



# The Agency of Dolphins: Towards Inter-species Embassies as Sites of Engagement with ‘Significant Otherness’

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*Received 9 December 2010; Revised 2 January 2012; Accepted 17 January 2012*

## Abstract

Cetacean–human interaction, at sites where free-ranging dolphins approach humans, is occurring more than ever before. Management policies and strategies, and their underlying research, intended to protect both dolphins and humans during these interactive events, affect the quality and nature of interactivity. The agency of the dolphins, and its representation in management schemes, is analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis of selected texts from the discourse of Dolphin–Human Interaction Management (DHIM). Analysis suggests a prevailing discourse of protectionism but also reveals the possibility for a new kind of management scheme based upon an acceptance of the ‘significant otherness’ of non-human species. This can be achieved by means of inter-species etiquette, acknowledging the choices made by non-humans to interact with humans. An inter-species etiquette, coupled with multi-species education (education across species boundaries, designed and delivered so as to enable mutually beneficial interaction), offers those non-human animals widely referred to as ‘ambassadors’ safe places in which to be encountered. This new form of inter-species interaction space is named an ‘embassy’.

KEY WORDS *agency; dolphins; ambassador; inter-species etiquette; animal geography; embassy*

## ACRONYM

DHIM Dolphin–Human Interaction Management

## Dolphin–Human Interaction Management (DHIM)

Moments of interaction with cetaceans can afford humans with an opportunity for positive emotional states (DeMares and Kryka, 1998; Servais, 2005; Wilke *et al.*, 2005). Thirteen million humans in 2008 used the services of whale watching companies to watch or interact with dolphins and/or whales (O’Connor *et al.*, 2009). There were more than 3000 whale (and

dolphin)-watching operations in 119 countries, employing 13 200 people in 2008, generating US\$2.1 billion in total expenditures (O’Connor *et al.*, 2009).

Dolphin–human interaction with non-captive (free-ranging) dolphins<sup>1</sup> is increasing at sites around the world to levels greater than ever before. Dolphin–human interactions of this kind are exemplified at the tourist Mecca of Monkey Mia in Western Australia, where a designated

space for interaction with free-ranging dolphins has been demarcated. Female dolphins, accompanied by their calves, come to the shore each day and are fed in small amounts by conservation managers, and tourists view the encounter or are chosen to also feed the dolphins (Smith *et al.*, 2006).

Myriad stakeholder groups from government, academia, advocacy organisations, and the private sector have competing interests in human–non-human interactions (Clove and Jones, 2004; Besio *et al.*, 2008; Warkentin, 2010). Various groups are also apparent in dolphin–human tourism activities, given its commercial nature. Managing the multiple interactions between dolphins and humans, particularly to mitigate possible negative consequences, has become an economic and social concern to communities around the world.

Out of the management challenges has arisen a discourse with the goal of informed management, referred to in this paper as DHIM. The two living entities in the network of relationships that is DHIM, dolphins and humans, each bring certain elements to the between-species interaction that is currently ‘managed’ by humans. Dolphins exercise agency as part of their networking with humans, but the understandings of dolphin agency held by different groups is unclear. Under the assumption that management schemes are intended to produce best possible outcomes for both entities, this analysis seeks to highlight the hitherto unexamined element of dolphin agency to more fully inform DHIM. Contrasting notions of agency within the discourse of DHIM will be explored and elucidated, following Panelli (2010), as forms of subversion, friendship, or other ways by which dolphin agency is represented. We first review the concept of agency as one of the underpinning pillars of human/non-human studies including animal geographies. We next analyse six texts from the discourse of DHIM to find how the choices made by dolphins – their agency – is represented in these texts. We argue that adopting an inter-species etiquette, and acknowledging dolphins as ambassadors of an ‘other world’, leads to recognition of each interaction space as an ‘embassy’ where appropriate respect is paid to the ‘significant other’ (Haraway, 2003).

