as the one described in the opening of this chapter, did leave me feeling a sense of anxiety and unease. Although I was the one feeling anxious, I may have felt that the person to whom I was speaking was also feeling anxious. This is an effect of transference. However, upon reflecting on the situation, the group was quite happy and laughing throughout the session, even after the paper boat emerged. This showed that reflecting upon my time in the field and my writing were integral to the avoidance of over-empathy, through the ability to recognise transference. By maintaining an awareness of this phenomenon, I was able maintain a balance between the empathetic writer and the reflexive researcher. However, that is not to imply that it was always maintained at the same level. It was a constant process of reflexivity, in danger of tilting towards over-empathy at any moment.

This caused me to reflect on how writers use empathy in writing. Pratt (1986) points to the parallels between travel writing and ethnography, in which she discusses the controversy around Florinda Donner’s Shabono, a subjective, personal account of a postgraduate anthropologist among the Yanomamo people, that was released to high praise. Later, Donner was accused of plagiarism. Donner’s accusers cited similar passages from an existing narrative account of a girl’s first-hand experiences as a captive of the Yanomamo people. On the other hand, Picchi (cited in Pratt 1986, p.30) supposes that it was the result of memory and research, as Donner destroyed her notebooks early on in her fieldwork. For Pratt (1986), this controversy raises some of the ‘confusion and ambiguity’ that personal narrative enacts in the ‘discursive space’ of anthropology.

‘Personal narrative’ here refers to the subjective memory of the observed event. Personal narratives are largely derived from experiences. This is most prevalent in my storyline for Lucy, the character from Chile. This is the character closest to the Self in that, like me, the character has a Chilean background. This character was also, paradoxically, the most difficult to write. I began to doubt my story and authority in writing a Chilean character. Journaling about my personal experiences during and before the writing of D1 helped with this. I began writing in the journal for everyday events as well, when something began to impact on me (see Appendix 7). A friend of mine, who is not Chilean, received a terminal diagnosis of breast cancer during this time and, because this affected my mood and teaching, some of these instances are described in my journal. As a result, her ‘unofficial wake’ was the inspiration for the wake that appeared in D1. In the original the character was not Chilean, but in D2 the story was merged with Tia Valentia’s storyline. The character of Mrs Brennan became Tia
Valentina. I found it easier to put myself ‘in the shoes’ of Tia Valentina, having had similar experiences with my family.

I found that the personal could not be separated from the fieldwork accounts. Even when I was in an/Other's shoes, I was still myself. This meant that I retained not only the privilege and power of my position, but my own viewpoints as well. I realised that, while empathy is a powerful and necessary tool for writing, its limits also need to be acknowledged.

**Fictionalising fieldwork**

It was important to acknowledge then, that the Self was the standpoint from which I wrote the characters. Clifford sees fieldwork accounts as fictions and ‘the ethnographer, a character in a fiction, is at centre stage’ (1986, p.14). Where fiction has consciously been used to convey data, the fictional speaking subject can be seen to have more agency than the subject who is written about:

Some reflexive accounts have worked to specify the discourse of informants, as well as that of the ethnographer, by staging dialogues or narrating interpersonal confrontations (Lacoste-Drujardin 1977, Crapanzano 1980, Dwyer 1982, Shostak 1981, Mernissi 1984). These fictions of dialogue have the effect of transforming the ‘cultural’ text (a ritual, an institution, a life history, or any unit of typical behaviour to be described or interpreted) into a speaking subject, who sees as well as is seen, who evades, argues, probes back. In this view of ethnography the proper referent of any account is not a represented ‘world’; now it is specific instances of discourse.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, while using fieldwork accounts as a source for D1 of All the Time Lost, my fieldwork became ‘fictionalised.’ Fictionalising a fieldwork account embraced the subjectivity of the anecdote, creating an allegorical text. The fictionalisation became a combination of personal experience, imaginary and empathetic writing. To show how accounts were fictionalised, it may be useful to observe how this was done in my work through different stages. Below is a field note excerpt from my journal. A man I had met previously, from the Middle East, approached me.
He said his English had gotten worse. I told him that it sounded better to me. ‘It’s worse,’ he said definitively. ‘There are people, they haven’t seen what I’ve seen, they may lie. A lot of people lie.’ I opened my mouth to object but thought better of it, I was just listening, he needed to get it off of his chest. ‘I’m not lying, what I’ve seen … terrible things, things no one should have to see. No one. And this government, it’s the same as the old government. Maybe it isn’t for you but it is for me. It’s a different form of torture.’

This was then combined with the ‘they do not believe my story’ journal entry mentioned earlier in this dissertation and the fieldwork account that was written after the group attended a free public lecture at the University of Melbourne. I combined these events to create this part of the story, which takes place at Melbourne University, narrated by Amar:

[Reflective journal excerpt, 25.02.15]

[The Australian Man] asks me about my visa. He tells me that most people lie on their visa, to come to this country. He asks me if I understand. I hear myself saying, ‘There are people, they haven’t seen what I’ve seen, they may lie. A lot of people lie. I’m not lying, what I’ve seen … terrible things, things no one should have to see. No one. And this government, it’s the same as the old government. Maybe it isn’t for you but it is for me. It is a different form of torture. They do not believe my story.’

Jean Paul\(^5\) has put his hand on my shoulder. ‘My friend, how are you?’ he asks me. I am so tired. My head, it is hurting.

As the drafts progressed, this scene became increasingly fictionalised. By D2 (after the interviews) much of the original text had been changed:

[D2 excerpt]

I turn to see Chris standing next to me again. ‘I’m sorry, I just overheard. You’re from Iran,’ he says, ‘I happen to know Iran is a Muslim country. Are you Christian? You would have to be to get the visa, wouldn’t you?’

‘I’m Muslim, yes,’ I say.

‘So you lied on your visa to come to Australia?’ he says, jokingly. ‘You must have said you were Christian.’

‘I don’t lie,’ I say. How do I tell him, I would not lie about what I’ve seen. People may lie. A lot of people lie. I’m not lying. I’ve seen terrible things, things no one should have to see. No one. And they do not believe my story. So many people have asked me if it is a lie. They ask me if I made my story up to come here. They asked me if I can give them more detail. What were the walls like? Who

\(^5\) This character’s name was changed to Basel in later drafts.
was with you? Where are your cousins? Did they threaten you? Why did you come here? Why are you here?

‘Then why did you come?’ he asks.

The process of fictionalisation continued into D2. In D2, as opposed to external dialogue, the information from the fieldwork account became internal dialogue. I did this because I thought perhaps it would work better as an internal conversation. I had to shift the context around, so Chris made a joke that was misunderstood by Amar. As I was unsure of what the man had said to the attendee in the field notes, I imagined a new scenario. This was influenced by my experiences in the field. As could be deduced from the field notes, being thought of as ‘making things up’ would be upsetting. I thought it would fit the context and maintain the meaningfulness of the notes. In effect, it became an anecdote for what I had observed in my fieldwork.

Speaking for Others

For nonfiction, Williams argues, the writing is subjective and about the ‘I’. This places me, as the author, firmly within the centre of the text as the interpreter of events. As I am not the narrator of the stories, it becomes necessary then to be explicit about how the text was written, to lessen ambiguity between the discursive space that may cause confusion.

As I began to write from the first person, I found it allowed me to create more sympathetic characters. This recalls the ways in which testimonials function as a form of advocacy, to create characters the audience can identify with. But this also poses the problem of speaking for Others. Alcoff (1991) distinguishes between speaking for – here I will interpret that as using the first person ‘I’ – and speaking about – which I apply to the third person ‘he’ or ‘she.’ To Alcoff (1991):

if the practice of speaking for others is problematic, so too must be the practice of speaking about others. This is partly the case because of what has been called the ‘crisis of representation.’ For in both the practices of speaking for and the practice of speaking about others, I am engaging in the act of representing the other’s needs, goals, situation, and in fact, who they are, based on my own situated interpretation.
This, in turn, sparks conversations around cultural appropriation and how representation affects identity. According to postcolonial theory, this disproportionate telling of the narrative runs the risk of having a negative effect on the identity of not just the characters, but the readers who identify as having a similar background to the characters. As Alcoff (1991) points out, Foucault’s (1972, p.225) ‘rituals of speaking’ discuss how who the speakers are and their position within society affect how the text is received. For example, Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s (2009) famous TED talk, ‘The danger of a single story,’ illustrates how people who are underrepresented in literature, or are represented in only a certain way, tend to be seen in only that way by a society that has had little contact with them.

The question became, was what I was doing voice appropriation and ethically questionable, considering that wrongful appropriation causes unjustifiable harm?⁶ At the start of this project, I was not comfortable characterising what I was doing as ‘cultural appropriation.’ The term is viewed in a negative light, seen as taking advantage of a group of people who have less power than the writer. I thought that, because I was speaking to the people whom I was representing, it shouldn’t be considered appropriation. When writing the compilation The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation, Asch (2009, p.4) acknowledges that not all team members were comfortable characterising their project as cultural appropriation, pointing in particular to members working with human genetic material. For the most part, the researchers did not limit the term to only cultural artefacts and intellectual property. For me, this was not an easy realisation to come to. The negative instances of cultural appropriation have led to much controversy – what is described in this dissertation was ‘misappropriation.’

Recently, there was a storm of negative criticism over Canadian writer Hal Niedzviecki’s call for a ‘cultural appropriation prize’ to encourage ‘anyone, anywhere to imagine other peoples, other cultures, other identities’ (Kassam 2017). One criticism perceptively pointed out that Niedzviecki ignored the fact that a prize would further disadvantage WoC in the publishing industry (Elliott cited in Kassam 2017). More offence was caused by failing to acknowledge the issues surrounding cultural appropriation, with a history of misrepresentation and the potential to do great harm to a group of people’s sense of identity. Sometimes referred to as ‘insensitivity,’ this makes writers weary of cultural appropriation. Writers are rightly warned to be more ‘sensitive’ in their writing. Sensitivity to me means both consideration of these

⁶ See Asch 2009, p.4.
underlying issues and the intention not to cause harm. However, intentions are not enough to protect those represented from offence or harm. Engaging the community represented is one way in which the chance of cultural misappropriation may be lessened in that it may bring these offences to light.

Therefore, the first draft was one of voice appropriation. This was done with the intention of advocacy, that writing from the first person would provide more empathetic characters, which would provide a counter-narrative to the ‘victimhood’ and ‘success’ story in which refugees are typically represented. As can be seen in the literature review, refugee narratives are typically written in collaboration with a subject. There is a simulation of the voice of a person or character, what Couser refers to as a ‘ventriloquism.’ Even though I was observing and speaking to a group, what I was doing was still an appropriation of voice. I had yet to determine whether this was a misappropriation. It was my hope that interviews and feedback sessions (D1 and D2) would lessen the chance that I would give offence, providing a more ethically written Otherness narrative. However, as I discuss in the final chapter, I came to feel that this ‘voice appropriation’ made for an inferior narrative.

Conclusions

When I began writing the manuscript, I saw it as a form of translation – I was observing real life and changing those semiotic signs and symbols into allegorical writing. My hypothesis was that, if I could observe people from refugee backgrounds, I might be able to represent them in my writing more accurately – to capture the ‘truth’ about everyday life in Melbourne. My original plan was to write a first draft of the novel that was based on experiences during fieldwork. Issues that were observed or told to me by attendees became points of the story and the narrative itself was driven from my perspective. I realised that the Self formed the central point and the Others became measured and defined in relation to the Self. Therefore, the empathy I thought I was using to write the characters was centred more around how I felt, rather than an accurate prediction of what the characters may have felt. To offset this, fictionalisation and allegorical tellings of fieldwork accounts added authenticity to the writing. External conversations in the field (e.g., ‘they do not believe my story’) became internal dialogue in D1.
However, these required reflection. I was not in the position of the Other, I was in the position of the Self. As such, interpretation was always in danger of shifting towards over-empathy. It was also, in effect, cultural and voice appropriation, although I was yet to determine whether it was misappropriation. It then became necessary to ensure that I was not causing offence, which would result in unethical writing with the potential to cause harm in the form of misrepresentation and contribute to discrimination. As such, the first stage was acknowledgement of the fact that I may never truly understand what it is like to ‘hate boats,’ but ethical representation of that experience may still be possible through increasing the engagement and collaboration with the people represented.

**Interviewing phase**

Looking at the chapters of D1, it was clear that I had an idea of the characters, the chapters and the form the novel would take. However, the characters were flat and the chapters jumped quickly from one scene to another. For the most part, it was an outline of what was to come, the skeleton of the manuscript. D1 was only about 75 pages, with seven chapters for each character. In truth, I was afraid to write more to the characters. I thought I might ‘get it wrong’ – I could see that what I was producing was based on my limited knowledge and interaction with people from refugee backgrounds. The more I learned from my fieldwork, the more it seemed that I did not know. D2 became about including the people represented in the process of writing through interviews. My fear by the end of the manuscript was that D1 could be considered an inaccurate representation, what is referred to as the ‘theft’ characterised by cultural misappropriation. However, I did not have a way of discovering what exactly about the draft was inaccurate.

Still, it must be acknowledged that undertaking formal interviews with people from refugee backgrounds can be problematic. As outlined earlier in Chapter 3, the potential for retraumatisation needs to be taken into consideration given the likelihood that people from refugee backgrounds may have undergone trauma. I designed my interview questions around the principle to ‘do no harm’ as laid out in the RMIT Research Ethics Approval process and in my own personal ethics as a professional English language teacher. This group is also considered vulnerable due to their social and political situation, which leaves them with limited resources and power. Power differences are reinforced by the fact that three interview participants viewed me as a ‘teacher’ although this was in a voluntary capacity and no marks
or qualifications were impacted on by this role. For the 11 other participants, who had not had me as a teacher, this provided a level of trust, as many who arrive in Australia without prior English language training attend English language courses.

