We are at Basil Jangara’s house sitting out under the stars watching and listening to the performances of men and women from Port Keats who’ve been invited to the 2004 Kalumburu festival. Occasionally the Port Keats women jump up to dance. In the dim firelight I keep my video camera recording for sound. There is an image but it is mainly dark. I wonder how my footage will be viewed in 40 years time?

Earlier in the day we watched Dance-Time Kalumburu (Lucich 1965) filmed in 1963-4 a hundred metres from where we are now sitting. Peter Lucich shot the film, recorded the sound, took stills and later edited the film. In Kalumburu the film had not been seen before and both young and old were delighted to see the images of themselves and their relatives.1

There are three processes involved in my paper. One is considering the way footage was filmed and constructed through a comparison between Lucich’s work and my own filming, secondly how and where film is viewed the first time and finally how and where we may view it again and again.

Construction

Corroborees

A catholic priest who lived in Kalumburu during the 1960s, Hilton Deakin, lists three kinds of dance practice at Kalumburu:

1) the sacred and secret;
2) the semi-sacred, semi-public ritualistic; and
3) the secular, entertaining dance form.

Deakin notes that
dance expression never stood alone. It was intimately connected to music, both vocal and instrumental, and to telling of a story, earlier myth, or the experience of a living or deceased person (Perez 1977, 159).

‘Secular’ performances are for everybody, men, women and children. What Deakin is making clear is the difference between corroboree and ceremony while acknowledging that certain performances have overlap. In this context we are discussing the corroboree genres Balga, Wangga, Malgarrin, Lirrga and Junba.2
Peter Lucich is an anthropologist who was also in Kalumburu in the 1960s and was interested in the dances he saw there. Lucich says that

filming began as an adjunct to my social anthropological fieldwork at Kalumburu, Nth. Kimberley (W.A.) in 1963-64, where I was also looking for ceremonies, dancing and music. At night, there was singing and dancing by firefight in the old people's camp. These non-sacred 'corroborees' were both colourful and accessible, and were a good place to begin. However I soon realised that I could not simply aim the camera and shoot. Decisions had to be made concerning why, for whom, where and how the film should be made (Lucich 2005, 1).

_Dance-Time Kalumburu_ was made by Lucich for the then Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, now the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (A.I.A.T.S.I.S.), and I refer to his compiled notes (Lucich 2005) on the footage for much of this paper. The notes are an important accompaniment to the film. They are not an explanation but provide information that helps situate what was filmed. The clear vision Lucich had of his intended audience when he recorded and edited the film is seen in the footage of various dances, painting up in preparation for those dances, footage around the township, church and people swimming in the river. He wrote

> I envisaged an audience of anthropologists or students of dance and music. The film was intended for researchers in a future when such performances might well have disappeared (Lucich 2005, 2).

Even though this remains a unique document, Lucich is self-critical in his notes concerning what he overlooked. He says that he missed a great opportunity where

> at the very least, comprehension requires my understanding of their understandings. It builds on their cultural and subjective views of ends, means (rules or practices), narrative contexts and traditional beliefs, especially those relating to expression. In the best circumstances, it requires detailed scene-by-scene comment from participants, both within the film and in any accompanying text. Unfortunately, I failed to give enough time for that task, and I missed a chance to get all their views on techniques, meanings, significance and ownership (Lucich 2005, 4).

What Lucich says seems obvious and straightforward. In my experience doing similar research, however, I have found it far from obvious to document scene-by-scene comment from participants. It takes years of personal involvement to find the right people, way, language, time, and place to enter into those levels of discussion. If my questions and observations are to have any bearing on what is happening in the dances they need to arise from a cultural awareness of why the dances occur in the first place. That is reason enough for making a film as a means to understand and to assist in developing cultural awareness to develop this understanding.