### **Towards a definition of non-human agency**

Literature on agency in non-human animals reveals varied and sometimes conflicting meanings. McFarland and Hediger (2009) identified a

dominant paradigm in some sciences, which is that only humans exert agency. This dominance is ascribed to the Judeo-Christian and Cartesian legacies of dualism in rational thought, that is, the separation of humans from the non-human world. Those legacies are still active in disciplines less concerned with non-human animals. Fuchs (2007) exemplifies the dominant paradigm in the current *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*:

Agency is the faculty for action . . . non-human organisms have no or little control over how they behave. They do not have a sense of self, or if they do, it is not reflexive. Their behaviour is caused by forces they cannot comprehend or influence. Human actors are different because they are conscious and aware of the world, themselves, and other actors . . . Action is contingent, behaviour is necessary . . . The faculty for action is located in the human mind (2007, 60).

Wilbert (1999) described the ‘modern constitution’, identified in Latour’s (1993; 2005) studies of science as historically developed ‘to deny intentionality and agency to nature’ (1999, 239). Latour and Woolgar (1979) and Latour (1993; 2005) subverted the conceptual differentiation of pure human agency by careful documentation of the innumerable non-human elements that are interwoven in human processes, arguing that no amount of effort can separate the non-human from the human world, including non-human animals and their agency. Indeed, agency is composed of hybrid actants of humans and non-humans, which themselves are not easily separable from their actions. Latour’s (1993), and others’, hybrid actants combine to characterise agency as ‘being spun between different actants rather than manifested as solitary or unitary intent, and it is decoupled from object–subject distinctions’ (Clove and Jones, 2004, 326).

The conceptual development of the notion of agency has continued in recent years, with theorists arguing that multiple agencies exist in life forms beyond humanity. Warren (1994, 4) took a totalising view of agency as a worldly phenomenon of actors and actions in place. Philo and Wilbert (2000) suggested both willfulness and choice constitute agency, whereas Clove and Jones (2004) showed how the activities of plants coexist with external events and practices to co-constitute relational agency. Plumwood

(1993) proposed that ‘intentionality’ is common among species but diverse in its assignation between

... animate and inanimate nature [as even] the plant world includes fully intentional others whose strivings, interactions and differences in life strategy are intricate, amazing and mysterious. (1993, 134–135)

Aside from eliciting the ‘attributes’ of agency, Whatmore (2002) extended the understandings of agency to those that have the capacity to change non-living entities such as buildings. She revealed how the agency of elephants is present in the relational network that influences the design of zoo enclosures and the conduct of management and how the bodily presence and intentional choices of elephants themselves has captivated the human public who demand that they be present in zoos around the world. In this instance, zoos are exemplified as sites of elephant encounter, where human culture meets (modified) elephant culture on terms that have been, in part, designed by elephant agency.

Human–pet relationships defy attempts to categorise their import on the basis of restrictive attributes such as intelligence and communicative capacity. Fox (2006) suggests pet agency is directed to achieve connection and a ‘lived intersubjectivity’ with others in their home (2006, 535). Power (2008) argued that dogs assert their presence in their human family, redefining their roles with their (human) family members, and disrupting predetermined notions of pack behaviour to privilege the individual dog. In turn, humans alter their behaviours to meet dog expectations.

In addition to these relational notions of agency, agentially driven assertiveness is evident in wild animals that regularly traverse domestic and suburban space to unsettle human notions of home (Power, 2009). Power (2009) illuminated non-human agency, showing how possums locate house entry points and cohabit space with (unwilling) humans to ‘unmake’ the best designed human home. Importantly, these species boundary transgressions by possums forcibly increase human awareness of the non-human other, in an assertive demonstration of presence, intentionality, relationality, and resourcefulness.