While participants understood the reason I was interviewing – to write a novel on experiences of the everyday about people from refugee backgrounds – some who were sourced from an English language institute also viewed the interview as a valuable opportunity to practise their English skills. Others felt that I had to ‘hear their story.’ While I did not wish to bring up painful or traumatic memories, some participants did appear to come to the interview wishing to impart a particular experience to me. It became important when discussing topics to listen to speakers and encourage further conversation, but to also recognise when a topic was becoming too difficult to discuss further. As the questions were provided at the time of the interview so that participants knew what they were going to be asked, asking participants what they wanted to talk about and whether they wanted to continue speaking on certain topics allowed them the agency to leave a conversation if they chose. In doing so, I aspired to provide as much transparency as possible around expectations during the conversations.

D1 allowed me to reflect deeply upon the ways in which I attained and incorporated information for the drafts. In this chapter, there is an emphasis on language and the way in which it was translated into D2. I begin with interviewing and then transcribing and finally integrating. I believe my fascination with these linguistic elements stems from my experience as a language teacher and my desire to unpack language at its most fundamental level. However, it also reflects a significant shift in the voices of the characters, which drew heavily from the content provided by interviews and my thinking around why I chose to write characters in the first person. It puts particular focus on the use of vernacular and forms of English, and how these can alter representation of characters. I had to ask myself what a true representation of a character consisted of. This was a difficult question, as I was coming from a background of privilege in the USA and, as I established in the last chapter, needed to consider my ethnocentric viewpoint when determining what representation meant and whether a direct translation of the interviews would maintain the ‘truth’ of what I was being told. In this section I explore these themes in the context of current theory and criticism around voice and translation, particularly with reference to Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of heteroglossia. Aside from the shifting context, these concepts can be applied to the way the
voices of the characters were created and my own political decisions around correcting English.

**Interviewing**

My interest in the language I chose in D1 was sparked when I visited a language school for the purposes of recruiting participants for interviews. The program manager invited me to visit the tertiary preparation program for students from migrant backgrounds after I approached her to put up a flyer. At the time, I had conducted four interviews and had begun to add information to the manuscript based on these interviews.

The program manager set aside an hour to take me around to five classes doing Certificate IV and V English. She thought it would be a good learning experience for students to hear about a PhD project. In these classes, there were around 25 students, their ages ranging from about 18 to 50, from various backgrounds. In the fourth class I visited, one student asked me if I wanted to become an author. I replied that was the hope, at least for most people doing a PhD in creative writing. She then asked me what the book was called and I explained that the title actually came from an interview. I explained that it had been named *All the Time Lost* because when I asked a participant if she was ever lost, she replied, ‘I am all the time lost.’

The program manager, as an English language expert, then began to explain that ‘all the time lost’ was ‘bad English’ but had two definitions, one being ‘I am lost all the time’ and the other ‘all my time is wasted or gone.’ I added that, when a language is taken out of one context and put into another, it can be considered poetic. But what she had said struck me; I hadn’t deeply considered the reception of ‘incorrect’ English by the audience.

This reminded me of a feedback session on my writing in which I heard the character Nina’s voice referred to as ‘broken English’. I wasn’t seeing it as ‘bad’ or ‘broken,’ but I realised that this may be the way it is viewed. This caused me to rethink the way I portrayed Nina’s English, because native speakers might view it negatively, perhaps even as inferior. The question then became, do I correct the characters’ English in D2? This would mean that I would not only alter characters’ voices, but I would also be adjusting the English of those I interviewed, since they were in the process of learning English and spoke with some inconsistency.
The interviews themselves focused on the content, specifically, a list of questions that had been crafted based on the core story around D1 (see Appendix 10). They were centred around topics such as public transport, cultural misunderstandings and learning English. For example, because the character Azra is harassed on public transportation, I asked if any of the participants had had strange encounters on public transportation. While the questions were on the topic of the everyday, conversations turned in surprising ways and sometimes difficult topics were broached. For example, one participant fell silent and looked uncomfortable when I asked him about his government-issued flat after he had implied that he did not like it. This caused me to move onto the next question, as this one was clearly troubling him. While it can be difficult to predict troubling questions beforehand, providing a list of questions to the participants minimised this risk. As mentioned previously, when one participant hesitantly asked me what we were going to talk about prior to our interview, I provided him with a list of questions. He looked relieved, as he had thought I was going to ask him about why he came to Australia, a topic he did not feel like discussing.

The interviews were very enjoyable and enlightening. I was surprised to hear much of what I observed being discussed by participants. However, the questions around public transport, so central to D1, really surprised me. It seemed I had written these somewhat optimistically. The stories I heard in interviews turned out to be much more frequent and, at times, violent. For example, one participant described two instances, one in which her foot was stepped on purposely and violently, and another where a drunk person approached her, yelled and then insulted her. She revealed that she had become upset that someone had treated her this way ‘because she was black.’ Of the instance, she described it as like ‘being eaten by a dog and people just watching you being eaten by a dog.’ Other female participants of Muslim backgrounds described instances where people had tried to physically remove their hijabs. One described an instance where an apple was thrown at her head.

In D1 I had written two instances of verbal assault on public transport, for Azra and for Nina. These interviews were surprisingly consistent with what had been written. However, what was not consistent was the level of violence, as well as the impact it had had on those I interviewed. At the time of hearing them, I resolved to write these specific instances into the D2 manuscript, using them to elaborate on Azra and Nina’s storylines.
However, I still had not had a formal interview with a participant who identified as being from Somalia. This was an issue, as Azra’s character was written as originating from Somalia although she had lived most of her life in Syria and considered this her home. While I had spoken in the field to participants from Somalia, who were aware that I was conducting fieldwork and writing a novel, this specific information was not integrated using the same method of transcription. I had spoken formally with a participant from the Somali region of Ethiopia who had lived in Yemen and a participant from Afghanistan who spent much of her life in Syria. Interviews with these participants, as well as others from Lebanon and Iran, were used to write Azra. In the following sections, ‘Transcribing’ and ‘Integrating,’ I will discuss how this was done. Azra, like some of the participants interviewed, is from a mixed background due to a series of displacements. Additionally, I will explore this further in Chapter 5, where I discuss the degree of distance from the author and the characters, and the levels of authenticity within the characters.

**Transcribing**

Before integrating the information from interviews into the manuscript, I needed to transcribe the interviews. I resolved to write the transcripts exactly as the speaker had said the response, that is to say, using the precise wording. This was an interesting exercise. Quickly I noticed that I unconsciously began to change the wording, perhaps in the way that I would say it, rather than the way it was actually said by the participant. I had to frequently replay the recording to ensure the accurate wording. For example, where a participant said, ‘first day when I come because the first day I come is July,’ I might type, ‘The first day I came was in July.’ I was listening and then writing from memory, but was unconsciously ‘correcting’ the English. As a result, I had to relisten to interviews several times to amend the transcript.

I was, in effect, translating the interviewee’s English into my own English. I was also correcting the grammar of the sentences. This was not something that I had intended to do. In order to get the rhythm of how different people spoke, I wanted to maintain the English exactly as it was spoken. This raised the point that, if this was being done during the transcription process, it would not be surprising to find it being done when converting the text into characters’ dialogue: the voices of the characters were a mix of mine and those of the interviewees.\(^7\) To

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\(^7\) Robin de Crespigny makes a similar observation, which she describes in the Prologue to *The People Smuggler*. 84
investigate, I went back to the journal entries from that day of the interview. What I found was very interesting. I had changed the language slightly.

This can be noted when comparing journal notes of the interview with the transcript from the interview:

[Reflective journal excerpt, 04.08.15]
During the interview, when she spoke about something difficult she responded that she was strong … [The story about the apple] seemed to have genuinely affected her. This was sad to hear, since she had such a positive view of Australians and life in Australia. She loved it and thought everything here was wonderful. When I asked why she thought they did it, she said, ‘because they are stupid and racist.’

[Interview transcript excerpt, 04.08.15]
T: … do you feel safe in Australia … on public transport?
V: Sometimes not, sometimes not.
T: Oh really? Why?
V: Because I’ve got a scarf. So one time when I come to school so someone they got apple [makes a throwing motion] So yeah.
T: They threw an apple at you? [gasp]
V: Yeah, because I’ve got a scarf. I look round they all laughing, I said oh my god man.
T: Were they children?
V: No no no, they old men.
T: No!
V: Wallah. [Arabic translation: [I promise] by God]
T: What? [gasp]
V: Yeah.
T: …Were you scared?
V: No, I’m not scared because I’m like I am … I’m strong. And I didn’t care. I’m just like, okay, you’re dumb.

V: My husband sometimes like be scared for me because when I go to the shopping or somewhere like and he said, ‘be careful there are a lot of people they fight with you because you got a scarf.’ I said, ‘No no no. Don't worry. I’m strong enough. So don’t worry.’
T: Do they most of the time leave you alone or is it something like, you feel, will happen often?
V: Because a lot of my friends, they, like, someone attack them, like, not attack but say, ‘why you wearing hijab, you have to take it off.’
I said, ‘naw, I don't want.’

He said, ‘you are Australian you don't have to do like that.’

I said like, you know, ‘Please. You don’t have to do like that.’ Bad discussion.

T: Why do you think they do it?
V: Because they're stupid. They're racist.

T: [laughs] That’s something I would say.

V: They’re racist.

T: You are very strong though.

V: Inshallah. Thanks be to God.

T: I’m sorry to hear that happened.

V: No, that’s all right. I’m used to it. [laughs]

The most notable discrepancy between the writings is that I recalled the participant saying, ‘because they are stupid and racist.’ However, the participant actually said, ‘Because they’re stupid. They’re racist.’ This has implications for how the text is written. In linguistics, Gee (2014, p.18) uses the following examples:

(1) The destruction of my home in the fire took only an hour.

(2) My home was destroyed in the fire. It took only an hour.

To Gee (2014), much the same information is expressed in the examples. However, the information that the house was destroyed relates to the information that it took only an hour syntactically in (1), while in (2) there are two important pieces of information related by discourse (or ‘at the level of discourse’). According to Gee (2014), this decision depends not just on what the speaker or writer wants to say, but on who the speaker or writer takes the listener or reader to be, and what they want the listener or reader to feel, think and possibly do (about the situation and about the speaker/writer). Gee (2014) notes that, while sentences may work differently in speech and in writing, syntactic relations and intonation demarcate sentences in speech. However, while it is the speaker who may want the interviewer to feel something, when this information moves to the novel it becomes the writer who wants the reader to feel something. By the selection and appropriation of the text, the movement of one form to another, the context gives it new meaning. The choice then of how to portray the information becomes important.
The next concern regarded whether or not I should ‘correct’ the English in the draft. I could either leave the English as it was said, which was at times difficult to understand, or change it to a clearer version. In his book on translation *Is That a Fish in Your Ear?* David Bellos (2011, p.44, italics in original) discusses the ‘paradox of foreign soundingness.’ This refers to the high value of translations that sound as though they were written in English, although there is a need to keep features of the culture of that translation. Furthermore, Bellos points out that the erasure of all foreignness from characters has been considered an ‘ethnocentric violence’ and, as such, an ethics of translations should prohibit the erasure of all cultural markers from the text. Jean d’Alembert (cited in Bellos 2011, p.45) suggests that the original should speak the language with the ‘noble freedom that allows features of one language to be borrowed in order to embellish another.’ The risk, Bellos (2011, p.45) adds, is that the ‘slightly unnatural diction may be rejected as clumsy, false or even worse.’ However, Bellos (2011, p.51) posits that these are only simulations of foreign soundingness, or ‘fictions of the foreign.’ By changing the letters/characters (e.g., Chinese characters would need to be changed to the English alphabet) or simulating an accent by changing letters, these become fictions of the language. But, Bellos (2011, p.51) points out when discussing translations of Kafka into English, Kafka does not sound German to Germans but to someone who doesn’t speak German, he does.

Likewise, the participants might not see themselves as sounding ‘foreign.’ Robert Bropho (cited in Heiss 2002, p.198) notes that the white author hears broken words which are called ‘broken English.’ The writer of the broken English is therefore ignorant of the language the subject speaks and so this English is only heard by the writer. Compounded by the fact that participants were sourced from educational institutions in the process of learning English and would presumably become ‘better’ at speaking it in the time after the interview, to portray the English as in any way incorrect would be unfair. This called for choices to be made and an ‘ethics of translation’ to be considered when transferring the information in the interviews to the novel.

As a result, I decided to correct the English when the characters were thinking or narrating, and to adjust the English when they were speaking to a more standard usage so that the meaning was clear. I did not correct the English entirely. As lack of English is one of the significant barriers characters (and, by extension, migrants) face, it becomes necessary to

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*a See Venuti (2012).*
portray this in dialogue. However, it was not possible for the text to be transferred from the original exactly as it was said in interviews, even if the context would allow it; this still required manipulation. Phrases like ‘I said like, you know,’ ‘Please. You don’t have to do like that’ and ‘Bad discussion’ spoken above by the interviewee are not easily made sense of in English. These would need to be reinterpreted were I to use them in text. These phrases were adjusted so they could be easily understood. Other phrases that were spoken were not translated. For example, the phrase Inshallah was left in the text. My thinking was that, if the participant felt that it was important to leave the phrase in the original language in conversation rather than translate the phrase, I would leave it in.

However, I discovered that I was not very confident about my decision about where to use Inshallah. I had to do some research into how it is used and exactly what is meant by the phrase. This became more obvious when, in interview, a Chilean informant said, ‘Ese. That’s it.’ If I were to translate ese, with my knowledge of Chilean Spanish, I would simply write ‘this.’ However, the participant added the translation ‘that’s it’ to it, which would be closer to what he meant and a clearer translation to a non-Spanish speaker. Therefore, the way in which I translated was not necessarily the way in which the participants would translate.

This raised another concern and that was whether I was still honouring the message that the interview participant intended to convey. Eco (2003, pp.2–3) says that, in translation proper, the translation from one language to another, ‘there is an implicit law, that is, an ethical obligation to respect what the author has written.’ Yet he problematises this, citing that translators must aim at rendering not the intention of the author but the intention of the text, which he describes as ‘the outcome of an interpretative effort on the part of the reader, the critic or the translator’ (Eco 2003, p.5). He uses the phrase ‘you’re pulling my leg’ as an example. The literal translation may be correct although it would be misleading. The translator must then be unfaithful to the text in order to remain faithful to the intention of the text.