**Filmmaking**

Lucich says “it seemed easier to film than to describe verbally” (Lucich 2005, 1), and in 50 minutes of footage with a Bolex camera on a tripod that is precisely what he did. At all times the framing is composed. He shot the dances during the day to make sure there were no lighting problems. The stillness and clarity of the shots enables the viewer to see the performances clearly. Lucich has recorded what words could not and yet in his notes he candidly admits the inadequacies of his approach.

Film is not a substitute for accurate choreographic notation, according to Lucich, and he suggests the
need for flow diagrams to assist in the fuller portrayal of the dances and their context. Once again we enter into the territory of potential cross-cultural misunderstanding where particular kinds of description may or may not be useful and I wonder what form of notation might record a more comprehensive document of the dances than his film has captured? If he means that notation together with his footage can make better sense of an entire sequence perhaps that would make sense to someone who reads notation.

The limitations involved in filming on a Bolex clockwork motor camera meant that Lucich could not film for more than three minutes without stopping. To record the dances with strict time constraints and only one camera angle at each moment the dances needed to be repeated many times while filmed from various angles and proximities. The sense of a complete dance is only seen constructed in edited sequences.

Lucich’s *Dance-Time Kalumburu* and my Ph.D. film share three obvious points in common. The films were both first time filmmaking efforts, they are both concerned with traditional performances in the northwest of Australia and they were funded with the support of A.I.A.T.S.I.S.. My Ph.D. project is a film and thesis about masked corroborees in the northwest of Australia.

In contrast to Lucich’s approach I am not an anthropologist, although my practical introduction to filmmaking is through the ideas and work of the ethnographic filmmakers David and Judith MacDougall, Kim McKenzie and Gary Kildea. These filmmakers, based at the Australian National University, are concerned with getting up close to the action and therefore using hand held camera to provide a more immediate, closer feel.

In general, my main focus has been on capturing what people say and do rather than on constructing ideal camera situations. In making my film, I attempted not to be intrusive and I followed action that was taking place rather than contrive performance situations. To this extent I kept the camera rolling when nothing happened for hours. Then there were many times I stopped the camera just before something important happened. My footage is almost always hand held and so there are inevitable shaky camera shots. The sound is often patchy when batteries went flat or when didgeridoo and clapsticks peaked the levels. In interviews I have occasionally let people’s heads slip out of shot or the microphone slip into shot while I was concentrating on something other than the viewfinder. The framing is often rough and harshly lit.

The ease, immediacy and potential vibrancy of impromptu video certainly requires a different approach from that of 16mm documentary filmmaking. Yet the difficulties and different approaches are not at the heart of the filmmaking itself and both Lucich and I have used image and sound recording to tell stories and to document performances. The main difference in what we did is not so much in approach but in the quantity of footage involved. The 60 hours of digital videotape that provides the footage for my film is at least six times greater than the ratio Lucich used to make his film of the dances at Kalumburu. However the difference between us is in fact not as great as this might suggest. The film footage does not include Lucich’s accompanying sound tapes which are roughly fourteen hours in length and include more than 350 songs from fifteen song cycles (Lucich 2005).

The way all this material is accessed in the future is important. Video is used for both sound and image recording and brings about the potential for confusion as to the purpose of particular footage if it is unaccompanied by detailed notes like those that Lucich has provided. In my case I often have the video camera recording to ensure that I have sound when the image is of little use. If this footage were viewed for visuals alone then that would need to be understood. Usually I record sound on two separate tracks that need to be separated in editing.
When I first returned from my groundwork in the northwest of Australia I sat down to backup, watch and listen to months of footage that I had kept unplayed. When I heard peaking wind sound that ruined many takes I was distraught. I hadn’t heard that in my headphones. Fortunately what I was hearing on tape playback was the dominance of the camera-mounted mic that had picked up the wind while the other track was in fact good. I was relieved to find that the sound on most of those takes was fine once the two tracks had been separated. In the future if people view the Digital Video (D.V.) tapes and experience the same problem, without accompanying notes to explain what is happening, they may deem the footage unintelligible.