Since Latour’s more systemic conception of agency, other explorations of agency reveal its more embodied and varying forms (McFarland and Hediger, 2009). Luka (2009) described a

man who studied grizzly bears. He and his girlfriend were eventually killed and eaten by one of the bears he was studying. In Luka’s analysis, agency is understood as a choice to constrain actions:

... the grizzly is not an agent because he kills a man [sic], but rather because he elects to kill a man amid a collection of other edible entities. The fact that Treadwell survived for thirteen years in Alaska without being attacked, and that grizzly attacks are rare in general, is attributable to this. (2009, 86)

A cross-species education-based initiative aimed at achieving human–animal coexistence, a kind of mutual friendship, founded upon a conception of intentional agency in both human and non-human animals, has recently been demonstrated in the work of Roberts, in Bogor, Indonesia. Her Multispecies Education International organisation has sponsored the Cat Education Program (Roberts, 2009) as a pilot project. This produces education for humans about the health needs and care of urban street cats and also the taking into care (veterinary and feeding) and training of 85 street cats, educating them to come, sit, wait, respond to ‘no’, and to enjoy alternatives to killing birds. By establishing a mutually reinforcing learning environment for both humans and felines, an actual coexistence in shared space is achieved based on respectful recognition of the agency of both cats and humans (Roberts, 2010, personal communication). This extends Haraway’s (2003; 2008) dog training model of companion species into a non-‘domestic’ framework by embracing entire urban habitat zones into a model of coexistence. In this model, agency is central to the free exchange of benefit – cats choose to visit a human-built habitat, gaining health and improved response ability among humans, and humans choose to help cats, thereby gaining safety (by reducing cat–human conflicts), companionship, and rodent damage mitigation.<sup>2</sup>

Haraway embraces the choices of non-humans in her exposition of species co-presence. She declares the meaning of her term ‘companion species’ to be ‘a bestiary of agencies’ (2003, 6), where ‘*significant otherness*’ (2003, 7, italics original) resists the neutralising of simple otherness by ‘vulnerable on-the-ground work that cobbles together non-harmonious agencies and ways of living’ (7). One of Haraway’s (2008) central themes in her recent work is the core value of ‘working together’, in an agentic zone of

response ability that grounds the human/non-human encounter in a productive and ontologically satisfying relationship. This has led to Haraway's replacement of a dualist lexical construction, that of 'training of' to a more relational form, that of 'training with' the dogs who share her life, as agents entangled in companionship (2008, 222).

Finally, Warkentin (2009) investigated the expression of agency by whales and dolphins in captive environments noting that dolphins interact with 'affordances' or opportunities to control interaction with human visitors. She discussed various choices made by dolphins: avoiding touch by gauging how a low wall acts as a barrier to limit the reach of hands; stealing paper fish trays as acts of transgression of rules; and strategic choice through '... taking the fish that they had been given by humans ... and using it as bait to catch their own food [seagulls]' (Warkentin, 2009, 42). Warkentin stated that acknowledgement of the agency of whales and dolphins can '... disrupt prevailing assumptions that only humans have agency and are thus the only species worthy of moral consideration' (2009, 43).

From its subversion, to its embrace as apparent friendship, to its assertion by the 'significant other', agency remains a varied and complex concept. Yet, in the ocean or at the shoreline, dolphin agency is evident, simple. At three sites in Australia, for example – Monkey Mia (Western Australia), Tin Can Bay, or Tangalooma (Queensland) – the dolphin chooses to come to the shore for interaction. It chooses to swim on its side while it chooses to look into your eyes. It chooses the moment to present its body or open its mouth, its choice to let you know it would accept a gift, if you choose to offer it. Its agency is as evident as human agency, albeit open to varied interpretations. This real-time, haptic encounter, unmediated by theory, directly experienced by hundreds of humans daily in Australia, and by thousands of humans at sites around the world,<sup>3</sup> suggests a relatively untroubled acceptance of the notion that dolphins exercise agency. The agency of dolphins is evident as they enter and remain in these interaction spaces, whether to watch, swim with, be fed by, or touch humans, and then leave. There is, however, need for illumination of the forms of human understandings of their agency and its expression within the texts that constitute DHIM so as to propose more relational ways of cohabitation, awareness, and social practice.

## Methods and results

This analysis will explore discourses of DHIM to reveal subversions/resistances, acknowledgements, assertions, and reciprocities of agency, in representations of dolphin–human interaction, with a view to proposing more equitable power relations and representations of the significant dolphin 'other'. The discourse of DHIM includes a wide range of texts (i.e. scholarly and grey literature, commercial brochures for whale-watching adventures, popular literature, documentary films, etc.). Such wide-ranging literature precludes a thorough analysis of the entire corpus of DHIM, and only key examples selected from public policy, management, and the academic portion of the discourse are selected for analysis.