This idea is reminiscent of postcolonial arguments about translation. Cheyfitz (1991, pp.xi–xii) sees translation as imperialistic and defined in relation to the foreign and the domestic, while the domestic is synonymous with the literal and the proper, whose job it is to bring the figurative foreign under control. To Cheyfitz (1991, p.xiv), the ideology behind this suggests that the Other’s redemption lies in the form of the Self. However, the Other also resists this
destruction. Heaney protests the colonisation of Ireland by England by retelling the story from the perspective of the colonised. This is what Eakin (2004, p.11) refers to as ‘counterstories’, which ‘resist dehumanising models of self and life story that society would impose on disempowered groups.’ In this argument, translation operates as a form of decolonisation although, Cheyfitz (1991) argues, this is cyclical. The two are perpetually translating each other.

**Integrating**

Once the interviews were transcribed, I went through the information and wove it into the first draft. I did this by adding information to the characters or events to the story. Here is an example of the original:

[D1 excerpt]

‘Look these terrorists,’ I hear a woman say from the opposite direction. I look around to see who is talking but all I can see are the waist level shirts.

‘Who is she talking to?’ Sana asks me.

‘You don’t understand me do you? In this country we speak English, mate. Speak English,’ the voice says.

Sana takes my arm and people look at her now.

‘Now they’re running riot. This is what us original Aussies fought for?’ The voice is sharp.

The smell of alcohol is cutting through the air, and I could feel the spray on the back of my neck. ‘She must be behind me,’ I think to myself. I don’t want to turn around.

‘You hear me?’ A jab hits my shoulder and I turn to see a wide-eyed girl of about thirty is reaching over the seats to grab Sana in the isle. Her hair is in a ponytail and she wears a large sweater. A man is behind her jeering.

A woman in black at the back of the tram stands up and yells something at the woman but I can’t understand it.

‘Excuse me. What did you say?’ the wide-eyed woman yells.

‘I said shut your mouth,’ the woman in black yells back.

‘This is my fuckin country. You tell me to shut up in my country,’ says the wide-eyed woman.

‘It’s not your country. And no one wants to hear what you have to say. Have a seat, you’re embarrassing yourself and everyone on this tram.’ The woman says, matter-of-factly, as if she were disciplining a child.

‘Are your talking about my grandfather? My grandfather fought for this country in the Second World War. It’s my country. This is my tram,’ the wide-eyed woman has begun to weep. Tears are running down her face.
‘Give it a rest,’ a man’s voice says from the front of the tram. Other voices follow, telling the woman to leave us. The woman walks away and leaves us alone. I feel so thankful to these people on the tram that have helped us.

As can be seen from this first draft, while the abuse of the two characters is present, the character Azra is grateful for the support from the people on public transport. The character also does not have much internal dialogue. However, in the second draft the character Azra is a young Muslim woman of Somali background. Interviews and field notes from participants from Somalia, Yemen, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Iran are integrated into the draft for this character. This is because the experiences that happened to one participant could feasibly happen to any of these participants, as the inciting factor was that they wore headscarves. The specific information below is taken from the participant from Lebanon’s interview. In nonfiction, Gutkind (1997, p.120) calls this ‘doctoring quotes’: making them more accessible, readable, to fit into the narrative. Therefore the language has changed to match the character’s voice and the story has changed to better match that of the interviewee, but the overall story is still the same: two girls are abused on public transport.

[D2 excerpt]

‘Excuse me. What did you say?’ a man I did not see before says to me. I wonder where he came from, he is not so close, so I do not say anything. Now I notice that the girls that were next to us are gone.

He is moving closer to us, pushing past people. I look around but people do not seem to be paying attention. ‘I said shut your mouth,’ he says to me.

‘Give it a rest,’ a man’s voice says from the front of the tram. Another man stands up and asks him if he would like to sit in his seat.

‘Nah, nah,’ he says. I am thinking the next stop, is our stop. Inshallah it is our stop. I look out the window and it is close – Swanston Street is the street I need. We do not need to speak. We go quickly. I do not realise Sana has taken my hand until we are outside and I can breathe again. I turn to see the man getting off the tram as well. He is with a woman who has a pram. We are walking quickly, but I can hear him behind us still, he is mumbling something loudly.

I’m knocked forward. There is a pain in the back of my head, not very bad, but it feels wet. Then, a ringing, louder and louder. I check to see if I am standing. Sana cries loudly and holds my hand tight to steady me. Her other hand is on my cheek. ‘I am okay,’ I say to her. I squeeze her hand.

The young boys from the tram have stopped and are watching us. It is like they have seen the accident, they look so scared. I bring my hand to my eyes and try to focus. My heart is beating so fast, I cannot concentrate. I realise I am looking for blood, but there is none thank god. It is just wet. Then there is laughter behind me.
I turn to see it is the man with the woman. She is holding a half eaten apple in one hand and a bag of apples in the other. On the ground is another apple with a bite in it.

‘You are in Australia. You don't have to wear that thing on your head. You're free here. Take it off,’ the woman yells. She still has so many apples.

‘Come,’ Sana says and starts to take me away. Her voice is cracking.

The boys have caught up to us and I jump when I notice one beside me, carrying a skateboard. ‘You right?’ he asks me. ‘We'll walk with you, where are you goin? We'll go with you.’ He says over and over.

‘It’s okay.’ I tell him.

‘It’s not okay,’ he says. ‘She hit you. I saw it. I can tell the police for you.’

‘No, no. It is okay. They are just racists. Stupid people,’ I say. Sana is gently brushing the apple off of my hijab. I can see her hand shaking. She doesn’t look at the boy.

‘They hit you pretty hard,’ he says.

‘They hit me yes, but I know I am strong,’ I say, ‘I didn’t fall. They cannot hurt me. Inshallah, I am strong.’

Some of the information from interviews can be seen here: the image of the apple, the phrase Inshallah and the dialogue ‘I am strong.’ However, this ‘collision’ refers to a clash of sorts. What about when the culture is similar to that of the audience? When interviewing and transcribing, I felt I understood the information provided by the Chilean participants more than that of participants from other countries. For example, when the interviewee above said, ‘Inshallah, thank you,’ initially I did not know what she meant. Only upon looking it up did I realise it is a phrase meaning ‘if Allah wills it’ (Oxford Dictionaries 2018). Similarly this happens with the word Wallah in the interview transcript.

The English is also cleaner and has been changed to match the story that is playing out in this scenario: the phrase discussed earlier has been altered from ‘Because they're stupid. They’re racist’ in the interview to ‘They are just racists. Stupid people’ in D2. Likewise, the interviewee reported that people told her to take off her scarf. This influenced how the characters spoke to her: ‘You are in Australia. You don’t have to wear that thing on your head. You’re free here. Take it off,’ they say. ‘Free’ is a reference back to Amar’s storyline; the repetition of images in different contexts serves to draw attention to the metaphors for everyday life as a refugee. In both storylines, the irony of being called ‘free’ becomes apparent without any further explanation. The character is not ‘free’ but is being assaulted because of her religion. This shows the way in which the fictional characters may express information ascertained from interviews, in order to translate the intention of the interview text while avoiding
identification. Like Heaney with *Beowulf*, however, I am aware that my opinion as an activist very much comes into the interpretation of this information.

However, interpretation must be based on some observable fact. I had written the text prior to interviews and observed through the media and casual conversations in fieldwork that verbal abuse on public transport was a significant issue faced by people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. In the interview stage, these remained real concerns, as a majority of my Muslim female participants had experienced some form of harassment on public transportation. If I had not found this to be true, this significant part of the plot of the novel would have been left out.

Bialystok tells us that ‘the boundaries we naively draw between languages are permeable, and all communication is interpretation’ (cited in Bellos 2011, p. 536). The fact that the transcript passages are selected and incorporated into the text, and at times spoken by characters themselves, speaks to the contextualisation and recontextualisation characteristic of the text. As Niranjana (1992) posits about translation, writing the Other suggests movement, disruption and displacement. It is the forced migration from the home country to the new context, Australia, that has positioned the characters in *All the Time Lost* within the postcolonial. Amar at the start of Chapter 1 says, 'When I arrived, I felt like a person just born.' This line is an exact quote from a participant from Sudan. This dislocation and then recontextualisation complicates not only the characters, but the voices of the characters, particularly when a line from the transcript is given to a character of another ethnic background.

The language ascertained from interviews has also been decontextualised and recontextualised. In a sense, it has been shaped by D1 and reshaped by interviews into the form of D2. Of the novel, Bakhtin (1981, p.7) says:

> They become more free and flexible, their language renews itself by incorporating extra literary heteroglossia and the ‘novelistic’ layers of literary language, they become dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, humour, elements of self-parody and finally – this is the most important thing – the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic open-endedness, a living contact with unfinished, still evolving contemporary reality (the open-ended present).
The open-ended present as it exists in this text is a space where nonfiction and fiction intersect, where language can be woven into text to convey a certain (deeply subjective) version of the ‘open-ended present.’ The language is a combination of writer and subject in this way it is heteroglossic. To Bakhtin (1981, p.47), ‘The language of the novel is a system of languages that mutually and ideologically interanimate each other. It is impossible to describe and analyse it as a single unitary language.’ When the words of the interviewee were written on the page, they were changed, translated. This happened again when they were placed in the manuscript. Because the spoken and written word are fundamentally different, the written words required some shaping. In order to maintain the authenticity of what the characters say, an ethics of translation should be considered when making decisions about changes to data.

Because the novel is a space where multiple voices intersect and interact, question and talk back, it would be impossible to convey a story where only a single voice is present. My interpretation had limitations. For example, Azra’s character is ‘thankful’ for the help in D1. However, in interviews with participants in which events of assault of public transport were discussed, they described being resilient rather than thankful. Thus, the voices and personalities of the characters needed to be adjusted to be more aligned with the voices from interviews. In this way, D2 marks a conscious effort to trace the voices woven into a text using ethnographic interviews. This portrayal of voice would have been inaccurate done according the interviews, the very offence I was trying to avoid in D1 – cultural misappropriation. I would have portrayed the characters as dependent upon the Australian observers to save them, rather than resilient women who overcame racial assault.

By the end of D2, the manuscript length had almost doubled. This was not necessarily because I had included the content from the interviews in D2, but because I had more confidence in writing the characters. I had more of an understanding of where people from refugee backgrounds were coming from and what they were experiencing through the stories they had generously shared with me. The fear that I had been misappropriating characters was also lessened, as I could see instances where I had made mistakes in representation, the two primary instances described in this chapter being language and representation of the refugee as helpless ‘victim.’ The interviews helped to shape more interesting and nuanced characters, allowing me to write more freely.
Conclusions

I began this section questioning how increasing engagement with the people represented in creative writing shifted the narrative. This was not an easy question to answer, as it involved an examination of how interviewing and transcription processes may reveal instances of cultural misappropriation. Just as data has its own 'shape,' these decisions about gathering information also shape the text. I viewed this from the perspective of an ethics of translation, which includes considerations about how subaltern groups are represented and decisions around what information may be confidential for people from refugee backgrounds due to their vulnerable visa status. I assert that making it clear what information will be used helps to clarify this for participants.

An ethics of translation also sparks consideration into how context also gives new meaning, which had to be considered when transferring the information in the interviews to the novel. I argue that decisions should be made that honour the 'intention of the text' rather than the intention of the author or subject, as the text encompasses both. What resulted is a more overtly heteroglossic version of the original text based on subjective impressions of a group of people from refugee backgrounds and the challenges faced by the everyday. As such, the second stage led to the realisation that, despite my best intentions and experience, while writing D1 I was still subscribing to the representation of the refugee as victim which is prevalent in refugee narratives. It was through speaking to the people represented and reflection on this process of translation that I became able to notice instances of misappropriation.

Feedback phase

The focus in this section is on the writing of D3, which was influenced by feedback sessions. Three feedback sessions were held, in which three people who had been involved in the D2 interviews participated (although all 15 interviewees were invited to participate and offered a copy of the D2 manuscript). In total two people attended the feedback sessions (two men – one from Sudan and another from Iran) and one person met with me privately outside of the feedback sessions (a woman from Sudan). Of the nationalities of the main characters, Somalia and Chile were not represented in the feedback sessions. Each participant received a draft of the D2 manuscript and a bullet-pointed treatment of the manuscript. The goal of these
sessions was to enable participants to have control over how I used the stories, answer any questions pertaining to the manuscript and gather suggestions for the D3 manuscript. This chapter explores the changes and consistencies between the D2 and D3 manuscripts that arose out of these sessions. It discusses my expectations of the feedback sessions against how the participants viewed the sessions. In doing so, it seeks to participate in the discussion of how a novel that writes the Other may change depending on the methods used to produce it. It situates itself within the debate of writing the Other, which brings into consideration issues of representation and identity in writing.

My thinking in planning these sessions was that, through participants’ feedback, there would exist the opportunity to learn about how the subject’s information is processed through the lens of the researcher and whether that representation is synonymous with the subject’s own. In other words, I thought it would tell me how information is translated between the subject and the writer, and whether the results met the expectations of the subject. In doing so, it might contribute to the field of creative writing by indicating how necessary reviewing the finished work of fiction is to the process of writing the Other. However, in truth there was not much interest from the participants to review the work. Of those three who attended, all had expressed an interest in writing their own story at some point. They were curious about the process of writing and happy to help me with mine using their expertise of their own experience.

What I learned in D3 was more about my own expectations of those giving feedback. I expected that, like the interviews, the feedback would show me what I had ‘gotten wrong.’ However, that was not the role of the participants – their role was to give advice. This caused me to rethink the expectations that writers of Others have for those they consult, and reinforces the idea that, despite my best efforts to de-centre my writing, as in ethnography the final word still falls to the researcher. As such, it is my own responsibility to find what I may have ‘gotten wrong.’ My main objective was to determine if the story ‘rang true’ for participants. They seemed to identify with specific experiences of the characters, those elements that were ascertained from both fieldwork and interviews. This resulted in more confidence to write characters, as I had been feeling constrained before by the fear that I would cause offence. I was perhaps so consumed by the fear that I would ‘get it wrong’ that I ignored what I got correct.
Ethnography has historically struggled with the question of how adequately represent Others in writing. While methods have tended to focus on objective interpretation of fieldwork and interviewing with a critical awareness of colonial bias, literature around participant responses to writing and representation has been rare. Although ethnographic studies strive to privilege the authority of their informants, the ‘last word’ falls to the researcher. In order to offset this, giving those who contribute the opportunity to approve of or provide feedback on the finished work is recommended. Critical collaborative ethnography stresses feedback and constant interchange with the participants as a necessary part of its methodology. How can this ethos and strategy be applied to creative writing?

