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English half of a Brazilian bilingual book Devires  
totemicos. Cosmoplitica do Sonho**

Barbara Glowczewski

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FUTURE ART BASE  
EXPRESSIVE SUPPORT FOR ASIGNIFYING RUPTURES  
SERIES EDITED BY AKSELI VIRTANEN AND PETER PÁL-PELBART

$n-1$

[W]hat a vapid idea, the book as the image of the world. In truth, it is not enough to say, "Long live the multiple," difficult as it is to raise that cry. No typographical, lexical, or even syntactical cleverness is enough to make it heard. The multiple must be made, not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by dint of sobriety, with the number of dimensions one already has available – always  $n-1$  (the only way the one belongs to the multiple: always subtracted). Subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constituted; write at  $n-1$ .

– Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari





Warlpiri women ceremony for lifting the death taboo  
on the *kama* Digging Stick Dreaming



Warlpiri women dancing *ngaijirri* Budgerigar Dreaming





the world refers back to text,  
as the text refers the world back  
to affirmation of the world

Maurice Blanchot

# **TOTEMIC BECOMINGS**

**COSMOPOLITICS  
OF THE DREAMING**

TOTEMIC BECOMINGS – COSMOPOLITICS  
OF THE DREAMING / DEVIRES TOTÊMICOS  
– COSMOPOLÍTICA DO SONHO  
Barbara Glowczewski

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Lajamanu, Austrália Central, 1984  
Book cover: Extract from the ritual body painting of Melody Napurrurla, Lajamanu, 1984: map of her *ngurlu* Seed Dreaming. | Inside: *Yumurrpa Yarla* [site of the Yam Dreaming], 1991, acrylic on canvas by Yulyulu Napurrurla, 124x124cm. Lajamanu, private collection. Reproduction by Barbara Glowczewski.

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— K O N E E N S Ä Ä T I Ö —

Barbara Glowczewski

# TOTEMIC BECOMINGS

COSMOPOLITICS  
OF THE DREAMING

*n-1*  
publications



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Group of Lajamanu men on a ceremonial trip in Docker River.

# ABORIGINAL COSMOPOLITICS AND GUATTARI'S ECOSOPHY

Seated on the red sand, a Central Australian woman in a pink dress unravels knots in a long red ocher-coated rope. She stands up, folds the rope like a multi-stranded necklace and bends over a sick woman who lies on the ground, a Snake design painted around her navel. The painter, sitting by her side, holds one end of the rope over the patient's painted belly and swings the rope back and forth with the help of the woman in pink. After a while, she pulls the rope with a brisk movement as if extracting something from the patient. She grasps the rope in both hands and, raising a foot, places it between her legs and, still holding the rope, prances away in little leaps with her feet spread slightly apart, as Warlpiri women do in their rituals. The dancer is powerfully, achingly focused on her task. She is a "businesswoman," respected for her knowledge of *yawulyu* ritual songs and dances, a status that entitles her to use the sacred rope. The purpose of this healing ritual is to draw the illness far away from the patient's body, which the painting has nourished. What is at stake is the transformation of an affect—the investment of the healers against the pain of the illness—into an effect, the promise of a cure. The effectiveness depends on the gravity of the "business" at hand, which at that particular moment lends consistency to the performed assemblage. The rope, which is made of strings of spun human hair, has the power to bear the illness away, not because people believe in it, but because a series of gestures and actions enact the becoming of the sacred power that its secret name suggests—*makarra*, the "uterus" or the "matrix" of all *kuruwarri*, "images-forces," in which all of the *Jukurra*, Dreamings or totemic becomings, are generated.

A young boy drags a rope through the scrub in France's Cevennes mountain range. His friend has fallen into a hole, and he wants to help him climb out. It



is a scene from the film *Le moindre geste*,<sup>1</sup> a story that Deligny centered on two children who escape from a psychiatric institution and literally unfold themselves across the landscape in the course of the movie. In fact, Yves, a psychotic child who had difficulty walking in real life, becomes a “wanderer” in the film, transforming himself as he wanders among hills, bush, and river. The rope begins to come alive in his hands, on the ground, and through the scrub, becoming an extension of his body, but an autonomous extension—something like the Amerindian and Australian Trickster myths in which the penis becomes detached, winds itself around the neck, runs independently after women, or causes the hero to stumble and fall. The myth is not referred to here as part of a psychoanalytic, Oedipal interpretation, but, in keeping with Guattari’s approach, to apprehend the object—the rope—in an “asignifying” way. Not as a sexual or organic metaphor, but as an empowered object that becomes an agent, a mediator, and in this role enables transformation. The images of Yves dragging the rope convey a sort of concentration, like that of a surveyor involved in finding landmarks. But it is more than that—the labor involved seems to traverse the boy as though the existence of the world depended on it, the world as condensed in this place that he wanders through.

The evidence—busy and almost joyous—created by Yves Guignard through the camera’s eye moved the young Brazilian students attending a two-day seminar called “Anthropology and Psychoanalysis” that Peter Pál Pelbart and I had organized in March 2013, at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC). It was during this screening that Yves’s rope brought to mind the Warlpiri healing rope that I had filmed in Central Australia in 1979.<sup>2</sup> If each sequence with the rope was pointing to a singularity, or, in Guattari’s words, a singularity trait, the Brazilian context helped to make the two ropes resonate across time and space. To bring together singularity traits that traverse humanity, we need to change not only our perspective regarding the people involved in such “actings” (*agirs*), but also to experience particular events that allow such traits to be recognized as “shared.” So, when Peter invited me to write for his collection, I became excited by the prospect of trying to find a thread that would unite my Australian experience and the complicity that we share with Guattari’s thinking and Deligny’s practice.

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1 The title of the film comes from Deligny’s sentence: *Le moindre geste peut faire signe* (The slightest gesture can signal something). Personal correspondence with Sandra Alvarez de Toledo, May 2014; see also: Peter Pál Pelbart, “Linhas erráticas” in *O avesso do niilismo*. São Paulo: n-1 edições, 2013; English version to be published.

2 See <[www.odsas.net](http://www.odsas.net)>, a database of audio-visual archives that contains Warlpiri recordings collected by B. Glowczewski since 1979.

## Wander Lines from Australia to Brazil

Before going to Australia, I was fascinated by Deligny's experiments and his use of maps resulting from the tracing process drawn by the volunteers who took care of autistic children in the Cevennes under his guidance. The hundreds of wonderfully detailed maps that they created reveal arrays of superimposed lines that trace the children's itineraries as they circulated between their living spaces and the scrub. Deligny called these trails "wander lines" and searched for what was driving them.<sup>3</sup> Janmari, the autistic child he called his guide and mentor nearly burst at the seams with joy on coming into contact with water and was powerfully drawn by the water in streams, even detecting a hidden spring like a diviner. Deligny recalls various experiences of Janmari and other children identifying traces—water, fire or others—along their wander lines. Mapping reveals the emergence of a common space and boundaries formed by the lines, which follow the children's various activities—their "actings" (*agirs*), as opposed to adult doings (*faïres*).

I often thought about the wander lines as I was attempting to trace the mythical itineraries of Warlpiri totemic heroes on geographical maps of the desert. I was seeking patterns and other signs in what these ancestral beings—the Kangaroo or Plum men and women, the Star, Wind or Rain people—left along their walking, crawling, or flying trails to mark the landscape with their tracks becoming springs or other features that emerged from their actions and actings—blood turning into red ocher, a body part into a rock, and tears into waterholes, as well as various imprints of Rainbow Snakes onto the meandering path of sand creeks. The trails of the totemic beings, the Dreamings, crossed the territories of hundreds of different language groups. Aboriginal men and women who used to walk from waterhole to waterhole, as hunter-gatherers, had extensive exchange networks across the continent. In desert regions, a crucial value of exchange was hairstring made of women's hair cut at funerals and used to make hairbands or sacred objects like the "matrix" rope used by the Warlpiri woman healer. In a way, the traveling of hairstring from group to group was a material expression of the links between every realm of life and between totemic ancestors, as well as all of their descendants, whether humans or not, horizontally through the land and vertically through every other aspect of the cosmos.