Six key texts from within this public/academic discourse of DHIM were chosen: two policy documents, two management documents and two scientific papers. The six texts were analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis, following Fairclough (1995; 2001).

The first text, the *Australian National Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching 2005*, is referred to hereafter as the 'Guidelines' [Department of the Environment, Water, Health and the Arts (DEWHA), 2005]. At face value, the text exemplifies an apparent acknowledgement of dolphin agency, devoting a section to the following:

### Allowing Animals to Interact With People

For the protection of animals and for the long-term sustainability of the whale and dolphin watching industry, it is important that whale and dolphin watching be conducted in a manner that allows animals to choose the nature and extent of any contact with people.

It is essential that everyone wishing to watch whales and dolphins understands the important distinction between moving towards an animal, and an animal moving towards them (DEWHA, 2005, 4, italics original).

In suggesting that dolphins (and whales) might choose to interact with humans in varied ways and for varying lengths of time, the agency of cetaceans is clearly acknowledged. Yet, their agency is, in the same lexical moment, also marginalised and effectively suppressed in this instance by making it conditional upon human permission. To 'allow' a non-human animal to act according to its own needs, desires, or chosen purpose is represented as a human choice or action.

Further, the goal of protection is for both the ‘animals’ and the ‘industry’ of watching them (by other animals, humans). Protection is based on an essentialist position of difference between humans and non-humans. The ‘important distinction’ of this difference is claimed as a benefit for ‘everyone’, yet the ‘essential’ understanding remains implicit, unspoken. This distinction of difference subverts dolphin agency under the guise of advocating agency as an attempt to protect the sustainability of the ‘tourist gaze’.

In four places throughout the Guidelines, the following paragraph is reproduced:

The following reactions may indicate that a whale or dolphin is disturbed:

1. attempts to leave the area or moves away from vessel quickly or slowly;
2. regular changes in direction or speed of swimming;
3. hasty dives;
4. changes in breathing patterns;
5. increased time spent diving compared with time spent at the surface;
6. changes in acoustic behaviour; and
7. aggressive behaviours such as tail slashes and trumpet blows (DEWHA, 2005, 5, 10, 13, 16).

The word ‘disturbed’, as it is employed here, implies that an agent has had its choices unwillingly affected. On its surface, this set of descriptions acknowledges the agency of dolphins as they choose to move away from anthropogenic sources of disturbance, yet this list of dolphin responses effectively erases their agency, framing action as ‘reactions’, an inference that it is a biologically determined reflex. However, rapid movement of a dolphin could be for reasons only a dolphin knows, as with all of the other behaviours in the list, and not a reaction to human action. The lexical construction of these responses naturalise the erasure of dolphin agency by means of a reductive paradigm requiring measurement, analysis, and sophisticated technologies (i.e. hydrophones to investigate ‘changes in acoustic behaviour’). While regulatory codes are necessarily part of the discourse of DHIM, many animals are quite capable of asserting and reframing their roles, activities, and relationship with the presence of human others without regulation of, or by, human action. Again, the protection of dolphins is invoked within this regulatory frame.

Another set of policy guidelines, comparing interaction with free-ranging dolphins and those in captivity, developed by the Animals and Society Institute (Stewart and Marino, 2009) acknowledges non-human agency while simultaneously privileging the human (albeit unintentionally or habitually). It notes (occasional) aggressive behaviour of dolphins towards human swimmers in captive circumstances, showing understanding of the dolphin’s agency as expressions of annoyance with respect to harassment. This follows an in-depth discussion of ‘harassment’ of free-ranging dolphins that was defined in 1994 as ‘any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance’ (Stewart and Marino, 2009, 15). Some dolphin–interaction tour operators contend that they do not harass dolphins but instead respond to their desire to interact, thus problematising current DHIM policies as being inadequate to deal with errant actors. The authors title their policy with the hyphenated term ‘dolphin–human’ and that term is mostly used; however, on seven occasions, the order is reversed to human–dolphin. On one occasion, this is used explicitly to refer to dolphin agency as ‘dolphins are sometimes the initiator of human–dolphin encounters’ (Stewart and Marino, 2009, 8), which suggests that discourses of dolphin agency might be further developed and expressed in more relational terms.