This may be likened to the debate playing out around sensitivity readers. According to a spate of articles published around February 2017 (likely in response to Shriver’s cultural appropriation speech), writers of Others and their editors have increasingly used ‘sensitivity readers’9 (also called ‘beta readers’10 or ‘cultural experts’11) as a means by which to ensure they have not misrepresented a character. A website that provides a database of sensitivity readers, ‘Writing in the margins’ (originating in 2012), says that their group aims to point out ‘internalized bias and negatively charged language’ that can arise when writers create ‘outside of [their] experiences’ although they warn that this is not a guarantee, as readers may see things different ways (Ireland cited in Waldman 2017).

However, drawbacks have been identified as well. According to Clayton (cited in Mason 2017), a sensitivity reader has the potential to legitimise the mimicking of marginalised voices by non-marginalised writers. “It feels like I’m supplying the seeds and the gem and the jewels from our culture, and it creates cultural thievery,” Clayton said. “Why am I going to give you all of those little things that make my culture so interesting so you can go and use it and you don’t understand it?” (Clayton in Mason 2017). Roderick (cited in Waldman 2017) also points out that the reading of insensitive material can take a heavy emotional toll on the reader. As a result, the assumption that those underrepresented in writing benefit from sensitivity readers has been called into question.

While I did not employ sensitivity readers to provide feedback on my text, I did engage in feedback sessions with the group of people represented. This is different in that this group

9 Fallon (2017); Mason (2017); Neary (2017); Sullivan (2017); Waldman (2017).
was not employed professionally to look for anything that would cause offence, although they were asked if anything did not seem accurate. There was also no monetary compensation. The goal behind this was to ensure that those who participated had some control over the stories that they shared with me, a principle in collaborative ethnography and one echoed by the refugee organisation RISE (2017), whose motto is ‘nothing about us without us.’ While it is not possible to in a novel to give complete control of representation to participants, it was important to my practice to make the changes recommended by participants. Through writing the novel manuscript, I learned that the voice operates as a construction of my own voice, though content from interviews and feedback are still present. It is important to note that mostly it was my own writing as I was the one making the decisions about what in published in the book. Still, I wanted to see if the writing ‘rang true’ for those I sought to represent. Thus, I needed to document the feedback I received.

**Getting feedback**

On my way to the first feedback session, I was worried no one would come or, worse, people would come but would not like the novel. When I arrived at the room where the feedback session was scheduled to take place, one man from an Iranian background in his mid-thirties was waiting for me. He had arrived thirty minutes early. ‘I came to see you, because you messaged me,’ he said in a friendly way. I was immediately relieved. I had used some of the information from his interviews in the manuscript and I was interested to see what he thought of my fictionalisation.

We went inside and had a chat. It seemed like no one else would be attending that day. I asked him how he had been. He told me he had stopped going to English classes because he couldn’t concentrate and wasn’t feeling well. I told him that Amar’s character was actually having trouble concentrating as well. He was surprised. He had not told me this in his interview. He asked how I knew. I told him that someone else had told me about their headaches. This was something that I heard frequently when I was working in the field. He said, ‘I thought I was the only one.’

He suddenly became very interested in the narrative surrounding Amar’s character. I warned him that the story included information from our interviews about being in prison. ‘It’s a short section, about writing,’ I told him. I explained that some of the information had been
changed to fictionalise the manuscript. I asked him if that was okay. I was worried that this would cause him to recall painful memories of imprisonment. However, he was actually quite upbeat. ‘Yeah, it’s fine. Which one is me?’ he asked enthusiastically. I explained again how I had written the characters before integrating the interviews and pointed out that there were other participants from Iran whom I had interviewed to create Amar’s storyline. I went through the bullet-point treatment of the chapters with him and explained the story, pointing to some of the parts of the interview I had used. I gave him the bullet-point treatment of the novel, which broke down each chapter (see Appendix 4), and the draft of the book.

I can’t reproduce exactly what was said, as I did not record it and instead took handwritten notes, but the conversation went something like this: ‘A lot of people don’t know what a refugee is and I don’t like it. And here,’ the participant pointed to a point in the treatment where Amar is told for the second time that he is very lucky. He said to me, ‘This, you’re very lucky. A lot of people say you are lucky because the government gave you a place, you have Centrelink, you go to university. I’m not lucky. I had all this in my country but I lost it.’ This anecdote about luck had come from fieldwork. I had observed volunteers repeatedly telling refugees and asylum seekers how lucky they were.

I asked him if there was anything in the book I should change. He said, ‘I want to read it but you write it, you write the book. You’re the writer.’ I asked him if he had any advice. He said, ‘You need to explain the situation, what a refugee is. You have to keep the name “refugee” your whole life.’ He said his name and then added, ‘refugee from Iran, from Australia. This is my class number.’ He read out a number. He went on to explain what he meant by this, that he has a number that he is referred to rather than by his name. He wanted the story to be about people, not refugees. I took this to mean that, when people see him, they do so as a refugee and a number, not a person.

The participant said another thing that struck a chord. When I asked him what I should include in the Iranian character’s story, he said, ‘There can be no hope that things will change in the book.’ A wave of relief swept through me when he said this. I had wondered whether I should include a glimmer of hope that the political situation in the novel would improve, even though there was no indication that it would in reality and the interviews had in no way suggested that refugees felt this way. My decision had been made based on the information from interviews during D2. The popular narratives that tend to portray refugees as either
victims or success stories (as discussed with relevance to refugee narratives in the literature review) had caused me to question whether I should be adhering to popular narratives espoused about refugees. However, the participant confirmed my decision, which had been made as a result of the information collected in interviews.

Not only that, but nothing was criticised in the feedback sessions – participants were only interested in how the story came out, and to discuss the characters. There was agreement that these plot points mentioned had happened to them, even though they had not told me about these situations in interviews. In fact, all three feedback participants said, ‘I thought I was the only one’ or ‘This is true’ at some point when we were discussing the bullet-point treatment. As I will discuss in this section, I believe the reason that there were no major changes suggested was due to several factors, one of which may have been out of politeness, but another reason was that I had been ‘listening’ to what I was told in interviews and incorporating this into the manuscript, which resulted in a story that participants could relate to.

**Collaborating**

I began my drafts of *All the Time Lost* optimistically. These were written with the idea in mind that the participants would review D3 and provide feedback. This seemed ethical in that it would take into consideration participants’ perspectives on their identity and how they would want to be represented. I also did not want the book to written for only a Western readership, but also for the people undergoing the experience, so that they would feel that they were ‘represented.’ Gaining feedback would not only serve to gain more insight into how the cultures represented in the book could be written better, but also could help to determine the extent to which I was successful in writing characters from other backgrounds.

‘Collaborative’ research is doing research ‘with’ people rather than ‘on’ or ‘about’ people (Bhattacharya 2008, p.305). This form of ethnographic research moves away from the Chicago School in order to ‘make way for multiple voiced, indigenous, resistance-based, performative research’ (Bhattacharya 2008, p.308). Madison (2005, cited in Bhattacharya 2008, p.305) refers to critical ethnography as ‘doing’ or ‘performance of critical theory’; in other words, it is ‘critical theory in action’ (see Madison 2005). Breunlin and Regis (2009) examine their ‘ethnographic collaboration’ through a project entitled ‘Seventh ward speaks.’ They worked
with the New Orleans community to develop an exhibition of posters which included the photos and life stories of community members. As Seventh ward residents, they considered themselves members of the community and adopted the motto ‘our stories told by us,’ but did notice the differences in power and decision-making that came into play. In the end, while participants still had the opportunity to withdraw their exhibitions, those who wrote the research still held the power of interpretation.

Like ethnography, translation is collaborative (Eco 2003, p.6). While collaborative ethnography advocates that the informants should be involved in the process of writing and be given the opportunity to review the finished writing where possible, translation has encouraged on discussing the translation of the source text with the author where possible.

Throughout this process, I was worried participants might have a negative reaction to some of the content because they would feel it didn’t represent them. I was surprised to find participants’ reactions were positive. While the level of collaboration was not to the extent that I would have preferred, it was still significant enough to shift the narrative and to provide support for the narrative I had written. An example of support is exemplified in the scene where Nina is at Centrelink. The information about Centrelink was drawn first from my own experiences helping people from refugee backgrounds with Centrelink and then from interviews. One participant from Sudan thought it was very funny and very true. This provided me with the confidence to develop the scene more. Previously I had been afraid to write, feeling that I could not possibly understand the situation in the same way as a person from a Sudanese refugee background.

McBeth (1993, p.146), who wrote about a ‘mixed blood Shoshone Indian woman,’ redefines the role of the person to whom she spoke in her research in order to better place herself within the research. She saw the participant’s role as ‘native consultant’ rather than ‘informant.’ She points to this definition since the role of an ‘informant’ is to speak, while here the subject’s role also included consultation. She argues that objectivity as a researcher is impossible and suggests the alternative of ‘informed intersubjectivity’ through familiarity, collaboration, listening and sharing.

Participants who did provide feedback seemed to enjoy their agency in describing and determining what happened to the fictional characters. They were seen as ‘experts’ or closer
to what McBeth (1993) views as ‘consultants.’ However, the term ‘consultant’ does not take into consideration the desire for knowledge both parties also possess by entering into this exercise of enquiry. It assumes that the participants aren’t curious about their findings, that they already know about the group that they find themselves apart of. However, my participants were curious about creative writing. Inclusion into the group of becoming a refugee is not desirable, nor is it an organically created social subculture. Not only is the situation foreign, but the Australian culture that refugees find themselves in is as well. I noted that the feedback participants were just as interested to find out about their own situation as was the researcher. All three participants did express an interest in writing their own stories. Each one said something along the lines of, ‘One day I’m going to write my life story. I have had a very interesting life.’ The stories that followed were not used in the dissertation or the novel, because those stories belonged to them. However, the interest in writing their own stories suggests they wanted to learn how to do it. This also goes back to the idea of intellectual interest in the process of learning.

*Listening*

In translation, there are losses and gains (Eco 2003, pp.32–61); some information is lost, while other information is gained. When asked what I should include, participants mostly mentioned things already included (e.g., the ‘prison’ of no work or study rights; people telling them that they are lucky to be in Australia). These examples supported the manuscript. As I mentioned in the introduction, I believe this is due to ‘listening’ to the participants. I adopted an ethics that, if an interview contradicted what I had written, it needed to be changed.

Originally I had wanted the stories to be positive, rather than negative – that is, to have a ‘Hollywood ending.’ This is because, although some participants may have complained about certain aspects of exclusion from Australian society, such as difficulty with the language and restrictions on work rights, I thought they would not want to appear ‘ungrateful,’ as they genuinely enjoyed living in Australia. However, some of the interviews contradicted this (others did not). Some participants wanted to talk about the difficulties they were having as refugees due to racism. But, as I mentioned previously, one participant suggested that there should be no hope, suggesting a happy ending would not have been desired. The benefit of having four characters was that I could show both sides of this perspective. Azra has a largely positive outlook, for example, while Amar is feeling depressed.
McBeth (1993, p.147) also suggests that what the subject may take issue with may not be what the writer expects. I had thought participants might also take issue with the dialogue of some characters being in ‘imperfect English.’ Although the participants hadn’t yet read the text closely beyond skimming it, there were no comments about the English used. I had also suspected that the participants would take issue with parts of the manuscript or have strong negative reactions to it. However, there were no negative responses to the manuscript; participants were quite happy that they shared similar experiences to the characters.

Furthermore, I thought the text would require more negotiation. However, participants seemed content to let me write the book. The ones who were present were happy to give ‘advice’ but not dictate the way the book should be written. Most of the participants did not respond to the messages about the feedback session. The reasons for this aren’t clear. This may suggest they were content to let me use the information in the same way I had described to them when they agreed to participate or that they were disinterested in this part of the study. They may also have been too intimidated to respond, too busy or too polite to suggest changes. It is important to note that suggesting changes could be a difficult endeavour, as any task, which involves delivering negative criticism. While there is no way to tell conclusively why many participants did not give feedback, I found the feedback that was provided was very enlightening.

Finally, participants were expressly happy to have control over the representation and use of their stories. Two participants said it was ‘a really good thing’ that I gave them the opportunity to review what I had written. Failing to provide adequate consultation with people from refugee backgrounds is an issue that has been raised with advocacy groups. For example, as mentioned in the introduction on April 9, 2017, Idil Ali (2017) from the organisation RISE accused the Refugee Action Collective of billing only advocates to speak rather than people with lived experience as refugees. Ali said, ‘it is time to listen.’ The act of listening requires that the researcher follows the advice of collaborators and works with them throughout the process of writing. If the collaborators are truly viewed as the ‘experts,’ it is pertinent that their approval is sought. My research has taught me that this works to benefit both parties, myself in that I had more confidence in the authenticity of the D3 manuscript and the participants in that they had control over representation.
Conclusions
Reflecting back on the manuscript, I felt that the first draft was one of voice misappropriation: the voices of the subjects had not been combined with those of the characters in the story. Instead, they were simulated based on observations I had made in the field. I thought that empathising would be an adequate way to write, but found that empathising was more about my own perception than writing from the perspective of anOther. By the completion of the second draft, the voices of the characters had changed to ones that were a combination of the writer’s and the subject’s. However, as the Self I still occupied a stronger and more privileged role in the telling of the story. This had to be taken into consideration when translating the interview material into the story. This led me to consider an ethics of representation when choosing to change the language used by participants in interviews to one that would be viewed as ‘correct English.’ The final draft was helpful in allaying my anxiety about ‘getting it wrong’ and reinforced the idea that listening to participants was an important part of the writing process. This helped to produce counterstories, which resist dehumanising models that society would impose on disempowered groups (Eakin 2004). In the next chapter, I will discuss these counterstories and how they challenge the idea of a ‘national story.’
5. Towards an Ethics of Writing Otherness

How might a writer construct an ethnographically informed novel, considering the ethics of writing Otherness?