In 2006, I was invited to the biannual conference of the ABA (Association of Brazilian Anthropologists) in Goiânia. I spoke about the injustice revealed by the violent death of an Aboriginal person in police custody and the disproportionate

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3 Fernand Deligny, *Cartes et lignes d'erre/Maps and Wander lines*. Introduction, glossary and descriptions by S. Alvarez de Toledo, postface by B. Ogilvie. Paris: L'Arachnéen, 2013.

reaction of the police, who for the first time in an Aboriginal community sent a special response emergency team armed with Tasers to arrest Aboriginal protesters.<sup>4</sup> I explained how this situation compelled me to get involved as an anthropologist. Consequently, my research involved following the inquest into the man's death on Palm Island in November 2004, a punishment reserve to which over 4,000 Aboriginal people from 40 different mainland groups had been deported. I followed the court proceedings for the inquest, as well as for the committal hearing of 23 Aboriginal people arrested for a protest "riot" that shook the population a week after the victim's death. The complex legal process and the hundreds of media headlines over a three-year period are analyzed in a book that I published in French, in 2008, entitled *Guerriers pour la Paix*. The book includes two chapters of interviews with Lex Wotton, the Aboriginal man considered the ring leader of what the media and police called a "riot." The book came out in February 2008, just at the time that the newly elected prime minister agreed to make an official apology for the harm done to Aboriginal people since colonization, in particular the practice of removing children of mixed descent from their families, known as "stolen generations." Typically, the French media were not interested in discussing the death of an Aboriginal man in custody, in a time of official reconciliation.

The English translation, *Warriors for Peace*, was checked in 2010 by Lex Wotton while he was incarcerated. No publisher in Australia was interested, so we decided with the lawyers to post it free online in support of the campaign for Lex's freedom. He was released after two years, but was banned for the remaining 4 years of his sentence from speaking in public, and from continuing to run a group against domestic violence that he had founded prior to these events. The ban responds to what many scholars have called a "moral panic." And yet Lex Wotton's words, that can be heard in a short clip I posted online to support the case, did not call for an uprising, but for the recognition of basic rights: "I don't want to be treated as an Aboriginal person, I want to be treated as a human being; we don't want two laws, one White, one Black, we want one law for all, we want to live in peace."<sup>5</sup> Colonial history has created its own ontology, which continues to find it difficult to accept all humans as "humans;" boundaries shift, but in the end race, poverty, gender, and any form

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4 B. Glowczewski, "Cruzada por justiça social" in M. Grossi, C. Eckert, P. Fry (eds.) *Conferências e Diálogos: Saberes e Práticas Antropológicas*. Blumenau: Nova Letra, 2007, pp. 149-180. See also: B. Glowczewski and L. Wotton, *Warriors for peace. The political situation of the Aboriginal people as viewed from Palm Island* (updated translation of *Guerriers pour la Paix*). Montpellier: Indigène, 2008. Available online on: <eprints.jcu.edu.au/7286/>.

5 L. Wotton, *2004 Palm Island death in-custody*, recorded in March 2005 by W. Barker and B. Glowczewski (5 min). B. Glowczewski commented at her 2008-2009 EHES Seminar Anthropology of perception, hosted at the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris; Available on: <[www.archivesaudiovisuelles.fr/FR/\\_video.asp?id=1635&ress=5116&video=116861&format=68](http://www.archivesaudiovisuelles.fr/FR/_video.asp?id=1635&ress=5116&video=116861&format=68)>.

of singularity is at risk of rejection for not conforming to the human norm, or worse, of not fitting the new post-human norm.

Today racism against the descendants of slaves and other African Diasporas in the world is related to similar problems as racism against Indigenous populations. Many governments and citizens do not accept that populations disadvantaged by historical, social or economic circumstances should benefit from differential rights which are not based on essentialism, nationalism, or ethnic hierarchies. The six months in 2013 that I was fortunate enough to spend in Brazil, thanks to a Capes invitation to teach and lecture in various Universities, revealed unexpected affinities between my Aboriginal experience and Brazilian cosmopolitics, both in terms of Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian situations.

I had been invited to speak about Australian Aboriginal people to the Kaingang, Xokleng/Laklãnō and Guarani students enrolled in the interdisciplinary *Licenciatura Indígena* program at the UFSC in Florianópolis.<sup>6</sup> The program was designed to grant a teaching degree that validated their professional experience in their community schools. A hundred indigenous men, women and children were seated in the large university amphitheater while I was testing the sound system for my presentation with a brief clip showing an old Warlpiri man in a flamboyant yellow miner's jacket, wearing an audio headset and chanting a ritual song in his language in front of a computer.<sup>7</sup> As the sound erupted from the speakers, the audience burst out laughing, and the men took up the chant as soon as the clip ended, imitating the singer's tone and deep voice perfectly. I did not yet know any of the students, but it seemed to me that instead of mockery, their laughter and imitation revealed a sense of recognition of the old Australian man on the screen. This impression was later confirmed. The indigenous audience had sensed familiar terrain in which they recognized something of their own experience in the Aboriginal singer's performance, despite differences in languages and cultural contexts. I later learned that the imitation of the Warlpiri singer was led by the Laklãnō men who are known for their artistic imitations of animals and birds.

A stream of questions and comments followed my presentation on bilingual education in English and Warlpiri developed at Lajamanu, the Central Australian desert community where I have been working. The audience wanted to see the animals and learn what people ate in the desert, an environment so different from their own, but they also pointed to a number of similarities, including the relationship with the land and the flora and fauna, as well as with dreams. They were curious about the historical strategies that Aboriginal people adopted

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6 The students asked to be called Laklãnō instead of Xokleng, Communication from Evelyn Schuler Zea (UFSC).

7 See <[www.odsas.net/scan\\_sets.php?set\\_id=752&doc=78221&step=5](http://www.odsas.net/scan_sets.php?set_id=752&doc=78221&step=5)>.

as they confronted the obstacles and transformations that colonization, missions, mining companies and Australian government policies presented, and they saw their resistance as resembling their own situations in Brazil. I was invited to teach another seminar, and this time I spoke about Aboriginal art and politics, but the discussion was an anthropology lesson for me, too—the indigenous students wanted to know whether the Australians were “dualists” and had “patrilineal moieties,” with specific rights to designs, explaining to me how the Kaingang are divided into two moieties that intermarry, with the right to paint exclusively designs that belong to them and are shared with the other members of their moiety.

Two months later, an Australian Aboriginal lecturer specializing in education and new technologies at James Cook University, Max Lenoy, was invited to the Blurred Interface Conference hosted by the UFSC as part of my TransOceanik program.<sup>8</sup> He was also asked to participate in the Guarani, Laklãnõ and Kaingang *Licenciatura Indígena* program a day before his conference presentation at the round table with three *caciques* (community leaders) who spoke from each of the three groups. The session reflected the bonds that had recently developed between the speakers.

The occasion was politically charged. One of the *caciques* suggested that Brazil’s indigenous peoples (*povos indígenas*) should have a “Tent embassy” like the one Aboriginal people erected in front of the parliament building in Canberra, in 1972, under the flag created by an Aboriginal artist to politically unite all of Australia’s hundreds of indigenous languages.<sup>9</sup> A non-indigenous student asked him why they needed an embassy when the Indians have the Funai to represent them. The *cacique* answered that the Funai is mostly for land issues, whereas the indigenous peoples of Brazil need a political agency to help assert their sovereignty. The Funai has various local Indian councils, but its director is not indigenous. I was surprised to meet a number of Brazilians, including anthropologists, for whom it was inconceivable for an Amerindian to be the Funai director, citing the excuse that such an individual could not “represent” the interests of other Indian groups. It is natural for this question to arise in a democracy if an elected official unfairly promotes his “own people” through nepotism or corruption. But it is strangely paternalistic to assume that Indigenous peoples would be unable to delegate political responsibilities

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8 Encontro com Lideranças Indígenas Brasileiras, Conference with Cacique Eunice Antunes (Aldeia indígena Guarani de Morro dos Cavalos), Getúlio Narciso (Cacique Kaingangue), Copacang Tschucambang (Cacique Xokleng/Laklãnõ) and Max Lenoy (JCU). Coordination by R. Devos (UFSC) and comments by A. C. Souza Lima (MN-UFRJ), Florianópolis: UFSC, 2013. See at <transoceanik.paginas.ufsc.br/programme/>.