A plan of management (Constantine, 1999) relating to dolphin tourism and conservation in New Zealand is primarily aimed at regulating the behaviour of humans to minimise harm or disturbance to protect dolphins. The text notes

Occasionally an apparently solitary dolphin will actively seek out human contact on a regular basis. Even though these dolphins have the freedom to swim away, they will often allow people to touch them and will involve them in apparent play activities (Constantine, 1999, 24).

The document notes that after the introduction of regulations, fewer numbers of people were permitted to interact with dolphins, and a solitary (bottlenose) dolphin interacted ‘less with people and more with the dusky dolphins . . . her behaviour toward swimmers has changed and now she is less interactive with humans on most occasions’ (Constantine, 1999, 25). This text suggests the dolphin asserted agency when playful experiences were and were not reciprocated.

A brochure details management of dolphin–human interaction at the Monkey Mia reserve

(Shark Bay World Heritage Area, 2011). It details that only a few chosen, but supervised, tourists are permitted to feed dolphins as feeding is 'carefully controlled'. Several human-inhibiting actions are mentioned, such as not swimming and leaving if dolphins are aggressive. These are clear attempts to not domesticate or encourage habituation, and to prevent dolphin or human harm, by creating a protected space in which dolphin choices (are not 'allowed' but) are not prevented (Smith *et al.*, 2006). An explicit acknowledgement of agency is in their suggestion to 'wait for the dolphins to approach you. Stay still and enjoy their company', emphasising highly affective, relational, and polite relationship-building (Shark Bay World Heritage Area, 2011). Archived material from a departmental web site shows a series of attempts to keep dolphins as close as possible to their natural selves. While attempting a 'planned introduction' of a dolphin to other dolphins who regularly feed at Monkey Mia, the authors of another text noted that the dolphin 'has shown a lively interest in the feeding . . . but has not taken food yet' (Department of Environment and Conservation, 2006), showing acute awareness of dolphin agency in the choice to interact.

In a scientific text by Cunningham-Smith *et al.* (2006), a dolphin named 'Beggar' is implicated in another dolphin's death. This is introduced by the observation of

. . . a lack of learned foraging skills, making [them] dependent on human handouts to survive . . . [a] 4-y-old male calf of a begging mother was observed begging up to several weeks prior to its death. This animal and his mother were documented associates of Beggar . . . [a]lthough the specific role of begging in the sequence of events that led to this dolphin's demise cannot be determined, this animal [was] a known beggar and the son of a begging mother (Cunningham-Smith *et al.*, 2006, 353–354).

The agency of all dolphins involved in this scenario is discounted by representing them as beggars who have a 'lack of learned foraging skills', as if searching out humans who offer food is not a form of foraging. Their agency is conceptualised as 'trained', conditioned rather than chosen, and further erased by being represented as not governing themselves to learn to forage as a less relationally oriented dolphin would.<sup>4</sup>

In some cases, agency is acknowledged while being framed as transgressive (Philo and

Wilbert, 2000, 27, where 'Transgression . . . entails actions whose consequences overstep certain limits, defined by humans, but which are not necessarily intended by anybody [or anything] to do so'). For instance, Cunningham-Smith *et al.* stated,

Wild dolphins conditioned to accept food from humans have been reported to become aggressive during these interactions (2006, 347).

Then,

In total, 18 bite incidents [out of 1996 interactions – and not doing so 1,978 times] were documented . . . [i]n all cases, bites were inflicted only when the boater engaged in attempts to touch or tease the dolphin (2006, 351).

It is followed by

Our findings suggest that biting may be an aggressive response by the dolphins toward humans who touch or tease, or who do not produce the expected food handout (2006, 355).