What they don’t understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you’re eleven, you’re also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one. And when you wake up on your eleventh birthday you expect to feel eleven, but you don’t. You open your eyes and everything’s just like yesterday, only it’s today. And you don’t feel eleven at all. You feel like you’re still ten. And you are – underneath the year that makes you eleven. – Sandra Cisneros, ‘Eleven’ (2009)

What can this exercise tell us about writing Otherness? I began this dissertation defining Otherness in relation to the Self. In writing, the Self cannot be separated from the Other; meaning is constantly made and remade between these two concepts. I took the stance that, when translating data provided by the subject, it becomes a combination of both voices, those of writer and subject. While increasing engagement with those represented in the writing led to character voices which were heteroglossic, they still centred around the author as writer: the Self. However, the Self was shifted more towards those who contributed to the writing; towards Otherness. D3 of the manuscript reminded me of Sandra Cisneros’s description of the birthday; it was D1 and D2 and D3, a palimpsest of fieldwork, interviews and feedback, a combination of writer and subject.

Ethics in fiction from the perspective of the creative writer continues to be controversial and perhaps this is what has led to a debate that conflates the idea of censorship with ethical representation (see Shriver 2016). In fields with established ethical principles, such as ethnography, it has been argued that this better representation may be achieved by bringing the subjects into the process of writing (Couser 1998). Until this study, however, there has been only speculation as to the difference between a narrative that has been written without

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12 See discussions around collaborative ethnography (Chapter 2) and ethics in life writing (Chapter 1), as well as Couser (1998).
consulting the subjects and one that has. To investigate this process, this dissertation has explored different methods of producing a novel. D1 of the manuscript was a draft that was deeply influenced by observations in fieldwork in an organisation that provides tertiary-level education to refugees and people seeking asylum, and by personal experience. D2 marks the draft that was written after interviewing people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. D3 describes drafting after participants read what had been written about them and provided feedback. In doing so, the project sought to interrogate how different methods of writing the Other may yield different results. Yet, throughout the project, personal experience and subjectivity, the Self, could not be separated from the writing of Others and did, in fact, play a major role in the creation of characters.

This became problematised when I considered that meaning is also constructed with relation to the audience, or the critic. How the writer views themselves and how the subjects are viewed by the audience lead to another potential interpretation of the text. These multivocal interpretations are couched in power relations and, as Foucault (in Foucault & Sheridan 1979) theorises about discourse, they can enable, constrain and constitute writing the Other. My constraint was my own anxiety about writing Otherness. This had to do with how I am viewed, as both not part of a group and part of a group. I exist within a liminal area, the nuances of the definition of the Self free to be debated in a public sphere upon reception by critics. The definition of who I am is not solely mine. For example, ‘you are not Chilean,’ a friend told me once, ‘because you were not born in Chile.’ I have had to redefine myself in order to discuss Otherness. I am not just Chilean – I am also American and Irish-American and so many other things.

As such, I chose to talk about the debate in terms of the key positions within the argument: artistic freedom, sensitivity and cultural appropriation. First, I examined a draft that was written prior to engagement with the people represented in the manuscript. This gave me insight into how a text may be constructed under the principles of artistic freedom. The second draft embodied a text with increasing engagement with people from refugee backgrounds in the form of interviews. It took on the characteristics of a sensitively written fictional text. The final draft, through feedback, represented writing which critically engaged with issues of cultural appropriation.
By the final draft several key aspects of the writing had changed, while others remained consistent. The most striking difference had to do with authenticity versus verisimilitude. A text written by someone from a background other than the subject’s will likely, by definition, be inauthentic but may perhaps possess an intriguing verisimilitude or believability. To do this, one must produce a representation that is as authentic as possible. Inauthenticity leads to inaccurate representations of a group of people, a practice which, I argue, is unethical.

This chapter will explore the varying degrees to which the Other can be written. It seeks to understand what the methods used to produce fiction on the topic of migrancy mean for writing the Other. I compare this with reflections upon writing a character of similar background to my own, which was largely based on personal experience and interviews with participants of Chilean background. This chapter looks at four key areas in which the draft changed after interviews. I reflect upon the differences and consistencies between the drafts and what they may reveal about writing the lives of Others, and how this contributes to the ongoing debate of ethics in fiction.

In doing so, I argue that the artistic freedom approach reproduces a ‘national story’ because the writer’s identity is so central to the construction of characters. I argue that increasing engagement with the people represented, through testimonial accounts, caused All the Time Lost to move away from the national story. Drawing on the testimonial form, All the Time Lost asks the reader to bear witness to a second-hand account of racially based abuse and the difficulties posed by the everyday from people from displaced backgrounds. While the national story seeks to document what has happened, the testimonial form exposes what is happening. The testimonial disseminates the story of injustice not only to the wider global audience, but also to the people who are being written about, in order to reaffirm collective ideals of disparate and shared experiences (Sigona 2014, p.370). This shared experience serves to reinforce a sense of identity. This sense of identity is lacking in the national story, which privileges whiteness.

**The national story**

Holloway’s (2013) metaphor of a creative writing dissertation as building a pocket watch highlights the variety of the mechanisms that work together to produce creative writing. In this dissertation, I have used ethnography as a method to gather information and translation as a means by which to incorporate that information into an ethnographically informed novel.
I have explored the way the testimonial, to reveal human rights violations, manifests writings about the refugee experience and in fiction. It is argued that the refugee narrative has a specific form that stories are translated into. This form is typified by the three-act structure, which focused on the before, during and after migration story. However, these stories also reproduce a nationalist agenda in that they tend to show the migrant experience as successful and dependent on hard work, while instances of racism and discrimination by white Australians are either toned down or avoided altogether.

To explore the praxis around shifting information into fictional and novelistic form, I used have ethnography as a conceptual framework, through the lens of postcolonial and translation studies. Rather than seeing ethnography as a method for data collection, Sarah Pink (2015, p.8; cited in Pink 2007) offers the following definition:

Ethnography is a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers’ experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality, but should aim to offer a version of ethnographers’ experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced.

Translation can also be seen as a process of creating knowledge. According to Gal (2015, p.225), translation points to a family of semiotic processes in which different social worlds emerge through ‘forms of communication in which practices, objects, genres, and texts are citable, recontextualizable.’ Several forms of translation have been utilised in this study. Through fieldwork accounts, the last chapter saw translation as a shift between two spaces. The interview phase described another form of translation, marked by partial rewriting of the voices of the characters and plot based on data from interviews. This is adjusted from the notion that, in translation, the major plot aspects cannot be changed. Minor instances may change but, in doing so, they recontextualise the story. The author is re-creating the translator based on interview data and must make decisions about changing minor events based on ‘negotiations’ between the source text, the new data and the context in which the text will be read, using an ethics of translation. The feedback phase marked the movement of the translation into a more collaborative approach through feedback. Although I thought this would reveal what I had ‘gotten wrong,’ it instead reinforced the idea that speaking to those represented produced a stronger and more authentic text that resonated with participants.
Translation was the glue that bound the ethnographic data and the manuscript. It was used to trace how the data became part of a fictional refugee narrative. The following figure gives an overview of how translation functioned as a tool to incorporate the ethnographic data into an ethnographically informed refugee narrative:

**Forms of translation:**

As mentioned previously, Gal (2015, p.227) views translation as ‘the expression in one semiotic system of what has been said, written, or done in another.’ The translation is marked by recontextualisation, by displacement and replacement. Therefore, when fictionalised, the voices and places become combinations of the writer’s imaginary and the source text. Just as migrancy is at once grounded in ‘place’ and removed from it, so is translation. Removed from its original context, it becomes recontextualised through fictionalisation in writing.

Ethnography was used as a method with which to gather data, while translation was used to incorporate that data into the form of a novel. However, the translation itself always points to the source. It cannot exist without the Other. It is important when producing fiction about people from backgrounds other than the writer’s for the writer to examine their relationship to the subject(s) and, by extension, to the Other.
To write Otherness, I first positioned myself in relation to the group I wished to describe. As I argued in Chapter 1, Otherness is inextricably linked to Western culture, the Self representing the coloniser and the Other representing the colonised, the Other lacking ‘identity, propriety, purity, literality,’ described as the ‘foreign,’ ‘unauthorized,’ ‘inappropriate’ and ‘unfamiliar’ (Al-Saidi 2014, p.95). I as the Self have access to certain places based on my cultural privilege. However, this also poses problems as I am not just ‘white,’ but also Latina. My ‘whiteness’ denotes a position of power.

According to Foucault, a balance of power may also be subverted. As identity is in constant flux, fluid, it has the power to shift. I can be the Other and I can be the Self within the context of the Chilean character Lucy. In this dissertation, I have explored the writer as Self while the subjects occupy the role of Other, and I have attempted to harmonise the two in order to write fictional characters. In doing so, I argue that Otherness can be seen to exist on a spectrum, with authenticity correlating to how far the writer, the Self, is removed from the subject. For example, Lucy’s character in All the Time Lost is closer to the writer in that Lucy is Australian-Chilean and the writer is American-Chilean; however, authenticity declines with Amar, the Iranian character with asylum-seeker status. To increase the believability of this character, interviews and feedback sessions were used. I have overlaid them on this diagram, which shows the characters as overlapping circles.
Next, I used empathy as a method for writing the characters. However, it is important to be cognisant of arguments that ignore the theory that writing the Other causes damage to a group’s identity. These have their basis in cultural relativism. These proponents find writing Otherness through ‘empathising’ an achievable goal, given the viewpoint that all cultures are intrinsically similar. For example, Shriver (2016) operates on the assertion that identity is confining. This stems from older viewpoints, such as that of French anthropologist Jean-Loup Amselle (cited in Lionnet 1993, p.107), that ‘to isolate a community by defining a set of characteristic “differences” can lead to the possibility of its territorial confinement, and its eventual expulsion. Ethnic labeling, and the assignment of differences, are self-fulfilling prophecies.’ However, as I point out in relation to my reflection on my mixed-race identity, the way others view me also has an impact upon the way I view myself, as do instances of racially motivated attacks. Identity, inextricably linked to race, cannot help but be influenced by these factors when certain groups are racially targeted.

Furthermore, in Chapter 4 of my study I found that writing using empathy, while an essential tool of the writer, is also problematic. While empathy was beneficial in understanding the situations of the subjects, I was constantly in danger of over-empathy and transference. Over-empathy with groups that have undergone violence and human rights violations may present the risk of secondary trauma for the writer (see Appendix 2), but is also a valuable writing tool. In my study, I noted that the risk of transference was present and could potentially lead to victimisation or infantalisation of the subject (Helff 2009b). In such cases, I found that reflection upon the writer–subject relationship is necessary to ensure these do not affect the writer or subject, or transfer over into the writing.

These effects may also be lessened when those who are written about are brought into the process of writing. I found reflection easier when compared with the interviews and feedback sessions, where information could be clarified. The word process here is important, as we need to know what our process is in order to bring others into it. Particularly when writing characters who are traditionally underrepresented in literature, an awareness of the process of fictionalisation and the issues, as well as the ethics, surrounding it is necessary to avoid dangerous side effects and to increase authenticity in the writing.

As such, the first draft may be considered voice appropriation. In the pre-interview draft, the voices of the characters changed several times. Initially, Amar’s and Nina’s stories were
written in the third person, but this gradually changed to first-person perspective. These characters also spoke in non-standard English, with Nina’s character narrating to an unknown person. This eventually changed in D2 to Nina narrating what she saw and all characters’ thoughts expressed in perfect English, with dialogue in non-standard English. It employed an ethics of translation. During the integration of interviews, the English was changed to match the ‘voice’ of the character and became a combination of the subject and writer, with dialogue maintaining much of the distinctive language that could be considered ‘imperfect’, but the grammar of the language in the characters’ thoughts changed to fit standard English conventions. The reason for this is that, when thinking, grammar would not be an issue for characters or speakers of other languages, who may think in their native tongue. I also considered the fact that participants would expect their English to be ‘fixed’, as I am an English teacher and writer.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect was voice. Trying to harmonise the voices of the writer and subjects was problematic. Gal says (2015, p.231):

Translations, like other forms of reported speech, are never simply repetitions. They add the moral weight of others’ voices to one’s own, or alternatively, attribute responsibility for the utterance to others. Both are examples of what Bakhtin called ‘double voicing,’ which has evidential as well as moral implications (Hill & Irvine 1993, pp. 6–7)

Moral implications include reinforcing harmful stereotypes about people from subaltern backgrounds. Both literary translation and cultural translation in anthropology have been criticised for reinforcing Western power structures (see Gal 2015, p.228; Niranjana 1992). Translation as an act of movement also enacts disruption and displacement (Niranjana 1992). When done without awareness of process or a grasp of the politics involved, it has the power to do harm to a group of people’s sense of identity, as well as the way an audience perceives that group of people.

The evolution of the drafts can be traced following the storyline uniting the narratives, the concept of public transport. As mentioned previously, the idea for a story set on public transport had its genesis in the metaphor of movement and dislocation. Two scenes of racial abuse on public transport were inspired by media coverage of videoed instances of racism on
public transportation and of stories I heard while I was conducting fieldwork. These led the VEOHRC to investigate the frequency and impacts of racial attacks on public transport. In its report, the VEOHRC (2013) distinguishes between racism and racial discrimination: racism is ‘a belief that a particular race or ethnicity is inferior or superior to others. Racial discrimination involves any act where a person is treated unfavourably because of their race, nationality, colour, descent or ethnic origin’ (2013, p.10). Hage (2014) describes several forms of Australian racism. Of these, ‘Hansonite racism’ and ‘condescending racism’ are most relevant for the purposes of this chapter. To Hage (2014, pp.233–234), Hansonite racism has its basis in a kind of ‘egalitarian’ ethos, the idea that certain immigrant groups are taking places that belong to Australians – a ‘them or us’ mentality. Condescending racism takes the form of a casual acceptance of racism and disavowal of the person calling out the racist act, with such dismissals as ‘oversensitive’ or ‘too serious.’ In doing so, relaxation of racialised forms of interaction can become routinised or normalised (Hage 2012, p. 234).