9 For films and the history of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy movement, see: <[www.creativespirits.info/aboriginal-culture/history/aboriginal-tent-embassy-canberra](http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginal-culture/history/aboriginal-tent-embassy-canberra)>.

among themselves, considering that they have demonstrated their ability to do so, for instance, in the long process that involved, since 1980, regular meetings of indigenous delegates from all over the world to draft the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was adopted by the UN on September 13, 2007.<sup>10</sup> It is true that a process of delegation or election is not an ideal solution for people who have experienced other forms of political organization, but once such groups became forcibly part of a nation-state (Brazil, Australia or France for the indigenous peoples of French Guyana, New Caledonia and so on), new political strategies became necessary. Some of these initiatives were stifled before they came to fruition, while others failed because of colonial and contemporary violence—Indians continue to be killed. Economic exploitation that destroys forests and other resources critical to survival, with various pressures from international companies, also continues to be a source of distress and internal conflict. But history also shows that a large number of creative and highly effective indigenous movements have succeeded in the past. Other forms of politics or cosmopolitics can be imagined, not only by and for indigenous peoples, but also by and for others who feel marginalized or who claim to be “minorities” under the current system. Guattari was interested in the kinds of dynamics created by indigenous peoples and other alternative groups.

### **Guattari’s Cartographies and Warlpiri mapping**

When Peter and I met at the 2007 Guattari Effect Conference, organized in London by Middlesex University, he told me about the conversation he had with Félix Guattari in São Paulo in the 1980s about my work with Aboriginal people. I had participated in the seminar that Félix hosted every week in his Paris apartment, during the years he was drawing on a flipchart diagrams to experiment with us his cartographic meta-model. He was tracking experiences that he could use to test his cartography-in-process, such as my account of Warlpiri cosmology. My method of analyzing the totemic networks as a rhizomatic collective management of myths and dreams projected onto the geography of the desert was a perfect example of what he was calling “existential territories” (virtually real) and “universes of values” (virtually possible), in tension with “machinic phyla/abstract machines” (actually possible) and “energetic flows” (actually real). He called *fonctives*<sup>11</sup> these four polarities of the two axis, actual/virtual and real/possible, that articulate his schizo-analytical cartography. At the conference, Anne Querrien drew this meta-model on a flip-chart, and as her pen travelled across it in different lines, she invited us to

10 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples available at: <[undesadspd.org/indigenouspeoples/declarationontherightsofindigenouspeoples.aspx](http://undesadspd.org/indigenouspeoples/declarationontherightsofindigenouspeoples.aspx)>.

11 The mathematical term *foncteur* in French has also been translated “fonctor” by Brian Holmes.

explore Guattari's multi-layered diagram that, according to her, nobody had yet translated "even into French!"<sup>12</sup> I realized then that I have been guided by Guattari's diagrammatizing process in different ways since he died in 1992. My struggle to explain what Aboriginal people could teach us included not staying trapped in old binary Western categories that oppose nature to culture, body to mind, the individual to the social, and the human to the non-human, as well as traditional to new technologies. These were all traps that Guattari had fought to avoid in a way that was increasingly on the agenda.

Renowned, although sometimes forgotten, for his co-authorship with Gilles Deleuze of the *Anti-Oedipus*, *1000 Plateaus*, and *What is Philosophy?*, Guattari has until recently been less well known for his own work. But in Brazil, his popularity goes back to the 1980s, when during his many travels he spoke with a variety of Brazilian alternative and minority groups, including the Workers Party (PT) and Lula, who was to become the president. The transcripts of some of these meetings were edited in a dialogue with Brazilian psychoanalyst Suely Rolnik, who published them in Portuguese in 1986 as *Micropolítica: Cartografias do desejo*, a book that took twenty years to be translated into English as *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*.<sup>13</sup> In the current decade, thanks to new translations and reprints, many people have discovered his writings and interviews as a visionary approach to a range of fields, especially through his notion of *three ecologies*—mental, social, environmental—that are part of his ecosophical project, a meta-model for action, including political activism and the relationship between micro-politics and globalization that he called "world integrated capitalism."<sup>14</sup> Ecosophy was the driving force behind the 2009 conference *Disaster between Exhaustion and Creation* that I organized with Alexandre Soucaille at the Musée du Quai Branly, in Paris. Peter Pál Pelbart was invited to discuss his philosophical analysis, his work with the actors of the theatre company Ueinz, in São Paulo, and the work presented by the company at the Documenta XII, in Kassel, together with Alejandra Riera. His intellectual, artistic and therapeutic involvement perfectly exemplified what we were attempting to enhance with my team of young researchers, i.e., creative responses to situations of mental, social, and/or environmental disaster.<sup>15</sup>

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12 A. Querrien, "Les cartes et les ritournelles d'une panthère arc-en-ciel" in *Multitudes* n° 34. Paris: 2008, pp. 108-120 (published in English as "Maps and Refrains of a Rainbow Panther" in *The Guattari Effect*. New York: Continuum, 2011, pp. 84-98); B. Glowczewski, "Guattari and Anthropology" in Alliez et al. *The Guattari Effect*, op. cit.

13 F. Guattari and S. Rolnik, *Micropolítica: Cartografias do desejo*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1986. (published in English as *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*. Boston: MIT Press, 2007).

14 G. Genosko, *Félix Guattari. A Critical Introduction*. New York: Pluto Press, 2009; F. Guattari, "The Three Ecologies" in *New Formations* n° 8. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989; *Schizopanalytic cartographies*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. S. Nadaud (ed.), *Ecosophie de Guattari*. Paris: Lignes/Imec, 2013.

15 See B. Glowczewski and A. Soucaille (eds.), *Désastres*. Paris: L'Herne, 2011. See also P. Pelbart, op. cit.

At the time, such ideas were not yet in vogue in France but were slowly making their way for various “Decolonisations of Thinking,” such as advocated by the title of a week organized by the University of Toulouse in July 2011. In the train on my way to this meeting, I was reading a paper on Guattari’s cartographies,<sup>16</sup> and I began to write a series of Aboriginal concepts that struck me as possible correspondences to Guattari’s diagrammatic polarities that he called functives (*foncteurs*). I decided to test this in the seminar at which I was invited to speak in dialogue with Viveiros de Castro. I used Félix’s cartography to rethink not only Aboriginal totemic cosmology but also its recent elaboration by an Aboriginal man, Wanta Jampijinpa, who had made a drawing lesson of his cosmo-vision for YouTube. This Warlpiri teacher, who later became an honored researcher at ANU, had selected five Aboriginal concepts that he drew as a circle connected to four others, according to the Warlpiri diamond in the shape of the Southern cross, an assemblage that would collapse if any of these five “pillars” and their links were broken.<sup>17</sup> It is an indigenous cosmopolitical model responding to global digital society.