The dolphin, by biting,<sup>5</sup> is said to be displaying 'an aggressive response', yet this follows the earlier statement that this occurred 'only when the boater engaged in attempts to touch or tease the dolphin' (Cunningham-Smith *et al.*, 2006, 351). An elicited response to 'teasing', where provocation is intended, has here been labelled as 'aggressive'. Agency as a choice to act or not act, as a self-governing power, is not acknowledged as such. Instead, it is framed as a transgression of the 'normal' behaviour (as defined by humans) of wild dolphins.

Beggar's agency is further represented as a transgression.

It is probable that the dolphin accepts and eats food from the hands of boaters that it would otherwise refuse to eat if the item were found floating in its natural environment. The fact that Beggar has continued to remain in apparent good body condition after more than 15 y of consuming a mixed diet of natural prey that he catches and items fed to him by humans is surprising (Cunningham-Smith *et al.*, 2006, 355).

Beggar is depicted as an unconscious, reactive entity who does not know what is good for him and what endangers him. The assertion of his vulnerability, and the contradiction presented

by his 'apparent good body condition', places Beggar into a torqued (Bowker and Star, 1999, 27–28) category of abnormality. Beggar's agency here transgresses an anthropocentric definition of normalcy for a dolphin and is lexically constructed so as to cast doubt on his ability to choose in his own best interests.

Acknowledgement of dolphin agency is evident in other scientific texts. Wilke *et al.* stated,

... the term *solitary dolphin* is taken to apply to dolphins who ... regularly closely approach humans, often including touch, social, sexual, and play behaviours (2005, 427, emphasis original).

This statement is followed by '[i]n most documented cases, this redirection of sociability is not mediated by food rewards' (Wilke *et al.*, 2005, 428), representing agency as a choice to interact with another creature rather than a conditioned, habituated, or trained response.

Wilke *et al.*'s attempt to provide an explanation for the agentic action of dolphins as they initiate dolphin–human interaction follows:

... most dolphins in these situations actively seek out some level of interaction with humans ... dolphins may be using humans to compensate for reduced conspecific social contact, or perhaps, even finding humans 'interesting' in their own right (2005, 427) ... a process possibly assisted or even initiated by the dolphin (2005, 428).

Strongly agentic actions are acknowledged: 'actively seek out', 'using humans', and 'finding humans "interesting"', 'assisted or even initiated'. Each of these is evidence of choice and actively seeking a dialogic interchange and connection with a 'significant other'.

## Discussion

Analysis of these texts shows that the agency of dolphins is variously represented within the discourse of DHIM. It is acknowledged, suppressed, denied, erased, asserted, and celebrated, usually within a 'protectionist' frame.

In our analysis, the privileging of agency by humans as part of the regulation of nature is revealed, as is the dilemma of how to manage, or provide for, the 'begging dolphins', and those dolphins who want to interact with tour-boat occupants. Much of the representation of dolphin agency in DHIM discourse is intended for dolphin safety, but at times, agency is colonised

by humans and denied to the dolphins. Some texts (e.g. Wilke *et al.*, 2005; Shark Bay World Heritage Area, 2011) demonstrate a different, more relational conception of dolphin agency that is possible within DHIM.

While acknowledgement of dolphin agency was found within the discourse of DHIM, its representation is, at times, problematic. Agency is presented as transgression, the crossing of anthropocentric borders: dolphins breaking rules. For example, the illegality of 'Beggar's' ways, the dolphins who 'steal fish trays'; each detail instances when a dolphin's agency, its choice to act on its own behalf, is represented as an abrogation of a border constructed, not by negotiation between equals in agency, but one produced solely by humans. A quite different text demonstrates how acceptance of, and engagement with, the agency of dolphins can be incorporated into the discourse of DHIM. Wilke *et al.*, stated,

The implementation of a 'dolphin etiquette' program is fundamental to efforts to manage a solitary dolphin situation to the benefit of both the dolphin and the humans. (2005, 431)

Theirs and others (e.g. Shark Bay World Heritage Area, 2011) offer detailed programmes of management of human behaviours that can be structured by such means as

Delineate specific areas ... Limit the number of people ... Restrict the number and type of boats ... Urge boat owners to act judiciously and with good manners ... avoid no touch zones [on the body of the dolphin] ... do not offer food ... Fully explain and introduce proper dolphin etiquette with the maximum degree of diplomacy (Wilke *et al.*, 2005, 431).