First viewing
When I first saw the performances of men and women singing, dancing and storytelling in Dance-Time Kalumburu it took me by surprise. As part of my research I was scouring the A.I.A.T.S.I.S. audiovisual library and this seven-minute film was one of ten V.H.S. tapes selected. I had no idea that in this film the Kuwaritch mask is danced. It took my breath away.

A year later I am in Kalumburu where Basil Jangara and I watch Dance-Time Kalumburu in the harsh neon lit meeting room. On one wall stretches a large whiteboard while the centre of the room is eaten up by the table and surrounding chairs. We are in the boardroom of the Kalumburu Council. Basil and the other elders preview the film and out-takes to ensure the images will not offend anybody. This is the first time they have seen footage. The church and stone buildings of the Benedictine mission are just across the road. The once productive orchards lie unharvested while the takeaway shop and supermarket provide the only source of regular food outside fishing and hunting. We sit and watch. Seven minutes of seven dances edited as continuous sequences is over in a flash.

In Canberra at A.I.A.T.S.I.S., I was unaware of the complete footage. I had intended to take just seven minutes of film with me to Kalumburu but on the recommendation of Peter Lucich we are now able to watch the full 40 minutes of silent outtakes as well. Nobody in the room gets up to leave. It’s a privileged experience to be sitting in this room watching the footage with these elders. The favourite dancers, Doto and Jo Puran, captivate everyone. The home audience laugh and laugh as the two performers in the drunken dance show the rush, stagger and quiver effects of strong alcohol through their bodies. The dancers are suitably outrageous and their dancing has a cheeky vernacular in similar style to the Chooky Dancers in “Yolngu Zorba” (Djirrimbilpilwuy 2007).

Who is the viewer of the ‘ethno’ in ethnographic?
Who sits beyond the ‘ethno’ in ethnographic? The category ‘Ethnographic film’ is a bundle of confused signifiers loosely holding together a diversity of films. Fortunately, the assemblage of films that fall under the category resist any kind of deconstruction and counter the idea of a singular privileged viewpoint. From Rouch and Morin’s self reflexive Chronique d’un été (Rouch and Morin 2005) to millions of YouTube clips there seem to be few limits to the genre. Even ethnographic film societies which once featured only anthropological documentaries now show foreign films and documentaries “from as many different genres, cultures and languages as possible” (Durham University Ethnographic Film Society 2007). For some this flexibility is unscientific. Visual anthropologist Jay Ruby writes that anthropological film ought to uphold a separate category from ‘ethnographic film’ (Ruby 1998). In the pursuit of a scientific description of peoples and cultures Ruby says that filming requires a particular kind of anthropological enquiry in which ‘Ethnographic film’ is not rigorous enough. The problem with this kind of assertion is that it privileges ‘anthropological enquiry’ above all other forms of enquiry.
The kind of film Ruby is calling for may well fit what Peter Lucich set out to do with *Dance-Time Kalumburu*. The film is an adjunct to his anthropological research. Yet the film was never an ‘objective’ enterprise. It surpasses scientific observation. In an effort to condense performances filmed over two years into seven minutes Lucich says

the film is not a picture of dancing, it is my own selected and organised impressions of Kalumburu dancing and its context (Lucich 2005, 3).

What Lucich has done with the film is offer his glimpse at those dances for others to begin their understandings. Simultaneously the complete footage is an important record of people at Kalumburu and clearly shows the dedication, skill and humour they brought to their performances.