The VEOHRC (2013) report cites a survey into the mental health impacts of racial discrimination on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities conducted in two rural and two metropolitan areas of Victoria by VicHealth in 2012. It found that nearly two-thirds of 1139 people from CALD communities had experienced racism in the previous 12 months. It also found that the CALD groups most targeted were those of Islamic faith. In VEOHRC’s own study, the Islamic Council of Victoria reported cases of verbal and physical abuse, and gave examples of women wearing hijabs being attacked and attempts to forcefully remove the hijabs (VEOHRC 2013, p.10). I used some of these instances as inspiration and fictionalised them to create D1:

The bus moves away from the kerb but a man he stops it. His hand goes on the door and he hits it hard. He hits it again. The driver, he stops. I don’t know why. When the man comes on, I see in his face that he is crazy.

‘Thanks mate,’ he says to the driver, then turns to help a woman to carry on a pram. She is blonde hair, her face red. She pulls out the card and touches on.

‘No charge for the pram yeah?’ she asks and the driver waves at them, shakes his head.

They push the pram in and the woman stops in front of me. The seats on the sides facing the inside of the bus are empty. And then this woman comes on.

She says, ‘You are in my seat.

‘Me?’ I say to her.

‘You,’ she says and points to me.
‘How is it?’ I look at the bus driver, who says nothing.

‘Dog,’ she calls me.

‘Pig,’ I say. ‘How can this be your seat when the driver tells me to sit here? I ask you how? You call me dog, I call you pig.’

And now I know she is drunk because she smells like alcohol and cigarettes and her breath is in my face. Then the man, he comes to me, his face to mine and I become scared. He says something ... I do not know what, and he calls me a dog too.

I get up, and I move to the back of the bus, but he follows close behind, saying things about Australia. *This my country. You are in my country. Get off my bus. Get out of my country.* I sit and he yells more.

The people on the bus go quiet. A man is filming on his phone.

The woman with the pram is yelling too. The bus it stop and the doors open, no one gets out. The bus driver asks the man and woman to leave. The bus stays there for maybe two minutes. I think maybe the bus driver will come, but the doors close and the bus, it begins to move.

Despite the evidence of its existence, I was still hesitant to write these scenes. These scenes in D1 are surprisingly a bit more like *New Humans of Australia*. The harassment on public transport was very toned down and at the end everyone was happy. What I mean by that is that there was no physical violence. Even putting that in made me anxious; I wanted everyone to come off well. I didn’t want Australian society to be reflected badly.

Then I began my interviews. I created questions based on these events in D1 of the manuscript. As discussed in Chapter 4, during interviews I discovered that of the five female participants who wore the hijab three had experienced racism, one had feared it would happen to her because it had happened to a friend of a friend and one had never experienced any form of racism on public transport. One female participant reported boys attempting to rip off her hijab and telling her that she did not need to wear it, that it was a free country now. A female participant from Sudan also reported violent abuse on public transport. The number of stories of racial abuse on transport towards these women caused me to rethink the softer storyline for Azra’s and Nina’s characters. Were I to remain true to the information I heard, I would need to convey even the violent stories; not to do so would be changing the story, it would be unethical. Therefore, the story of the apple being thrown at Azra and the story of Nina having her foot violently stepped on were incorporated into D2 of the manuscript.
The story of the foot being stepped on was particularly interesting, because the interviewee drew a connection between this and attempts at the time to change the 18C Racial Discrimination Act. She pointed out that, when Senator George Brandis (2014a) wanted to change the Act, which made it ‘illegal to publicly “offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate” a person or a group of people’ (Griffiths 2014) in order to allow more freedom to express offensive views, it had impacted on her experience on public transport:

that week he said that when I was on the tram coming from work and the tram was so full of people was like five o’clock and there was a guy came, very drunk guy, and he walk straight to me, I was the only black person there on the tram … and he say, ‘I don’t like that black people here. You should go back to where you come from … I am allowed to say my feeling. I am allowed to say what I feel … And you know, as a black person, if you talk, if I talk and raise my voice, I would be the problem.

This interview bore a striking similarity to the scene written into the first draft of All of the Time Lost in which a woman is verbally assaulted on a bus. However, the sense in that draft is that this act is not representative of the ‘average’ Australian. I wanted this sense to come through, that the few did not represent the many, with fears that I would be representing Australia unfairly. When I thought of this, I thought of the average Australian, as Brandis (2014a) puts it, the ‘ordinary, reasonable Australian.’

However, writer Alice Pung questions what the ‘ordinary, reasonable’ Australian is. In a public talk at the Melbourne Writers Festival, Pung (2014) discusses Brandis and his proposal to change the Racial Discrimination Act, which came as a result of prominent Indigenous Australians such as writer Anita Heiss challenging right-wing pundit Andrew Bolt’s racist argument that light-skinned Indigenous people should not be considered Indigenous. Brandis (2014b) reacted in defence of Bolt, whom the courts found against, vowing that ‘never again in Australia will we have a situation in which a person may be taken to court for expressing a political opinion.’ According to Pung (2014, 3:00-4:00), the proposals included changing words such as ‘offend’ to stronger words such as ‘vilify’ and defined ‘vilify’ in terms of how the ‘ordinary, reasonable Australian’ would define it. These were eventually scrapped, but Pung (2014) asks how to distinguish between ‘hurt feelings’ and ‘words that incite violence.’ As such, the ‘ordinary, reasonable Australian’ is one who agrees with traditional Australian values, who would presumably share the same values as Brandis. Brandis’s values ignore much of the racial implications of changing the Racial Discrimination Act. Furthermore, the
man who racially abused the interviewee described above was repeating Brandis’s and Bolt’s sentiment as justification for the attack in saying ‘I am allowed to say how I feel.’

Between these two examples, the relationship between Hage’s ‘Hansonite racism’ and the inciting of violence is made explicit. Pung (2014) goes on to point out that people are labelled, depending on whether they agree with the dominant white perception, either ‘good migrants’ or ‘ungrateful ethnics.’ Nikesh Shukla’s (2015) The Good Immigrant is a collection of essays by emerging ‘British black, Asian and minority ethnic writers, poets, journalists and artists,’ who explore ‘what it means to be “other” in a country that wants you, doesn’t want you, doesn’t accept you, needs you for its equality monitoring forms and would prefer you if you won a major reality show competition’ and what being ‘mixed-race’ means for identity. The duality is also laid out here, as the interviewee feels she cannot speak out because she will be the one to be labelled as the ‘troublemaker.’ The onlookers, in their casual acceptance of the situation, enact what Hage refer to as ‘condescending racism.’

I began to integrate these ideas into the draft. The implications of the attack are present in the interviews and translated into D2 of the draft. Regarding the Brandis incident, the participant described being followed and yelled at; she said, ‘[it’s like] a dog eating you. It’s like being eaten by a dog and people just watching you being eaten by a dog.’ This caused the incident to change from one that still reinforced the dominant notion that such attacks are perpetuated by people who are not ‘ordinary, reasonable Australians’ to one that subverts that notion.

However, it was not the feeling of the interviewee that all Australians are racist. Quite often interviewees, including the one quoted extensively above, referred to Australia as tolerant, friendly and welcoming. Therefore, while this section retains the incidents described, this complex relationship needed to be expounded in other sections of the book. Thus, I integrated the interviews into D2:

> As the bus rocks gently away from the kerb, a man’s open hand hits the window, the sound echoing through the air. He hits it again, this time with his fist, it is no longer to be noticed, but to warn. The bus stops dutifully and the doors open.

> A head appears below the stairs, a distracted one, with hair pushed to one side, tired blue wide eyes. ‘Thanks mate,’ he exhales to the driver cheerfully, his back to him as he lifts the front of a pram. The back of the pram is held by a blonde, red-faced woman, her eyes half-closed. When she
reaches the top of the steps, she holds the pram in place with the weight of her body, pulling out two train cards for the driver.

‘No charge for the pram yeah?’ she asks. The driver waves at them, shaking his head. They stop in front of me, looking at the empty seats, and then me, and then the seats again. I am, for a moment, an object to be studied. His eyes flash and he raises his foot, bringing it down hard on mine. I can feel the pain moving from my toes, to my knees, to my stomach. My first response is to cry out, but I do not change my face. ‘She is in your seat,’ he laughs, looking to the woman.

I can feel his eyes studying me, he must wonder why I do not move, must want me to cry. ‘You’re in her seat, you hear me?’ he says loudly. I want to say, ‘I heard you the first time,’ but the blood has begun to move in my body, my heart is beating so fast I cannot make any words. As a black person, if I talk and raise my voice, I would be the problem. If I say anything, it will be me who is the troublemaker.

It happened before, someone yelling at me for no reason. I shut up, not saying a word. And he was just yelling at me, insulting me. I moved. I moved to another part of the tram and he followed me. And I just sat there and I didn't look at him and I said to myself, ‘I am not going to get off.’ No one dared say anything and he was just humiliating me in front of all the people on the tram, like they were just watching me being eaten by a dog. That’s what it felt like, like being eaten by a dog.

That is the worst that can happen. I say to the man sweetly, ‘Me? There are plenty of seats, those there next to her are for the prams.’ I cross my legs, taking the weight off my aching foot. I look casual, not interested.

The woman pushes the break on the pram and moves next to her man. ‘I hate the government, bringing you people here. And it’s my right to speak my mind. It’s my right as an Australian,’ she says, choking back tears. I know why she is saying this. Two days ago, the Attorney-General said that people should have rights to say things that are bigoted, though the Racial Discrimination Act does not allow it. ‘It’s my country,’ she cries, ‘My great-grandparents fought for this country, not yours.’

I can see inside the pram, but there is no child, only bags of shopping and some apples. Standing up with my great height, I look down on him, my foot throbbing. ‘You should say sorry.’ I say.

‘What did you say?’ he says, moving closer.

As calmly and sweetly as I can, I say, ‘You should say sorry, because you hurt my foot.’

When it came time for the feedback phase, I was nervous. I was afraid the participants might feel I had represented them unfairly by focusing on a negative instance. I held a feedback session, giving participants a draft of the manuscript and a bullet-point treatment. We discussed the manuscript and their impressions of it. However, the feedback was positive and participants felt that the opportunity to collaborate gave them more confidence in the project, although they did not provide a large amount of feedback. They did feel that instances such
as this, a girl being attacked on public transport, were important to include. It rang true for them.

The consistency between D1, D2 and D3 I attribute to listening to the participants. This meant putting my own ideas of how they should be represented aside and reworking the manuscript to include the ideas and feedback from participants.

However, after the feedback phase, I asked myself, why was I so scared to write a story that depicted Australian society badly? Novelist and academic Tony Birch (2013) discusses the power of Indigenous writing to shift the national story in what he calls ‘post-national fiction’.13 Birch (2013), quoting a conversation he had with Mexican screenwriter Guillermo Arriaga, says Aboriginal fiction refers not to Indigenous issues but human issues and thus ‘speaks to the world.’ Birch does not only include Aboriginal writing in post-national fiction, mentioning Sri Lankan Australian author Michelle de Kretser’s novel Questions of Travel (2012), which centres around two characters: Laura, a white Australian woman who enjoys travel, and Ravi, a Sri Lankan man forced to leave his country and seek refuge in Australia after the politically motivated murder of his wife. This opens the term ‘post-national fiction’ up to a wider application, such as refugee writing.

Birch (2013) also notes the ‘disloyalty effect,’ which occurs when critics, commentators and readers view a negative critique of the national story as an act of ingratitude:

In recent years, the wider literary community in Australia has celebrated Aboriginal writing, although it also continues to be received and consumed defensively, within a mindset stuck in the colonial imagination. I call this the ‘disloyalty effect,’ whereby some critics, commentators and readers respond to what they feel is a negative critique of the national story: an act of ingratitude. The degree of disloyalty is compounded when delivered by ‘mixed-blood’ Aboriginal writers, who are, after all, the wayward children of the benevolent nation.

The disloyalty effect can also be manifested when writers are challenged for writing the Other. In the first chapter I mentioned Stephanie Convery (2015), a self-proclaimed ‘white writer writing Indigenous characters,’ who argues that, if writers are deterred from writing ‘the

Other,’ it will produce Alcoff’s ‘retreat response,’ causing them to avoid doing so all together. This would result in marginal groups ‘fighting their battles with no allies at all’ (Convery & Polites 2013, p.56). Essentially, a false equivocation has been set up, suggesting Indigenous people are ungrateful for the advocacy of writers writing the Other. At the very least, it suggests an ultimatum: let white people write Indigenous characters, or we will not help you. The fact that statements like this can be produced without any academic sources to support them (see Convery 2012) also speaks to the unconscious sense of privilege nonWoCs may hold when writing characters of colour.

This can be brought back to the controversy triggered by Shriver (2016), who defended the right to write the Other by attacking proponents as creating ‘rules’ for her, saying that many great works of fiction wouldn’t have been written were it not for writing the Other, all that would be left is memoir, all characters would be one ethnicity (white) and freedom of speech would be dead. She decried the controversy over cultural appropriation for making her nervous about writing ‘black’ characters, a result of criticism against her for her negative portrayal of African American characters in her novel The Mandibles (Kalfus 2016).

Much like the disloyalty effect, the reaction from writers who advocate artistic freedom at the cost of misappropriation has been to accuse those who speak out against perceived misrepresentation of identity as ‘censors.’ The result is a form of pretentious racism which encourages silence on issues of cultural appropriation and compliance with the national story. This may also be compounded when writers are seen as mixed-race, as they may be seen to gain both the benefits of whiteness and the benefits of being a WoC (Ritchie 2011). Such racialised attacks serve to undermine the mixed-race writer’s authority, in order to reinforce existing Western structures in which the boundaries of race go largely unchallenged.