Wilke *et al.*'s (2005) suggestion of an intra- and inter-species regime of 'etiquette' frames the situation within the bounds of appropriateness, of mannered propriety. In this model of species interaction, the agency of both dolphin and human are freed to find new relationality in a discourse of respect (Taylor, 1986; Evans, 2005).

In a proposed 'dolphin etiquette' style of management, the need to exercise at least some control over human behaviour acknowledges the human tendency to occasionally misdirect strong attraction towards dolphins by acting in ways that can endanger both dolphins and humans and that this improper behaviour requires management.

Dolphin agency does not require management. Dolphin agency is beyond human control in any case, although some teaching of alternative behaviour can be effective in reducing behaviours that humans find distressing (Wilke *et al.*, 2005, 432). This leads to a more appropriate and mannered relationship, as one would expect of any strong relationship that negotiates difference.

Dolphins, who are increasingly accessible to humans in facilities and in the ocean commons, have an exceptionally long history of anthropophilia (Montagu and Lilly, 1963; Taylor, 2003; Cressey, 2009). By not engaging with the choices of dolphins to approach humans, a valuable affect is likely to be lost. To achieve a more agency-friendly DHIM discourse that will be safe, responsive to both human and non-human requirements, and enabling of a possible 'peak experience' (DeMares and Kryka, 1998, 175), '... new *practices*, other forms of life rejoining humans and non-humans' (Haraway, 1987, 87, italics original) are needed.

Behnke (1999) proposed an 'interspecies practice of peace' in which humans actively display a calming demeanour, a bodily inhabitation of non-threatening posture and attentive ways of being when with non-humans. As with any relationship, these kinds of demeanours are likely to elicit positivity and reciprocal exchanges with the other. The importance of her proposal is that obligation is placed on humans to modify their behaviour and genuinely engage in a reciprocal interchange where equal species agency is paramount.

Cheney and Weston (1999) suggested an alternative model of relationship, one based on an environmental 'etiquette'. Such an etiquette involves all aspects of human 'being' – in human 'comportment' (Cheney and Weston, 128). This notion of etiquette involves reciprocity of seeing, touching, and speaking with the other, a bodily invitation to interact by welcoming gesture, following the rules of courtesy and trust, allowing the space to respond (or not) as a journey in discovery of the other. Warkentin (2010) elaborated on the idea of comportment, to propose attentiveness based on openness as praxis in inter-species etiquette. She suggested that attentiveness is not merely politeness or observation but an entire embodiment of the relational response to the other, coalescing in such inter-species etiquette (Warkentin, 2010).

The idea of an inter-species etiquette returns attention to the multi-species education concept of Roberts (2010, personal communication); the

transcendence of species borders embodied in the lived experience of responses between 'significant otherness... in ramifying webs' (Haraway, 2008, 97). Alternatively, dolphins may be considered as ambassadors, as Latour would have it when he wrote of his 'mad project':

If I dared to reveal my entire mad project to you, I would confess that I always had this odd dream of being able to do... a procession, that is, a theory of ambassadors... of the various modes of existence, each in its own incommensurable and yet fully respected truth conditions (Latour, 2008, 9).

The designation as an 'ambassador' is already widely used in describing animals that have entered the human sphere: from newsletters of professional marine mammal trainers (IMATA, 2008) to French postmodern philosophers (Derrida, 2002); from philosophers of biomedical science (Glackin, 2008) to tourism advocacy groups (Tribe, 2001).