There is a difference between an edited film and the rushes or “raw” footage from which the film is made. Lucich called the unused footage to his film ‘outtakes’. Anthropologist, Howard Morphy, is adamant that this ‘raw’ or unedited footage is the ‘richest material for analysis’ and that “edited film though useful is more akin to an ethnographic monologue” (Morphy 1994). It was in fact Peter Lucich who alerted me to the existence of his outtakes, well aware of their value. The scientific construct that this footage is data for analysis is one way of viewing which may obscure other ways of viewing. Filming or videoing alongside traditional owners is not data collection. Instead I prefer to think of it as an optimum means to understand what is being filmed situated in the opportunity to later sit with the participants and discuss what they have said and done, whose country they were in and what context they found themselves in. Such discussion in turn prompts further stories at the heart of our interest and the stories provide multiple paths of understanding.

**Why was the film forgotten?**

As I said, the first time I saw this footage was in A.I.A.T.S.I.S. discovered through the M.U.R.A. online audiovisual catalogue. It was good luck more than systematic research to find the film because the collections at A.I.A.T.S.I.S. are a formidable labyrinth. But why didn’t people at Kalumburu know of this film? A.I.A.T.S.I.S. does have repatriation policies. However someone has to know the material is there to be repatriated. *Dance-Time Kalumburu* was lost a long time ago to Kalumburu people and the current members of the community had forgotten its existence. It is also in the way A.I.A.T.S.I.S. stores its films that can unintentionally conceal much of what is supposed to be publicly available. When “law business” and private information is at issue there is unquestionably a duty to be vigilant with access. In the case of public performances the main consideration is to ensure that people who appear in a film and have since died will not cause anyone watching undue grief and anguish. That being said a lot more could be done to make public material such as *Dance-Time Kalumburu* accessible. Protocols put in place by A.I.A.T.S.I.S. require constant revision and in this instance, as things have changed, Lucich’s film became regarded with uncertainty in terms of its public status. Since the film was constructed in 1968 no one had made any contact with the Kalumburu community about it. To my knowledge the only public attention *Dance-Time Kalumburu* has had till now is a Lucich photo of a mask on the cover of *Aborigines of the West*.

At a community level things have changed. The V.H.S. copy I took with me in 2004 to Kalumburu was destroyed in a cyclone the following year. Further copies have been sent to Kalumburu at the Council’s request because local people wish to view the film regularly.
Being There: After
Dominique Sweeney

Reviewing

Second viewing with Kalumburu people
The second night I am in Kalumburu and the film is projected outside on the big screen in the school grounds where Basil watches again. Basil is nearly seventy years of age and, with a bad back, finds it hard to move. A section of outtakes feature a particularly fine dancer in his late twenties whose movements seem to defy gravity. A year later I realised that young man dancing in the film was old Basil Jangara. Whether or not Basil recognised himself as the powerful young dancer I do not know. He certainly made no remark while we were watching.

In 2005 Peter Lucich went back to his original notes to write a detailed report for A.I.A.T.S.I.S. in which he lists the dances, the surrounding story, who danced, and where they come from. He further provides words in language and known translations.

Third viewing with Kalumburu people
The kinds of details I talked about with Kalumburu people during a third screening of the Lucich footage were to do with who was involved in the dancing and what was happening. In particular they told me that in the dance with the mask, the pole marks the place where a dead person is buried. The name of the devil devil mask is Kuwaritch and it was said to be a Murin Patha language song type called Malgarrin from Port Keats. This is the kind of detail that on further viewing can be extended and elaborated for deeper and closer understandings. Numerous viewings of footage offer the possibility to pick out what is happening in various parts of a shot, all the people and animals in shot, what is said in the foreground, background and off screen and any other sounds which have been recorded. The main problem is in finding the culturally appropriate way for these discussions to take place.

Conclusion
Who can tell how a filmed moment will be viewed in 40 years time? Lucich never expected local interest. He says, “at the time I did not even consider that the Kalumburu community would be interested in what they already knew. Forty-one years later I was pleased to learn they were indeed an appreciative audience” (Lucich 2005, 2).