Home (*ngurra*, literally “land,” “place” and “camp”) is the first Warlpiri concept drawn as a circle in the sand by Wanta, Law (*kuruwarri*) is the second circle, Ceremony (*Jardiwarnpa* for settling dispute, *Kurdiji*, the “man-making” initiation, and other rituals) is the third, followed by Language (*jaru*) and Family (*warlalja* “my relatives” as extended kin and classificatory relations between people, Dreamings and places). Law is a common expression used by Aboriginal people to translate concepts of different languages that relate to the Dreaming as the foundation of their cosmopolitics. The Warlpiri word *kuruwarri* translates literally as “image,” “mark,” “track” or “trace.” To suggest its cosmological meaning, I have proposed translating it as the “image-forces” and “vital forces” of Dreamings (*Jukurrpa*). In 1980, a young Warlpiri man named Martin Johnson Japanangka said to me “We have no beliefs! We have *kuruwarri*!” I later came to understand that as “traces,” Warlpiri *kuruwarri* are the evidence that an event happened or an action took place. In that sense, traces are always true—only their interpretation is subjective. This is why *kuruwarri* is also translated as the Law. Anything named in nature and culture can be a Dreaming, i.e., a totem that has its “traces” or *kuruwarri*, image-forces in the land, mythical itineraries, narratives, songlines, or geographical trails,

16 B. Holmes, *Guattari’s Schizoanalytic Cartographies or: the Pathic Core at the Heart of Cybernetics*, available at: <brianholmes.wordpress.com/2009/02/27/guattaris-schizoanalytic-cartographies/>.

17 See drawings in: B. Glowczewski, *Décoloniser l’anthropologie: agencements et réseaux existentiels des peuples autochtones*. Filmed Conference and Debate. Toulouse: FIPS, 2011. *Décolonisations de la pensée: Anthropologie, philosophie et politique. Leçons Deleuzo-guattariennes*. Toulouse: Erraphis, Université de Toulouse Le Mirail. Available at: <www.youtube.com/watch?v=EN5NmPIGX6M>.



punctuated by such places as springs, rocks, or hills. All of these places are identified by toponyms whose names are assigned by mythical beings who are also called Dreamings. They continue to “become” in all of these sacred places and to dream the life on earth. In other words, all of life on earth is dreamt by the Dreamings.

Plants, as well as phenomena such as rain or an attribute like invincibility are considered “animate” in the same way that animals or humans are animate, particular Dreamings inhabit them and allow them to perpetuate themselves; this is not so much an “animism” that would attribute a soul to everything in the universe that is named, but instead a form of “vitalism” that postulates intimate links between things on which life depends. The sites that the ancestral beings named and marked with their bodies are also said to be inhabited by their presence for all eternity.<sup>18</sup>

Guattari used as an example of “Existential territories” the way the Warlpiri and other Desert people in Central Australia connect, map and assemble through dreams and ritual interpretations of inherited narratives, songs and designs (*kuruwarri*, the Law), the multiple networks of totemic stories embodied in the landscape, transforming thus a multiplicity of Jukurrpa lines into a metamorphic Jukurrpa, Dreaming as space-time. Existential territories (virtually real) are in an affective feedback relationship with “Universes of reference and value,” which Guattari also called “Incorporeal universes” or “Constellations of aesthetic refrains” (virtually possible), a relationship he defined as enunciation or subjective deterritorialization. Aboriginal totemic songs (language as a Universe of Value) are examples of such refrains and their relation to the *kuruwarri* Law reflects a form of nostalgia that is at the heart of the semi-nomadic spiritual attachment to a land that people always used to depart from and come back to. But contemporary life also introduces new universes of value, such as the redefinition of Dreamings through art, negotiations for rights, protection of land, mining, Christianity, or digital images. All of these new constellations can either reinforce spiritual attachment to existential territories or threaten them with destruction bringing pain, madness, violence or suicide.

For Guattari, universes of value are in a propositional discursive relationship with “abstract machines, or phyla/phylums” (actually possible) while existential territories have an energetic discursive relationship with “the economy of flows,” including libido, signifier, capital labor, but also blood and other corporeal or material flows from the earth, like water or wind (actually real).

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18 B. Glowczewski, *Du Rêve à la Loi chez les Aborigènes. Mythes, rites et organisation sociale en Australie*. Paris: PUF, 1991, p. 26. Free upload on: <[repositorio.ufsc.br/handle/123456789/99708](http://repositorio.ufsc.br/handle/123456789/99708)>.

In the case of Aboriginal practices, I understand ceremonies and circulation of ritual goods as examples of flows; kinship relations and classifications are examples of machinic phyla that I have analyzed using topological devices such as the hypercube. Since colonization, Indigenous peoples have been swollen by capitalistic flows and forced to contend with other abstract machines like government policies and various institutions and technologies. For Guattari the tension between phyla and flows involves a process of objective deterritorialization. This entails conflictual assemblages (*agencements*) of inherited, present, conscious, and unconscious flows that are involved in varying relationships of tension and transformation with the other three polarities. Land is another form of flow that for Aboriginal people has become a source less of food than of royalties from mining, with possible risks of destruction and current threats to other resources (including water, animals, and plants), as well as dispossession, and displacement. Similarly, traditional circulations of food, hair, and blood at initiations and death have incorporated money in rituals, also shared through kin obligations and gambling. Many people depend on the art market and other aspects of the integrated global economy, including the current ongoing impact of colonization and government policies such as welfare, payment cards, criminalization, suicide, and so on.<sup>19</sup> Expressing matters in this way merely serves as an invitation to think in a diagrammatic way to try to understand the tensions at work through the four Guattarian functives. What makes Indigenous Australians resist and insist on claiming a spiritual relationship with the land despite changes in their mode of existence from semi-nomadic to forced sedentarization with all the current economical and social pressures? How can deterritorialization be the source of their reanchoring in existential territories? Or, on the contrary, threaten their lives with despair, violence, and even death. Wanta, the Warlpiri man, answers in his own way when he says that if one of the five pillars—home, language, law, ceremony or family—is not strong and connected to the others, everything collapses, and there is no Warlpiri anymore. For him the pillars are mirrored as stars in the Southern Cross, with the vertical axis being the Digging stick Dreaming that announces in September the season for *Puurda* yams, a time of the year also called the waking Emu, seen as the Blackhole in the Milky Way, two other Dreamings which like all things in nature and culture have their songline and pathway on the earth.

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19 See B. Glowczewski, "From academic heritage to Aboriginal priorities: anthropological responsibilities," in *Revista de Antropologia*, v. 4. São Carlos: UFSCar, 2012. Available at: <issuu.com/raufscar/docs/r\_uv4n2/9>.

## Freudian phantasies and Warlpiri myths

Two weeks before his death, in an interview in Paris with a Brazilian psychoanalyst, Jô Gondar, and the philosopher Rogério da Costa, Guattari positioned on his cartography four Freudian phantasies—fusion, seduction, primal scene and castration—that he called driving (*pulsionnelles*) matrices. Thus the return to the maternal breast/fusion is not understood by him as a maternal phantasy but a chaotic dimension which corresponds to non corporeal universes (possible and virtual), seduction is a relation of flows and “identification in which there is an object but not really a subject, where there is an object-subject (real and actual), “not allowing the creation of something outside of this flowing character.” The primal scene for Guattari is “precisely the machine of representation that always occupies the third pole, a third term; there is a pole in relation to another heterogeneous pole which is related through an instance of communication, an instance of exchange: the machinic phylum.” Finally, Guattari says that the castration fantasy, which he rejects along with the Oedipal triangle, is “something that implies not only the *positionality* of three terms, but also the autopositionality of the self in relation to the self: that is to say autopoiesis, positionality of an existential territory” (real and virtual). For Guattari, drive is the main component which allows one to “recover the originary phantasies of Freudianism, but on a very different ontological substrate, one that is entirely different, completely separate from this biological anchoring.”<sup>20</sup>

During Peter Pál Pelbart and Suely Rolnik’s seminar in São Paulo, in 2013,<sup>21</sup> I was stimulated to try to analyse articulations between different Warlpiri myths according to tensions “same but different”—as many Aboriginal people say—to the way in which Guattari has repositioned the four Freudian fantasies on his cartography. For the Warlpiri, seduction is best illustrated by the many myths about transgression of the strongest taboo among Australian Aboriginal groups—relations between mother-in-law and son-in-law, who are not allowed to talk to each other or even cross footprints in the bush. Interestingly, this taboo gives women the power to interfere to stop a fight between two men, when one at least is a son-in-law; for a woman coming close to a son-in-law (or a potential son-in-law through classificatory kinship) brings so much shame to the man that he will stop fighting to run away in order to avoid being mocked. Men and women in this avoidance relationship are committed to exchange food

20 F. Guattari, interview by R. da Costa e J. Gondar in his Paris flat, 12 August 1992. Available at: <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkqmpcOHk1Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkqmpcOHk1Y)>. The French transcript was published in *Chimères* n° 20. Paris: 1993. And in A. Moura (ed.), *As pulsões*. São Paulo: Escuta, 1995. See translated in English in P. Pál Pelbart, op. cit.