We want to take another step in this direction, to envision animal–human interaction sites as 'embassies', sites where species ambassadors approach one another in mutual respect, as first envisioned in Taylor (2009). The notion of interaction spaces is raised by Cheney and Weston (1999), who suggested humans approach non-humans on terms that offer 'the space and time, the occasion, and the acknowledgement necessary to enter into relationship' (1999, 118). Embassies are interaction spaces where ambassadors take on temporary roles of engagement with others as emissaries of significant otherness. An agent of individual choice, while reflecting the choices of her kind, the ambassador embodies possibility, communication, and relationship. Sites where dolphin–human interaction occurs can be viewed as embassies where negotiated protocols of conduct guide humans towards a more diplomatic response ability towards non-human agents and afford equal respect for the sovereignty of the other. It is not our intention to offer prescriptive models for behaviour but to open the ideas and debates as to how this might happen with future research. It is anticipated that site-specific management schemes can be designed for interaction embassies, some for short-term and some for long-term interactions.

## Conclusion

Haraway (2008) raised the idea of accepting 'significant otherness' and called for new practices

that embody this stance. She suggested humans refrain from an impulse to act 'to' or 'for' non-humans but instead act 'with' non-humans. Such egalitarian practices entail a more diplomatically framed human response to the non-human invitation to interact, one that involves a commitment to reciprocity in action and intent that is embodied as a relational response to the significant other as friendship (Panelli, 2010, 83). As with most inter-cultural understandings of diversity and difference, actants may need to adopt a heightened sensitivity to inter-species difference (and sameness).

Agency is variously understood in academic literature, including as a relational response between actants. This research highlighted how dolphin agency is represented in managed socialisation contexts and found that the choice expressed by dolphins to interact with humans is under-acknowledged. The power embodied in the choice to (or not to) interact is not uniquely human's to apply but can be found in the mutual reinforcement of roles developed over centuries between humans and other species. With an articulated, spatially framed inter-species etiquette – the respect for, and enjoyment of, agencies intertwining – the possibilities of 'power-with' are opened.

This research suggests that a more respectful understanding of ambassadorship might evoke the spatial imaginary of an inter-species embassy. Further research around this concept is indicated, such as understanding how the agency of ambassadorship is expressed by other non-human species in socialising situations, how inter-species embassies may be conceptualised across different human cultures, how this model can be designed and implemented in temporary and long-term embassies of dolphin–human interaction, including captive environments, and how the discourse of DHIM, and that of other animal–human interaction contexts, can be opened, finding ways to more fully engage with 'significant otherness'. Protocols of behaviour become refined when conceptualised within an inter-species embassy where species respectfully interact for mutual benefit.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge the helpful suggestions of two anonymous reviewers. The Institute of Australian Geographers (IAG) and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of the Sunshine Coast, generously provided a postgraduate travel scholarship and other funding to the first author to develop these ideas at an IAG conference.

#### NOTES

1. This research focuses on dolphins that are not in built environments and unless captivity is specifically mentioned, refers only to dolphins known as 'free-ranging' or 'wild dolphins'. This need not, in our view, preclude an understanding of captive dolphins as ambassadors, or the sites where they live as embassies.
2. Roberts' (2010, personal communication) Multispecies Zones will, in time, extend to all species, that is, future development of a programme to educate rodents as to where specially placed human refuse will be made available to them for food, in return for absenting themselves from homes. A full 'all-species' programme is the goal.
3. Sites such as Monkey Mia and Bunbury (Western Australia), Tangalooma (Moreton Island, Queensland), Tin Can Bay (Queensland), Kealahou Bay (Hawaii), Mahia Beach (New Zealand), Dingle Bay, Doolin, and Tory Island (Ireland), Providenciales (Turks and Caicos Islands), Brittany (France), Eilat (Israel), Panama City (Florida), and the Savannah River (Georgia, USA) are among those with dolphins visiting at this date (2011).
4. This is not meant to minimise the danger to dolphins of becoming overly dependent upon human handouts, especially when not overseen by someone with competence in providing good quality food but is meant to problematise human assumptions around dolphin agency in DHIM.
5. An assumption is made here that 'bites were inflicted'. Dolphins have approximately 88 pointed teeth and taste things to determine their possible food value. If a human were to extend their hand with potential food in it, the dolphin could, while tasting the item, touch the fingers of the human. A reaction to this by pulling the hand away can result in scratches. These may not have been bites but instead scratches caused by human reactions. This observation is based on many years of direct contact and interaction with dolphins by the first author.

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