Fears over the way a writer may be perceived based on their identity when writing the Other in fiction may significantly impact on the way the writer goes about writing. This fear has been recorded by several writers (see Grenville 2005; Shriver 2016). While this exercise did not abolish this fear, collaborating with participants did lessen my anxieties about cultural misappropriation. Furthermore, the evolution of D1 to D3 shows that, unconsciously, I had been trying to avoid the disloyalty effect from critics by writing a nationalist story. I had started in the first draft with the story of the ‘good immigrant’ and moved to one which shows
the human issues behind instances of racism. In other words, from the first to the second draft, I began to move more towards the post-nationalist story.

Identity politics and concepts such as cultural appropriation should not be equated with ‘censorship’ or ‘rules.’ Rather, they should serve as a guide to how writing can be improved in quality. While I am not suggesting any ‘rules’ for writing the Other, I can argue that my work before engaging with the people I sought to represent was inferior. As can be seen from New Humans of Australia and What is the What, there is the expectation that what we are writing is, to a certain extent, authentic. Nothing can replace the authenticity of the writer writing a character of the same background. However, if one is to write the Other, it is important to reflect on one’s privilege when writing and to engage with and listen to the group being represented.

Conclusion

At the start of this thesis, I asked the question: How do refugee narratives function as a form of advocacy? I argued that refugee narratives function as a form of advocacy in that they have the potential to shift public opinion and enact political change. However, the power relations between the writer and subject may also reinforce exploitative power structures, particularly through voice misappropriation. However, when a writer is incorporating the accounts of a subject, the voice becomes a combination of writer and subject. The idea of appropriation in this case is not so clear, but the issue still remains that the writer’s voice is stronger and more privileged in the telling of the story. It becomes necessary then to document how the writing changes, as we have little detailed information in how the text changes depending on the level of involvement of the people represented and whether this has been done ethically. Due to its emphasis on method, this creative practice thesis has the potential to contribute to the ongoing political debate about writing the Other.

I then asked the question: How can ethnographic methodologies be applied to creative practice? I argued that translation theory provides a helpful framework to analyse the method of converting data ascertained through ethnographic methods into fiction writing. I applied ethical procedures used in ethnographic practice to this approach, with an emphasis on the ethical guideline of ‘do no harm.’ This ethical approach also allowed me to interrogate how
knowledge is framed by the researcher and the unequal power relationship between writer and subject.

I then asked the question: *Does increasing engagement with the people represented shift the form of the refugee narrative?* In Chapter 4, I reflected on the consistencies and differences between the three drafts of the manuscript. I determined that the first draft was one of voice misappropriation in that the voices of the subjects were simulations based on my perceived observations in the field and my own personal experiences. In this draft, I thought that empathising would be enough to produce a realistic character, but found that empathising was more about my own perception than writing from the perspective of another. In order for it to be effective as a method, I needed to reflect upon my own empirical writing. In the second draft, based on interviews, the voices of the characters became a combination of the writer’s and the subjects’. However, as the Self I still occupied a stronger and more privileged role in the telling of the story. As such, I reflected upon the ethics of representation when changing or ‘correcting’ the English used by participants. Feedback on the final draft was helpful in relieving my anxiety about ‘getting it wrong’ and strengthened the argument that ‘listening’ to participants was integral to the writing process. The second and third drafts produced counterstories which resist Western storytelling structures, or the ‘national story.’

Finally, I reflected on my writing in order to answer the central research question: *How might a writer construct an ethnographically informed novel, considering the ethics of writing Otherness?* I reiterated that translation theory allows the writer to examine the many ways in which ethnographic and personal experiences are translated into the writing. I reinforced the importance of the writer interrogating their own position in relation to the group of people represented, arguing that authenticity may decline the further the writer is from the subject. I discussed the politics of writing the Other in relation to the key positions within the argument: artistic freedom, sensitivity and cultural appropriation. In doing so, I argued that the artistic freedom approach, which aligns with the methodology of Draft 1, reinforces the national story. I warn that those who advocate for artistic freedom at the cost of cultural misappropriation reinforce existing Western structures in which racial stereotypes go unchallenged. I advocate for interviews when writing and for the avoidance of cultural misappropriation by reflecting upon the writing process and speaking with those represented in the writing.
In conclusion, in writing about aspects of “otherness” through ethnographic research, the writer acts as an observer of the event, rather than someone who experiences the event. While it may be said that the writer witnesses the event during fieldwork, the writer still possesses the privilege of being able to leave the field, control the interview and write the story. While the research may serve as an authentic experience for the writer, the authentic story belongs to the participant, the teller of the story. Drawing the participant stories into the writing may increase the authenticity of the tale, as long as the power dynamic and the ways in which the story changes are interrogated. Through listening, the writer can challenge the national story and enact change through the ability to create more witnesses to acts of injustice and human rights abuses. Interviews can also increase the verisimilitude of the story for those who identify with the characters. However, fear of racial stereotyping and misrepresentation causes anxiety in the writer.

As writers, we may feel that we are just writing fiction or merely telling the nonfictional side to the story. However, the writer and the writer’s identity are inextricably linked to the telling of the tale, as is her/his place of privilege. There is a need to acknowledge our cultural privilege and how we are complicit in a system that regularly misrepresents people of marginalised cultural backgrounds. A level of authenticity may be brought to the text through interviews, but nothing can replace the authentic experience of the writer writing about a character of her/his own background. Given these different representational issues, I believe that it is more important for the writer to stand aside rather than write in the voice of Others or in the voice of the narrator participant. For those writers who wish to work collaboratively with participant narrators, there is a distinction between representing one’s own views on a subject and those of the person experiencing the marginalisation or impact of migration, which I have acknowledged may often be two different things entirely. To this end, I have argued for an ethical and collaborative cultural practice – one which interrogates not only the methods used, but the writer’s own place within society.
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Appendix 1: Research Ethics Approval

RMIT UNIVERSITY
Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN)
Sub-committee of the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

Notice of Approval

Date: 11 August 2014
Project number: CHEAN B 0000018828-07/14
Project title: Out of Place: Images of the Migrant and Routing in Australian Fiction
Risk classification: Low Risk
Investigator: Dr Marsha Berry and Ms Maria Teresa LeClerc

Approved:
From: 11 August 2014
To: 1 March 2016

I am pleased to advise that your application has been granted ethics approval by the Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network as a sub-committee of the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

Terms of approval:

1. Responsibilities of Investigator
   It is the responsibility of the above investigator/s to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by the CHEAN. Approval is only valid whilst the Investigator/s holds a position at RMIT University.

2. Amendments
   Approval must be sought from the CHEAN to amend any aspect of a project including approved documents. To apply for an amendment please use the ‘Request for Amendment Form’ that is available on the RMIT website. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from CHEAN.

3. Adverse events
   You should notify HREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

4. Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF)
   The PICF and any other material used to recruit and inform participants of the project must include the RMIT university logo. The PICF must contain a complaints clause including the project number.

5. Annual reports
   Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report. This form can be located online on the human research ethics web page on the RMIT website.

6. Final report
   A final report must be provided at the conclusion of the project. CHEAN must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

7. Monitoring
   Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by HREC at any time.

8. Retention and storage of data
   The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

In any future correspondence please quote the project number and project title.

On behalf of the DSC College Human Ethics Advisory Network I wish you well in your research.

Suzana Kovacevic
Research and Ethics Officer
College of Design and Social Context
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Website: www.rmit.edu.au/dsc
Notice of Approval

Date: 30 June 2015

Project number: CHEAN B 0000018828-07/14

Project title: Out of Place: Images of the Migrant and Routing in Australian Fiction

Risk classification: Low Risk

Investigator: Dr Marsha Berry and Ms Maria Teresa LeGerc

Approved: From: 30 June 2015 To: 01 March 2018

I am pleased to advise that your extension request until the 1st March 2018 has been granted ethics approval by the Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network as a sub-committee of the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

Terms of approval:

1. Responsibilities of Investigator
   It is the responsibility of the above investigator/s to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by the CHEAN. Approval is only valid whilst the investigator/s holds a position at RMIT University.

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   Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report. This form can be located online on the human research ethics web page on the RMIT website.

6. Final report
   A final report must be provided at the conclusion of the project. CHEAN must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

7. Monitoring
   Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by HREC at any time.

8. Retention and storage of data
   The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

In any future correspondence please quote the project number and project title.

On behalf of the DSC College Human Ethics Advisory Network I wish you well in your research.

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Appendix 2a: Continuum of Involvement – Working with Vulnerable Communities

Appendix 2b Spradley’s Types of Ethnographic Descriptions

FIGURE 2.1. Types of Descriptions

The extent to which the description is based on concepts and meanings in the language of informants.

Spradley 1979, p.2.
Appendix 3: Example of Bullet-pointed Treatment

Overview of All the Time Lost

4 characters:

Amar – Iran
Azra – Somalia
Lucy – Chile
Nina – Sudan

Most of the stories take place across a day in Melbourne; the characters attend a protest and a free lecture at Melbourne University.

The plot follows the lives of four characters (Amar, Nina, Lucy, Azra) as they move across the city, at various times on public transportation. The first is Amar who, a few weeks after his release from detention, is finding it difficult to leave his flat to see his Sudanese flatmate, Basel, present on his experiences of living in detention at Melbourne University. Also presenting on her experiences as a refugee is Azra, a student at Melbourne University, but on her way to the talk she finds herself at a protest with her friend and fellow student Lucy. Lucy is dismissive of her father and the expatriate community, but slowly comes to the realisation that she has been protected from the stories of an oppressive regime, which are much worse than she had been led to believe. The final storyline centres around Nina. Nina's job at the university catering service becomes threatened by a medical condition she is keeping from her employers. These stories cross over like the lines of railways and tram tracks: they begin in the outerlying suburbs, but converge at the protest, set in the Melbourne CBD, where the Melbourne public transport system lines converge. The book then moves to a second part, in which the stories, mirroring all tram lines on the main Swanston Street, go to Melbourne University.

Though the story is set across a day, the backgrounds of the characters are gradually revealed in Part 2. Amar, originally from Iran, arrived by boat to Christmas Island Detention Centre. Nina, originally from Sudan, flew from Egypt through the support of the United Nations. Azra, from Somalia, spent most of her life in Syria before fleeing to Lebanon and eventually coming to Australia following the outbreak of the Syrian war. Lucy, born in Chile, arrived in Melbourne as a young girl after the Australian Government granted her family a humanitarian visa to flee the Pinochet regime.
PART I

Amar

- **Chapter 1: Christmas**
  - Amar meets his caseworker Clinton at the airport; Clinton is from Sudan.
  - Clinton takes Amar to his flat in Footscray and tells him he has two housemates. One is Christian and one is Muslim, like Amar.
  - Clinton shows Amar where he will take free English classes at the neighbourhood house in Footscray.
  - Clinton shows Amar his room. Some items have been left by the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Catholic nuns.
  - Clinton tells Amar he is lucky to be released now because now they are sending people to Manus and Nauru.
  - Amar does not feel very lucky.

- **Chapter 2: White**
  - Amar goes to his first English class.
  - Amar feels like he doesn’t need the classes and really wants a job.

- **Chapter 3: Sisters**
  - When the teacher is talking, he realises that he made a mistake when he was on the boat; he thought the Australians who rescued them were saying ‘white’ but they were saying ‘wait’. Amar thought this because he is used to American English.
  - Amar gets headaches and it is difficult to concentrate.
  - Some Catholic nuns enter and offer Amar and other students unpaid volunteer work at the Catholic church.
  - Amar says he doesn’t want it because he is uncomfortable going to the Catholic church when he is Muslim.

- **Chapter 4: Silvio**
  - Amar meets Silvio, a man who came over to Australia from East Timor to become a Catholic priest, but he met his wife here and got married.
  - Silvio talks about living in Australia and East Timor.
  - Amar talks about the day the boat crashed off the coast of Christmas Island.
  - Amar explains how he tried to come to Australia through the UNHR but they kept changing the rules and never gave him an interview.
  - Amar wonders if his cousins came later and were sent to Manus or Nauru.

- **Chapter 5: Basel**
  - Silvio and Amar live in the same building.
  - They greet the man at the front door, the building security guard, Okot, who is from Sudan.
  - Silvio tells the security guard that Amar’s brother is from Sudan, because Amar and Basel are so close that they call each other brothers.
  - They tell Amar not to go to the city because people are protesting there.
  - Amar goes back to his apartment and talks to Basel.
  - Basel tells him about the Catholic nuns (the sisters) and how they come to visit their Christian housemate every Saturday.
  - Basel asks Amar to come see him talk at Melbourne University later that day.
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Appendix 5: Example of Drafts 1–3 Azra

D1:

Excerpt from ‘Missing the Tram’

A pang of hope lingers in one's chest while awaiting the digital clock mounted above the platform to change. Blank. Black. A glow. 25. A uniform groan. Twenty-five minutes is an age in metro wait time. When Azra first arrived to Australia, she was surprised that the buses were not as available as in her home. Now here with the trains, which more or less arrived exactly on time, and were actually on a time timetable, she has contracted the infectious irritation of the passengers at having to wait any period of time exceeding ten minutes. There would be words with the staff, and already an incensed woman had found one and was giving him hell.

Interview transcript:

X: For me I'm all the time lost. [W & X laugh] But for me I'll never forget that I was taking my friend's mom back to the clinic so she can do her X-ray. But we went by tram because it says by the map that it is near where we live. But to go to there it says you need 25 minutes. But how we will go there, no trams goes this way, no nothing, just cars. If you have car you can go. Not even buses. And then we were standing there, we ask the woman, we told her how you can go to the end of this street. She say you can't go here, you need to go to the end of the street then bus and then he will take you I don't know where – tell him blah blah blah. And then we told and we went there and we told the man first to go to the other street you need to walk one hour, maybe. And the woman told us is just twenty minutes. And I don't know maybe in Australia they walk fast or so. [W & X laugh]
Excerpt from Chapter 23: ‘Cats’

Familiarity is such a warm feeling for me. Maybe, for this reason, I become close with people too quickly. I want to fasten them to myself, but people, like smoke, are always moving either towards or away from you, and you do not know when this will change. I like that feeling when a stranger smiles at you. Or the feeling of seeing my best friend for the first time after a sleep. Hearing my name, the way it is said by my mother, whether she is angry or upset with me, it is the same. I believe all people are kind. I know though, that sometimes they are not.