21 B. Glowczewski, Seminar Dos espaços de sonhos dos Warlpiri (no deserto central da Australia): aos territórios existencias de Guattari e agenciamentos em conflito. São Paulo: PUC, 2013.

(yams for meat). This exchange is the basis of all exchanges and is mediated by the wife, daughter of the mother-in-law. This “in-law Dreaming” taboo and its transgressions—for instance, many sexual relations in mythical narratives—are at the heart of the “real and actual,” the flows (*flux*). What is at stake in this sexuality is that if a girl who is promised as a future mother-in-law to a boy who is initiated becomes pregnant by the boy, he would have to marry his own daughter in the future. In other words, the seduction fantasy of the mother-in-law taboo masks a father/daughter “real and actual” incest.

The castration fantasy—as opposed to what Roheim wrote about Aboriginal people when he was sent by Freud to test the Oedipal complex—is best exemplified for the Warlpiri by the myth of Invincible, the incestuous Man who married his daughters, as well as the daughters of his daughters, and forbade them to keep their sons. In other words, he was preventing the emergence of any form of alliance and diachronicity of generations, as his daughters became his wives and later his mothers-in-law. He was eventually reduced to sterility by a fatal blow to his testicles, from which pus (*kurra*, in Warlpiri) spread at a place of that name, a sacred site with a great quantity of gold (his pus according to the Warlpiri). The Invincible Dreaming is the father of all shamans, in other words, his power to overcome time through incest is an Existential territory that is “real but virtual.”

The revenge that led to his disempowerment was caused by two of his sons, who were hidden from him by his women. They grew on their own until they became the Two Men (*Watikutjarra*), a Dreaming pair celebrated by all of the tribes of Central and Western Australia. The Two men played with the quartz or crystal stones in a way that created different kinship systems that they dispatched along the way of their travels to the different language groups they met (tricking men into the complexity of having to find ways to “translate” their kinship systems to be able to communicate between themselves, like the Babel Tower). The quartz stones also gave them the healing power of all shamans (*mapanpa* or *ngangkayi*), who can see “through” the body to heal it. Their father, Invincible, was transformed into the constellation Orion, which is significant during the male circumcision ritual, while his wife-daughters escaped to become the Pleiades or Seven Sisters, a Dreaming shared by every desert tribe. The Two Men Dreaming mythical narrative functions as what Guattari called an “abstract machine” (actual and possible): The primal scene for the Warlpiri is not so much seeing the mother and father engaged in intercourse, but surviving the rejection of their incestuous and Invincible father, a bit like the Greek myth of Chronos who devoured all of his own children.

Finally, the functive of “universes of values” as “fusion fantasy” is operating in various myths with free women, like the Seven Sisters who escaped

their incestuous father, or the Willy Wagtail who kept an adult son in her belly,<sup>22</sup> as well as Two Kajirri Mothers (related to a ceremony coming from the Kunapipi Two Sisters of the North coastal Yolngu people). It could also be applied to the pack of Digging-stick Women who lived without men, hunted with spears, and initiated boys—a perfect chaosmosis or fusion—until some men who could not hunt or have children used a seduction trick to take away the women’s knowledge of initiation, hunting, and their children. In this way, the men would in turn initiate the boys and marry the girls. Mythical women with “hyper-powers” echo other mythical narratives around the world, including the famous Amazonian “hyper-women.”<sup>23</sup> It is worth noting that just as “hyper-women” are important figures for Kuikuro women, female rituals in the central and western deserts of Australia specifically seek to transform women into “hyper-women,” allowing them during their secret ceremonies to “become” the Dreaming figures of the myth that can live without men because they are like “women-men.” In their secret rituals, men do parallel work to become “hyper-men.” This does not simply involve trans-sexuality or androgyny, because “men-women” are not like “women-men.” There are as many forms of hyper-heroes as there are Dreamings, hybrids of animals, plants, fire, and rain, i.e., agencies that express the reign of heterogeneous subjectivities at work in totemic becomings.

In my early writings on Aboriginal people I have stressed my fascination with the way they combine multiple identities—totemic “becomings,” kinship roles, symbolic androgyny, and so on—and play with intersubjectivity not only between humans but also with all elements of their environment, which are perceived as acting in interaction with humans. All these elements are *animated*, not in the sense of being inhabited by a soul, but propelled in dynamic relations, which are transformed, each time changing the interacting elements slightly, be they humans, animals, plants, minerals, objects or ideas.<sup>24</sup>

The notion of “animism” refers to the Latin “*anima*,” or soul. The Christian concept restricts the soul to humans, and in colonial history only to Christians, as illustrated by old debates about whether Indians possess a soul or not. In Australia, there have also been eugenicist “theories” that question Aboriginal

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22 See B. Glowczewski, *Rêves en colère. Avec les Aborigènes australiens*. Paris: Plon, Terre Humaine, 2004. Dreaming myth narrated by B. G. Nakamarra in the chapter called “Leçon de psychanalyse.”

23 *As hiper-mulheres*, documentary film directed by C. Fausto, L. Sette and T. Kuikuro (80 min). São Paulo: Vitrine filmes, 2012. See also the filmed play by Kiukuro women of the Men who become “pigs” (pecari), *Porcos Raivosos*. Directed by I. Penoni and L. Sette (10 min). Pernambuco: Lucinda Filmes, 2012. Available at: <vimeo.com/48182481>. A. Villela *Mythe et fiction dans les productions filmiques amérindiennes*. Paris: Seminar EHESS, 2014.

24 B. Glowczewski, “Between spectacle and politics: Indigenous singularities” in B. Glowczewski and R. Henry (eds.), *The Challenge of Indigenous Peoples*. Oxford: Bardwell Press, 2011, pp. 1-23.

people's humanity, and thus their capacity to possess a soul. An awkward anthropological interpretation argued as late as in the 1960s that women have no soul according to the Aboriginal worldview. This misunderstanding was partly due to a projection of the Judeo-Christian notion of the soul that prevented ethnographers from understanding situations in which men and women in the same society have gender-restricted rituals and express their "spiritual" experiences differently. Strong presuppositions concerning what is spiritually conceivable can prevent recognition of a worldview and practices that pursue a different logic. Even the Jungian approach to "imagining" a universal, double-gendered, archetypal soul (anima/animus) is unable to accommodate or explain the complex ways that different societies have developed to conceive of the multiple material manifestations of spirits, which not only change with gender but that multiply "genders," including into various animal and other forms of agency like rain, wind or stars, as deployed by Australian totemic becomings. Tim Ingold says:

Animism is often described as the imputation of life to inert objects. Such imputation is more typical of people in western societies who dream of finding life on other planets than of indigenous peoples to whom the label of animism has classically been applied. These peoples are united not in their beliefs but in a way of being that is alive and open to a world in continuous birth. In this animic ontology, beings do not propel themselves across a ready-made world but rather issue forth through a world-in-formation, along the lines of their relationships. To its inhabitants this weather-world, embracing both sky and earth, is a source of astonishment but not surprise. Re-animating the "western" tradition of thought means recovering the sense of astonishment banished from official science.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout my work, I have shown that Aboriginal totemic itineraries—called Dreaming lines and songlines—are dynamic and constantly in motion, various forms of "becomings" that are not bounded by the human body and do not isolate animal bodies, plants, or minerals from the environment. Atmospheric and cosmic phenomena such as the wind, the rain, stars, the moon are all image-forces that, like other totems, are Dreaming lines of the same "kind" as animal or vegetable ones. They all propel various becomings into human and non-human forms, including features of landscape. In other words, there are both lines and place markers. I do not use "space" as a mere container for "place," but instead like in the expression "cyberspace" and, in the case of the Dreamings, as "space-time" or "time-space," in resonance with the relativity implied by astrophysics, nevertheless with very material consequences for survival on earth:

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25 T. Ingold, "Rethinking the animate, re-animating thought" in *Ethnos*, n° 71. London: Routledge, 2005, pp. 9-20.