We are inevitably placed in our own schematic worldview and can never anticipate the way our actions will be interpreted in the future unless we are somehow able to operate outside linear time. While there remains a large amount of Australian Indigenous material culture, literature, photographs and audiovisual media associated with those cultures stuck in the vaults of institutions, a few people who deal with those collections will hold the keys to that knowledge. The return of Peter Lucich’s film to Kalumburu offers special insight. The warm and heartfelt reception given for the return of this archive to Kalumburu is tangible evidence of what can happen when this material finds its way back home. What we are talking about is more important than just returning something from people’s memories. The film captured a moment and perspective that is no longer and the returning of that object to the traditional owners is first and foremost a mark of respect. As well as repatriating what is the cultural heritage of Kalumburu people, the film also offers the chance for interested people to enter into deeper connections with those cultural practices, cultures that have not vanished. Can a more informed understanding of the choreographic language used in these dances emerge through the use of film combined with notation? Who would be able to read or comprehend notation? From which cultural viewpoint is such a portrayal to be drawn? Now that Lucich’s notes have been compiled and made available to A.I.A.T.S.I.S. it seems a follow up trip to Kalumburu would be valuable to review the film and sound while pursuing these questions and the recommendations made in the notes. Now
that I have finished my own film, when will I find the time or the resources to write detailed notes to accompany the footage? Every fragment that Lucich documented in his notes, photos, film and sound is of interest to the people at Kalumburu because within that collection are a multiplicity of stories to which Lucich, myself and other researchers can only ever hope to gain glimpses. Lucich says that asking questions about techniques, meanings, significance and ownership should accompany footage. This of course implies that the audience is academic researchers. What if the audience is the local community? What accompanying material may be of value to them? A valuable way to review this footage in either case means sitting with locals, such as Basil, to find out as much as possible about what is happening and if possible record their responses for us, the interested outsiders, and for them.

Notes
1. Kalumburu people include the language speaking groups, Kwini, Kambera, Worara, WilaWila, Ngarinyin and Wunambal as well as other people living in the ex Benedictine mission, the furthest northwest township in Australia.
2. See (Chalarimeri 2001) for further details on Kalumburu dances genres.
3. These five steps are borrowed from Annie McCall who collaboratively developed them while working in Arnhem Land.
4. At the time I was searching through the collections it was impossible to view a comprehensive list of what they hold in relation to my research A.I.A.T.S.I.S. do not place every item they hold online for numerous reasons, some more obscure than others. Another obstacle is that the three collections; audiovisual, library and archives do not work in conjunction which means that if, for example, there are accompanying notes to a film held in the main library it may not necessarily be possible to see them while watching a film in the audiovisual library.
5. The caption for the mask image on the cover of Aborigines of the West reads: “A mask worn by a dancer in the lirga song cycle, derived culturally from the Port Keats area of the Northern Territory, Kalumburu, Kimberley. 1963-4” (Berndt and Berndt 1980, 459).

References
Durham University Ethnographic Film Society 2007 Home Page. Durham University
Lucich, Peter
Rouch, Jean, and Edgar Morin 2005 Chronique d’un été (film) Produced by Argos Films. Distributed by Arte Video.
Dominique Sweeney

trained and works as a performer. His education included two years in Paris at L’École de Théâtre, Jacques Lecoq, while his work has seen him on stages, screen and other locations throughout Australia. Dominique has been a core member of Theatre Kantanka, a company that specialises in site-specific performance. He was a teacher in theatre studies at Griffith University and in masked performance at the Institute for Cinematography and Dramatic Art, St. Petersburg, Russia. Dominique was the Artistic Director of the Anvil Theatre, Melbourne, producing a number of masked productions performed nationally and internationally. He has a B.Ed in drama, dance and philosophy from Deakin University (Rusden) and in 2001 received First Class Honours for his thesis, “Beyond the Confines of the Body: Are Waranggi masks or are masks part of what Waranggi are?” Working with masks has led to Dominique’s current Ph.D. documentary film project Masked Corroborees of Northwest Australia.