‘I am so glad you came with me to here. I am all the time lost,’ I tell Sana. We are waiting for the tram together. Sana is beautiful. There is so much colour in her eyes. I think it is like a reflection to her soul, the way her eyes are shadowed. I watch her redo the gold strap on her shoes as we wait for the tram, her head falling in line with the bronze tracks in the pavement. It seems, after walking like this, she fixes her shoes every time we are waiting.

I don’t want to admit that I am lost much of the time, but it’s true. My brother, he was always making fun of me. He says I could get lost in my own house. He never is lost. Never.
Appendix 6: Example of Drafts 1–3 Lucy

Field journal excerpt [12/12/15]
I met YY at XX’s unofficial wake. It was unofficial because she wasn’t dead yet. Why should you have all the fun when I’m dead, she told me. So she threw a party at an upscale Chinese restaurant in ... Lane and paid for everything.

D1:

Excerpt from ‘Santa Lucia’
I remember that day now at a cafe in Clifton Hill with Carol Brennen. It was organic, which was all she ate. Since her diagnosis she had tried many things, and one of the only things that sent her breast cancer into submission was a special diet. She had sworn that preservatives and pesticides only aggravated it.

We had been volunteers once, at the Fitzroy Library. Since we’d gotten on so well, we continued to meet for regular coffees, even after her health deteriorated, she thinned, her hair disappeared and scarves, in luscious colours, impulsive souvenirs all too rarely worn prior, resumed crowning her head. In those days we used to gossip about the management over tea, who was still there, who wasn’t, the usual customers, the kids who used to come in and cause trouble, everything. She showed me photographs of her freckle faced grandchild, sitting atop a fence in the country, where she would disappear for weeks at a time, only to return professing her love of her single room apartment in the city.

Interview transcript:
U: No, no, I don't tell my mum anything. And if she’s been … it's so funny. I’ve kinda been dating someone, and she’s tried to find out who it is. She says to me, so who are you dating? And I say, na. Someone from column A, someone from column B. It's like keep her guess. So I’ve got two adult girls, one’s twenty-three and one is twenty-one, and so she rings them and goes, so I hear, my little sources in the community tell me your mum is seeing someone. And I’ve trained my girls very well, I’m like, do not tell your grandmother anything. You don't have to tell her anything. So they’re like, we don't know, she’s an adult. She’s doing her own thing. [laughs]
Tia Val’s temper softened in her old age, or perhaps it wasn't age at all. When I come to think about it, maybe her divorce played a part. She had stopped watching children, gotten a diploma in education, and travelled the world. The severity I had known as child was gone, but her health had deteriorated. Later, when she was diagnosed with breast cancer, even her look softened. She had thinned, her hair disappeared and scarves from her travels, in luscious bright colours, had migrated from around her shoulders and begun adorning her head.

The treatments, while weakening her, had given her a new power to extract gossip and attract company for tea. When the cappuccinos arrived, she waited until I had taken a sip before barraging me with questions. ‘I hear your father is seeing someone,’ she began. ‘The woman who sells the empanadas. What’s her name? Renata,’ she sneered…
Appendix 7: Example of Drafts 1–3 Amar

D1:

Excerpt from ‘Writing’

When I arrive to home, Jean Paul is writing. ‘How did your English class go my friend?’

This is a dark place and the dark is so comfortable. He thinks he is my family, but he is not. Housemates are not family. I was surprised when he invited me to share a meal. He says is difficult for him to eat by himself. I can do this easily, but I understand. I don't like it.

‘Now I will try to write. I want to give a speech tonight’ he tells me. Jean Paul speaks many places. He tells people what is like to be refugee. He is a good man with a good community, and they support him. He asks to me listen when he is finished.

My head hurts and I cannot do much. There is an aching in the corner of my mouth, I only realise now. Sometimes it is difficult. I cannot concentrate. Before I left, I could write very well. My friends asked me to write for them. You know it is funny, since I came here, I can write poetry. Never before. But now I can write this and only this. I agree to help him, but please my friend, give me one hour. My head, it hurts again. I must take my medication and lay down in the darkness of my room.

When I awake Jean Paul is gone. He has left me a note with a map to the university at which he will talk. I go to the stove and make myself a coffee and some Maggi noodles. I will go after this, if I feel like it.

Interview transcript:

K: You tell about the typing now. I was I started when I was prison in Iran, in writing, I started this and I am writing, writing. I lost the time. Seriously and I lost the time and I’m writing. Only write. And when I write I see myself, I see the bone and I have of scar. And I see the date and time and is one week. [laughs] I didn't know. One week and I’m just typing. Non-stop. I’m just typing. Look at this, look at that. I lost the time. I love that. I really like it. I love the backing. The writing. Like that. Too much writing. I make a good project.
Basel listens. He is always hearing what is happening, remembering everything about everyone. He was a medical student before he left. Now he’s volunteering with the Sudanese community groups. Until he can study medicine again. He knows many people, even local people, but like me he cannot work. He is not yet a true refugee. But what you can do? ‘I will give a speech tonight,’ he tells me. ‘Maybe you can help me, because you are a poet. Can you read it for me, to tell me is it good?’

I do not think of myself as a poet. I was never good at writing, but I have learned to like it. When I was prison I started writing. Writing, writing, writing. It was all I could do. After Fatim and Hashim were taken in the protests, the guards raided my flat, took me to Evin Prison, took my phone and computer. My room was small, just enough for me to lay down on the cement floor. I was given a blanket and a towel. It had a window and layers of steel between me and the light. The wall was yellowing white. After I was writing I don’t know how long, I saw hand and I saw the bone and scar. I wrote nothing, and I lost the time. When I looked for the date and time and it was one week later. I didn’t know. One week and I was just writing non-stop. Look at this, look at that. But I really liked it, losing the time. Too much writing, and like that, it was gone.

Now I can write poetry, it’s so crazy. Never before did I write it.

The ringing in my ears has started, and I feel light headed. ‘Give me one hour,’ I say. When this happens, I must take my medication and lay in the dark. It is the only thing that helps. I tell Basel that I will read his writing when I get up. When I wake it takes me some time to realise Basel has left. I still feel his presence in the room. I am always feeling people, things, as though they are here when they are not.

On the table a note lies flat under a cup of half-drunk coffee, the edges of the gridded paper torn lengthways against the grain. He had drawn a map to the university, with lines labelled in tram numbers. I feel for the tram pass given to me by Clinton and hope that I don't have to recharge it.

In the sink the dishes have been piled delicately awaiting the time when one of us will return with detergent. The one that is the least soiled is the mug atop the paper. I rinse it and turn on the kettle to make myself a coffee and two minute noodles.

I will go after this, I tell myself, but I know it will take me at least two hours to work up the courage to leave the flat. The world outside needs to be imagined. A walk through the mountains. It is so bright. And how long was I asleep? I do not even know the answer to that.
Excerpt from Chapter 13: ‘Basel’

Basel was a medical student before he left Sudan. Now he’s volunteering with the Sudanese community groups until he can study medicine again. He knows many people, even local people, but like me he can’t work. ‘I will give a speech tonight,’ he tells me. ‘Maybe you can help me, because you are a poet. Can you read it for me, to tell me it’s good or not?’

I do not think of myself as a poet. I was never good at writing, but I have learned to like it. When I was in prison I started writing. Writing was all I could do. After Fatim and Hashim were taken in the protests, the guards raided my flat, took me to Evin Prison, took my phone and computer. My room was small, just enough for me to lay down on the cement floor. I was given a blanket and a towel. It had a window and layers of steel between me and the light. The wall was yellowing white. After I was writing I don’t know how long, I saw hand and I saw the bone and scar. I wrote nothing, and I lost the time. When I looked for the date and time and it was one week later. I didn’t know. One week and I was just writing non-stop. Look at this, look at that. But I really liked it, losing the time. Too much writing, and like that, it was gone.

The ringing in my ears has started, and I feel light headed. ‘Give me one hour,’ I say. I can’t tell if it is the medication or a headache. I need to lay in the dark. I tell Basel that I will read his writing when I get up.

When I wake, the sun shining through the window and the room is too hot. It takes me some time to realise Basel has left. I thought I felt his presence in the house, but I didn’t check. A psychologist that I spoke to on Christmas Island told me that anxiety makes you feel like you have special powers. That you can hear people’s thinking, feel their energy.

On the table a note lies flat under a cup of half-drunk coffee, the edges of the gridded paper torn lengthways against the grain. He has drawn a map to the university, with lines labelled in tram numbers. I feel for the tram pass in my pocket given to me by Clinton and hope that I don’t have to recharge it.

In the sink the dishes have been piled delicately awaiting the time when one of us will return with detergent. The one that is cleanest is the mug atop the paper. I rinse it and turn on the kettle to make myself a coffee and two minute noodles.

I will go after this, I tell myself. It takes me at least two hours to work up the courage to leave the flat.
Appendix 8: Example of Drafts 1–3 Nina

D1:

Excerpt from ‘Steam’

‘Let me to tell you. The teacher say me that my children must to eat healthy, she ask me what do you give them to eat. I tell to her that I give them food from Africa.

But my children no like this food. Now they want Maggi noodle and sandwich. No you must to cook vegetable teacher say. Vegetable! I buy vegetable my family do not eat them. I cook. No! Teacher says. Spinach, broccoli, carrot, she say. My god my god. But I do not know how to cook this. She say steam. Steam! My dear, I do not know what is steam. She say to me you must boil and take out. To boil has no flavour. I fry. That is how I cook. You know, I put these veggie in the pot with the bean but I don’t like. So now when she ask me about veggie I say yes. I say steam, that is how I cook.’

Interview transcript:

Z: You know, I was working at [a community health organisation]. And there are a lot of drug problems there, drunk poor maybe before I came in the 50s or 60s and they all come to that flat to do drugs. Kill the pain. Everybody knows. And where the Sudanese community are. And one time the Minister of the Housing came, it was terrible that time, and he say [pause] isn’t that amazing! You live in this beautiful place! And I nearly get up. I wanted to say before and I nearly said, ‘Sir, would you like to move here with your children, if that beautiful’.
Excerpt from Chapter 12: ‘Steam’

‘Let me to tell you,’ Kali says seriously. ‘The teacher says to me that my children must to eat healthy, she asks me what do you give them to eat. I tell to her that I give them food from Africa. But my children don’t like this food. Now they want Maggi noodles and sandwich. No you must to cook vegetable teacher says. Vegetable, Nina! I buy vegetables, my family do not eat them. I cook. No! Teacher says. Spinach, broccoli, carrot, she says. My god, my god. But I do not know how to cook this,’ when she says this ‘this’ she raises her hands up. ‘Steam’ the teacher says. Steam! My dear, I do not know what is steam. She says to me you must boil and take out the vegetable. To boil has no flavour. I fry. That is how I cook. You know, I put these veggies in the pot with the beans but I don’t like it. So now when she asks me about veggies I say, yes. I say, steam, that is how I cook. These teachers, first they want to know how you study with the children. Now they want to know about food. I just say yes to everything.’

...

You know, once, the Minister of Housing came. And we were watching TV, he was on another floor, in a flat, maybe two floors below. And he walks around and he says, Oh isn’t this amazing. Isn’t this wonderful. This place they give to you to live. You live in such a beautiful place. I nearly got up to walk down there. I wanted to say, Sir, would you like to move here with your children, if it’s that beautiful? Then we complained, we said, we can’t live here. They gave us a new flat, here. Kali looked around, proud.
Excerpt from Chapter 14: ‘Steam’

‘Let me to tell you,’ Kali says seriously, ‘You need to take care of yourself. You don’t eat meat and you’re not strong.’

‘You think eating meat will make me healthy?’ I ask, thinking about my problem.

Kali frowns, ‘My dear, I know what healthy food is. People, they don’t believe me, but I know. You know, the other day, my children’s teacher says to me that my children must to eat healthy, she asks me what do you give them to eat. I tell to her that I give them food from Africa. But my children don’t like this food. Now they want Maggi noodles and sandwiches. You know what she says me then? No you must to cook vegetables.

Vegetables, Nina! I buy vegetables, my family do not eat them. I cook healthy but no one eats it. And No! teacher says, Spinach, broccoli, carrot, she says. My god, my god. But I do not know how to cook this,’ Kali lifts her hands up. ‘Steam the teacher says. Steam! My dear, I do not know what is steam. She says to me you must boil and take out the vegetables. Can you listen to this? Boiling has no flavour. I fry. That is how I cook.’

…

I laugh. I had a similar experience. ‘You know, once, the Minister of Housing came to the Richmond flats I was volunteering next to. We were working in the clinic nearby and we were watching TV. We see him walking around this place, and it’s so ugly. There is nothing inside. It’s like all the furniture, they took it out for the camera. And he says, oh isn’t this amazing. Isn’t this wonderful. This place they give to you to live. You live in such a beautiful place. I nearly got up to walk down there. I wanted to say, Sir, would you like to move here with your children, if it’s that beautiful?’
Appendix 9: Examples of Interview Questions

Language

Do you often hear people speak in other languages? What do they sound like to you? Loud, quiet, angry?

Do your children understand everything you say in your language?

Have you experienced difficulties dealing with an emergency situation due to lack of knowledge about the culture or language issues?

Does anyone try to learn English themselves? Have you been to the city library? What did you think?

Do you have experiences misunderstanding Australians (particularly those with thick accents) because of the accent?

What are your experiences with disruptions on public transport? Did anyone have to take a replacement bus? How did you find it?

What was public transport like in your home country?

Public transport

What were your first experiences with the public transport system like?

Have you been to Sunshine or Footscray railway station? How would you describe it? Beautiful? Ugly? How would you describe the view from the station to the city?

Has anyone taken the bus? What was your first experience like? Did you find places easily?

Do you have strange experiences on public transport/the bus? What happened?