Conception and experience of time and space in the desert are relative, almost in a non-Euclidian way. For example, a pathway linking three waterholes spread over 100 kilometers is relatively longer than another 100 kilometers pathway crossing a country with no waterholes. This relativity comes from the speed at which you need to travel at in order to survive. You need to go fast to reach the next waterhole before being too thirsty, but you can slow down or stop if there is water on the way.<sup>26</sup>

### **Dreaming, Becoming, and Transforming**

The first text, “Warlpiri Dreamings spaces” (*Espaces de rêve: Les Warlpiri*), included in this book, is a translation of two seminar discussions I had with Félix Guattari in 1983 and 1985 that were initially published in the first issue of the journal *Chimères*, founded by Guattari in 1987. The transcription of our dialog and questions from the audience reflect the complexity of trying to translate the Central Australian Warlpiri notion of dream and Dreaming, *Jukurrpa*, on the basis of a western understanding of dream restricted to sleeping visions. Dreaming spaces for desert Aboriginal people include ritual, myth, and oneiric experience of encounters with ancestral totemic spirits who are also material agents becoming in all animated forms and feature of the land and the sky. I would like to thank Abrahão de Oliveira Santos for so enthusiastically translating these two seminars into Portuguese. I was moved to discover that in 2010 they inspired him to create a course at Fluminense University in which his students participate in workshops of collective management of dreams, one of which I was fortunate enough to attend in 2013.<sup>27</sup>

Examples of Warlpiri dreaming creativity and ritual healing process are included in this book with six chapters from *Desert Dreamers (Les Rêveurs du désert)*, first published in 1989), that read almost like a novel. It is a reflexive account of my everyday life as well as my doubts and learning process while sharing the women’s camp in Lajamanu and during trips into the bush with Warlpiri people in 1979, 1983, 1984, and again in 1988. The chapter entitled “The Hypercube” relates the Warlpiri’s reaction to this topological model when I presented my second doctoral dissertation to them.

An extract of the published version of this thesis, *From Dream to Law among Aboriginal people*<sup>28</sup> is translated here from French. The book is a highly theoretical essay in which the hypercube is used to map my own and ancient

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26 Glowczewski B. “Lines and Criss-crossings: Hyperlinks in Australian Indigenous Narratives” in *Media International Australia*, n° 116. Brisbane: University of Queensland, 2005, pp. 24-35. Includes a DVD containing extracts from the interactive film *Quest in Aboriginal Land*, 2002.

27 A. de Oliveira Santos “Gestion collective des rêves: extractions déterritorialisées” in *L’Unebêvue*, n° 31. Paris: Lunebêvue-éditeur, 2014, pp. 151-170.

28 B. Glowczewski, *Du Rêve à la Loi chez les Aborigènes*, op. cit.

Warlpiri ethnographies of cosmological geography, social organization, rituals, and taboos in comparison to similar questions among other Aboriginal groups of Australia. The extract focuses on the Warlpiri concepts of *kankarlu* (above/public) and *kanunju* (below/secret), a pair that since the 1980s I translated into French (and English) as a double process of transformation between “actual” and “virtual,” the key to understanding rituals as “acting and becoming.” This double process of actualization and virtualization in the Warlpiri understanding of life reproduction is part of the non-dualistic paradigm that Deleuze was sensitive to when reading my book as well as Deligny’s wander lines:

This is why the imaginary and the real must be, rather, like two juxtaposeable or superimposable parts of a single trajectory, two faces that ceaselessly interchange with one another, a mobile mirror. Thus the Australian Aborigines link nomadic itineraries to dream voyages, which together compose “an interstitching of routes” in an immense cut-out (*découpe*) of space and time that must be read like a map.<sup>29</sup>

“The paradigm of Indigenous Australians: anthropological phantasies, artistic creations, and political resistance,” republished here from an art catalogue of a 2007 exhibit,<sup>30</sup> discusses Aboriginal re-appropriation of their own representation versus various Western discourses. It includes a critical comment of the then recent ontological theory of the French anthropologist, Philippe Descola, a specialist of Achuar in Venezuela, who has a long-term dialogue with Viveiros de Castro about ontological categories.

In the 1990s, I initiated a multimedia, collaborative digital project with Warlpiri people. I was struck by the cognitive similarity between the reticular network of Dreaming songlines and the emerging hyperlink mapping of the Internet.<sup>31</sup> The ways in which our “technology” of perception was changing was in fact helping us to “see” how Aboriginal mental maps were closer to our reticular way of thinking than to an analogical, dualist vision of the world.

My constant challenge is to defend the idea that Indigenous people of Australia are not remnants of prehistory, but that they have developed different conceptual tools that still anchor their ontological perspective. One of these tools is inspired, like in many Pacific Ocean societies, by their knowledge and management of yams and their rhizomes. They have been experimenting for

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29 G. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*. New York: Verso, 1997, p. 63, quoting B. Glowczewski, *Du Rêve à la Loi* op. cit. I had taken Deleuze’s course at the Université Paris VIII to complete a master’s degree in cinema and philosophy in 1978, before going to Australia.

30 Glowczewski in G. Le Roux and L. Strivay (eds.), *La revanche des genres/The Revenge of Genre*, bilingual art catalogue. Paris: Ainu Editions, 2007. Revised by John Angell for this book.

31 B. Glowczewski, “We have a dreaming’ How to translate existential territories through digital tools,” in A. Corn, S. O’Sullivan, L. Ormond-Parker, K. Obata (eds.) *Information Technology and Indigenous Communities*. Canberra: AIATSIS Research publications, 2013 (Conference 2010). Free upload: <[www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/booksmonographs.html](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/booksmonographs.html)>.



a long time with mental mapping and reticular ways of seeing, not as metaphors, but as conceptually and materially constant metamorphoses. The West, on the other hand, only “rediscovered” a reticular way of thinking (which questions the binary categories of Western science and humanities) when technology was transformed by the development of the WEB. In other words, technology—the technical machine—has transformed the Western paradigm (even if many people still function according to old dualistic paradigms) into a new perspective in which things are seen via nodes and threading lines within networks, and as changing according to the position and movements of the viewer. This does not signify cultural relativism, but the ability to project heterogeneous ways of interacting, with different definitions of “inside” and “outside,” moving boundaries, and blurred interfaces within an ability to create new ruptures and bifurcations as well as new alliances and fusions, such as the continuity of the Möbius strip.

This quest that I have pursued for 35 years with a specific interpretation of the Aboriginal totemic cartography of “dreamings” is not far from issues discussed by Viveiros de Castro, who recently said “Aboriginal Dreaming is *like* perspectivism.” But is Aboriginal Dreaming totemism a form of animist perspectivism?

### **Australian and Afro-Brazilian ontological cosmopolitics**

Theories of “animism” have been contrasted with theories of “totemism,” based on the postulate of a universal typology of religious systems, that could classify relationships with spirits of the dead, ancestral animal spirits or other empowered or divine entities, and related social organization including kinship, marriage rules and taboos. I apply the words “totems” and “totemism” to the Australian context because it is primarily on the basis of Aboriginal ethnography that these terms were discussed in the history of anthropology. But my use of totemism in relation to “Dreamings” is part of a critique of “classical” understandings as popularized by Durkheim and Mauss and their followers.<sup>32</sup> Consequently I have no problem using “animism” in the Aboriginal context, on condition that it is redefined in a way that corresponds to their time-space values and concepts:

The Dreaming is what gives men the best intuition of what this parallel dimension can be. The analogy here is far more than a simple extrapolation of the existence of spirits of the living and the dead based on visions of their images during sleep,

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32 B. Glowczewski “Rejouer les savoirs anthropologiques: de Durkheim aux Aborigènes” in *Horizontes Antropológicos*, n° 41. Porto Alegre: UFRGS, 2014, pp. 381-403 (paper presented at the International Conference *Durkheim et Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, ENS: June 2012).

as the old theory of animism postulated. Instead, it involves a complex reflection on the universe that the Aboriginal peoples developed over thousands of years by transposing their conception of the universe into every aspect of society. In the light shed by the most recent research in astrophysics, which relativizes time in space and topologically interrogates the shape of the universe, even asking whether there might not be several of them, Aboriginal cosmology seems to call into question, almost like a challenge, our quest for the human mind.<sup>33</sup>

Guattari used the term animism to refer to the shamanistic and other experiences involving “altered” consciousness of various indigenous peoples—in Amazonia (mostly through the work of his friends Jaulin and Clastres), as well as in Australia (as he understood their subjectivity through my work)—but also for any humans experiencing a “becoming other” process, a process that he and Deleuze called the animal, plant, or machine becoming. The exhibit *Animism* that toured several European contemporary art events was the perfect context for a three-channel installation dedicated to Guattari, *Assemblages*, a co-creation of the artist Angela Melitopoulos with the sociologist and philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato. The three vertical screens combined various visual archives, including extracts of Deligny’s film *Le moindre geste*, a performance by Japanese artist, Min Tanaka, at the La Borde clinic and interviews with Peter Pál Pelbart, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Rosângela “Janja” Araújo, Jean-Claude Polack, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Eric Alliez, Suely Rolnik and myself.<sup>34</sup> In a text written with extracts from all of the people interviewed for the *Assemblages* installation, the authors emphasize Guattari’s recognition of animistic subjectivity as a potential way of redefining contemporary subjectivity and note that for him: “Aspects of polysemic, trans-individual, and animist subjectivity also characterize the world of childhood, of psychosis, of amorous or political passion, and of artistic creation.”<sup>35</sup>

They remind us of the ways in which Guattari extended Varela’s notion of auto-poietic “machines which continuously engender and specify their own assemblage:”

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33 B. Glowczewski, *Du Rêve à La Loi*, op. cit., p. 313.

34 Presented in 2010 at the 60<sup>th</sup> Berlin Internationale Film Festival and as part of the exhibit *Animism* at Kunsthalle, Bern, Extra City Kunsthal Antwerpen and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Antwerp; in 2011, at the Generali Foundation, in Vienna, and, in 2012, at the *Animismus* exhibit, Das Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, where David Abram, cultural ecologist and philosopher from New Mexico, suggested in his lecture, *The Speech of Things and the Commonwealth of Breath*, that “animism, first and foremost, is a way of speaking in close accordance with the spontaneous life of our bodily senses.”

35 A. Melitopoulos and M. Lazzarato, “Machinic animism” in *Animism*. Taiwan: NCU, 2010, pp. 45-57. Available on: <film.ncu.edu.tw/word/Machinic\_Animism.pdf>; statements from interviews on: <www.e-flux.com/journal/assemblages-Félix-guattari-and-machinic-animism>.

Varela reserves the *autopoïétique* for the biological domain in reproducing the distinction between living and non-living which is at the foundations of the Western paradigm, whereas Guattari extends the term to social machines, technical machines, aesthetic machines, crystalline machines etc.<sup>36</sup>

Another of Varela's notions, enaction, inspired me to transliterate the power of self-generation and acting of Aboriginal rituals and their ongoing performance in a process of re-engendering of the actual (*kankarlu* in Warlpiri) into the virtual (*kanunju*), and vice versa. I did not conceive of rituals as cyclical repetitions, but as keys to understanding the production of new life, humans, animals, plants, and climate, as well as cultural innovations concerning ritual songs, paintings, dances that are anchored in ancient tracks but reactivated within new, self-referential forms and assemblages:

Whether the person is painted with his totem or another, he or she leaves the register of his/her social identity to enter into a cosmological otherness (*laterite*) that melds him/her to the Dreaming, the space-time as law comprising all totemic beings (...) Aboriginal mythical heroes, as totemic names, are concepts that men unfold in stories on one hand, and on the other hand generate from one another in a process of *feed-back* which constantly modifies them so that they reflect and integrate the factual.<sup>37</sup>

As summarized by Venezuelan anthropologist José Kelly, Descola, in a paper of 1996 redefined the concept of animism as the inversion of totemism:

Later Viveiros de Castro (1998) suggested that what Descola had been calling animism was best described as MP (multinatural perspectivism), and that due to its particular nature/culture and universal/particular configuration, it was in fact an inversion of Western naturalism (and therefore multiculturalism) rather than totemism. Descola (2005) converges with this point, even if he holds an ongoing debate as to the geographical distribution of the MP phenomenon with respect to what he calls 'standard animism,' and thus disputes whether it is MP or animism that could be seen as an essential feature of Amerindian socio-cosmologies and conceptual imaginations.<sup>38</sup>

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36 Ibid., p. 49

37 B. Glowczewski, "Rêver n'est pas rêver: autoréférence dans la cosmologie des Aborigènes d'Australie" in *Les Cahiers du CREA*, n° 16. Paris: CREA, 1993, pp. 123-140.

38 J. A. Kelly Luciani, "Perspectivismo multicultural como transformação estrutural" in *Revista Ilha*, vol. 12, n° 1. Florianópolis: UFSC, 2010, pp. 137-160; Kelly quoted P. Descola, "Constructing natures" in P. Descola and G. Pálsson (eds.), *Nature and Society, Anthropological perspectives*. London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 82-102; and *Par-delà nature et culture*. Paris: Gallimard, 2005; E. Viveiros de Castro, "Cosmological deixis and Amerindian perspectivism" in *JRAI* v. 4, n° 3. London: 1998, pp. 469-488.

In the 2005 French version of *Beyond Nature and Culture*, Descola redefined totemism not as an inversion of animism, but as an inversion of analogism, creating a universal model with four ontologies.<sup>39</sup> In the new model, his old definition of totemism becomes naturalism (Western multiculturalism for Viveiros de Castro) opposed to animism (multinatural perspectivism for Viveiros de Castro), defined as a continuity between the human and the non-human at the “internal” level (animal spirits live “like” humans), but not at the material level (humans are not animals). In this second version, totemism is defined as continuity or lack of differentiation at all levels—between nature and culture, humans and non-humans, physically (materially), and at the level of interiority. It is opposed to analogism, in which everything is discontinuous at the physical and interior level as exemplified, according to Descola, by Chinese divination, African geomancy, and Afro-American cults, for instance when a Candomblé initiate is ridden by his *Orixá*, or a witch is inhabited by his or her demon:

In short, analogical subjects seem to be back-to-front versions of Pascal’s God: their circumference is everywhere, their centre nowhere (...) they are fragmented into multiple parts that never form a stable whole (...) However, given the need, day in and day out, to ensure that singularities are all collected into an effective hierarchy, most mechanisms of aggregation and subordination remain very abstract. This is why the political function becomes decisive in analogical collectives, particularly when very numerous items are involved. It is through the political function and the coercion that it exerts that every individual, every segment, and every aspect of the world is kept in the place fixed for it.<sup>40</sup>

If African-American cults exhibit hierarchical patterns of organization, it does not necessarily mean that a system of analogical differences leads to abusive forms of domination, coercion or empires such as the Inca example provided by Descola. In circumstances of political resistance, the enactment of a power of singularity and heterogeneity—as encouraged in Afro-Brazilian trance cults—can be more important than the eventual hierarchy that accompanies such becomings. In that sense, such features of what Descola defines as specific to analogism, where all levels are discontinuous, can be found in Australian forms of totemism, understood as I propose not as a fixed state of essentialized totemic categories, but as a process of metamorphoses in becoming.

Martin Holbraad seems to come to a similar conclusion regarding Cuban Divination:

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39 P. Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013.

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 299 and 302.

Deities (including the *oddu* and their mythical path) are so powerful precisely because they are defined as the kinds of beings that can traverse ontological distance—indeed, I argued, they are trajectories of ontological traversal. Alterity in this sense, is internal and constitutive to them.<sup>41</sup>

Guattari's enthusiasm for Aboriginal totemic cartography and my own 35 year passion in attempting to explain its reticular relevance to today's world both stem from the fact that totemism is constantly reproducing heterogeneity, i.e., discontinuities, which are not reduced to the differentiation of local groups, but (expand) to the way in which people constantly recreate their subjectivity in relation to others and to places, using dreams as part of that process. In other words, if the continuity of everything is a "mythical" state, a kind of sleeping state of the eternal Dreamings, the active story-telling of myth, the enactment in rituals, and tracking in dreams aim at creating discontinuities and transversality that bring life into being in the face of death.

After witnessing hundreds of Aboriginal totemic rituals in which people "become" the totems that are given as their "dreamings" since birth or initiation, I was surprised to see in Brazil some episodes in the Umbanda rituals that seemed to present certain features that I thought were specific to Australia. In fact, both kinds of ritual respond in their own way to Guattari's definition of "I is another, a multiplicity of others, embodied at the intersection of partial components of enunciation, overflowing individuated identity and the organized body in all directions."<sup>42</sup>

I met many Brazilians who have been at least once to a Candomblé or Umbanda house of a *pai* or *mãe de santo* (father or mother of saint) for a divination with cowrie shells and stones to find out which *Orixá* (sometimes two or more) they carry "inside" them as a virtuality that may or may not be actualized. It takes a relatively long initiation for the "medium" to be ready for his/her *Orixá* to manifest during the cult. Certain people choose not to engage in this process, while others, even after initiation may never experience it. In other words, "becoming *orixá*" appears different from the notion of a body being passively possessed as the vehicle for an *Orixá*. People talk about being incorporated, receiving a shade or "working" as a medium.

And these should not be treated only as representations (the thunderbolt representing the *Orixá* *Iansã*), relations of ownership (the sea belongs to the *Orixá* *Iemanjá*) or control (sickness being provoked and controlled by *Omolú*), but a very complex

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41 Martin Holbraad, *Truth in motion. The Recursive Anthropology of Cuban Divination*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012.

42 F. Guattari, *Chaosmose*, op. cit., p. 117 (english trans. p. 83).

form of assemblage. In a certain sense, the sea is Iemanjá, the thunderbolt and the wind are Iansã, and sickness is Omolu. Nature, culture, human beings and the cosmos, all appear articulated in this system.<sup>43</sup>

In Umbanda, a similar process applies to spirits of the dead who are defined as “families” of inhabitants mostly from Brazil but also from other countries, like Guarani people from Uruguay or soldiers from Ancient Rome. Out of the many families or phalanges of spirits. I only witnessed evenings dedicated to Caboclo (Indians), Preto Velho (old black slaves), Beijada (spirits of children), or Pombajiras paired with Exu. Some of these spirits have the personal names of actual people or people who were considered real in the past.<sup>44</sup> Like *Orixás*, the spirits of the dead have their own colors, which are worn by the initiated dancers (green for Caboclo, pink and light blue for Beijada). When a dancer is incorporated by one of these “enchanted” spirits (*encantados*), he or she moves and behaves with specific gestures characterizing one or the other of the spirits. The expression “en-chanted” is not only about the wonder of such manifestations, but also evokes the importance of song, as a non-discursive, asignifying element that allows the transformation of affect into effect. It is worth asking whether this process is not an actualization of a virtual state that any receptive individual who feels inhabited can experience.

“I is another” opens here into a series of possible ancestral figures, *Orixás* and the spirits of the dead, which are like ontological states of being, acting as typical statements about life in relation to all aspects of the social, urban, and natural environments. However the particular attributions in terms of colors, objects, medicinal plants, atmospheric elements, places, clothes, and the temperaments of various Afro-Brazilian figures, including the equivalences of some of their attributes with certain Christian saints, resonates with a form of totemic becomings. As a matter of fact each Aboriginal Dreaming also bears cosmological characteristics related to a series of connections and cartographies of subjectivization. The Afro-Brazilian cults like Australian ones are “animist,” if we redefine “animism” as this individual and collective production of subjectivity that is literally processing traumatic memory and history into

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43 M. Goldman “Formas do Saber e Modos do Ser: multiplicidade e ontologia no Candomblé” in *Religião e Sociedade*, v. 25, nº 2. Rio de Janeiro: IUPERJ, 2005, pp. 102-120. Quoted by M. Bondi, “Things of Africa: Rethinking Candomblé in Brazil” in *Working Paper*, nº 2. London: UCL, 2009. Special thanks to Clarissa Alcantara and Abrahão Santos for noticing two mistakes of translation that are corrected here: “thunderbolt” instead of “sunray” for *raio* and “assemblage” instead of “negociation” for *agenciamento*.

44 For Abílio Noé Da Silveira, *zelador de santo* (custodian, caretaker of the saint as he prefers to be called rather than “father”) of Tenda espírita Vô Cirina (spiritual house of umbanda-angola in Florianópolis), the spirits of the dead can change their names and their family names (Exu becoming Preto Velho). My acknowledgements to Abílio, and the other members of his house, for their warm welcome in 2013 and in 2015. And also all my gratitude to Clarissa Alcantara, for her help in the translation of the interviews.

a political mode of subjectivization that is attempting to change, not the past, but the possibility of a different future.<sup>45</sup>

José Carlos dos Anjos explains that the political philosophy of Afro-Brazilian religiosity displays “another possibility of articulation for the ethnical-racial differences” with “another cosmopolitics different from those that just inform the sense of nation:”

The ideology of racial democracy fertilized an entire image of Brazil as a country of syncretism and of racial miscegenation. For this ideology, the image of the intersection of differences is closer to the biological model, in which different species blend together, resulting in a “mulatto” synthesis. Afro-Brazilian religiosity has a different model for the encounter of differences that is rhizomatic: the crossroads as a meeting place of different roads that do not blend to form a single entity but that continue as a plurality.<sup>46</sup>

Carlos dos Anjos refers to Deleuze and Guattari commenting on the notions of race, cultures, and gods as effects that traverse fields of intensity and calling for the theory of proper nouns to be conceived not as representations, but as “effects.”<sup>47</sup> He then advocates considering the houses of Afro-Brazilian cults, *terreiros*, as spaces for “nomadic journeys which are dessentialized but racialized,” “a paradoxal equation for Western thought, which is not taken into account in the ring of the national identity reconstruction.” And he concludes that it is “possible to have political compensations on the basis of race, without essentialism, as well as an ethnic heritage.”<sup>48</sup>

In Australia over the years, I have observed a doublebinded racial essentialism that rejects its Indigenous people based on their skin colour. They are discriminated against for being too Black to fit in white society or “not Black enough” (due to years of generational mix with lighter people) to be recognized their right to claim their Aboriginality.<sup>49</sup> Although essentialism has been criticized in our disciplines, it has reinserted itself through perverse reasoning that consists of asserting that when Indigenous peoples and the descendants of slaves or other colonized populations, as well as survivors of historical

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45 “Animism” is not to be understood here as a non authentic spiritual state. On the contrary it refers to the multiplicity of the “living” in spiritual life.

46 C. dos Anjos, “A filosofia política da religiosidade afro-Brasileira como patrimônio cultural africano” in *Debates do NER*, nº 13, Porto Alegre: UFRGS, 2008, p. 80.

47 G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *L'Anti-Édipe*. Paris: Minuit, 1972, p. 103.

48 C. dos Anjos, op. cit.

49 I entitled my previous book *Rêves en colère. Avec les Aborigènes australiens* (Dreams of anger. With Indigenous Australians) precisely because that racism and historical eugenicism as an extreme of essentialization have with time generated in Australia considerable anger that Aboriginal people attribute not just to people but to spirits of the land which manifests in various cataclysms, droughts, cyclones or water becoming polluted.

genocides, proclaim their racial, ethnic, or cultural specificity, they are viewed as essentializing themselves. My daughters, Milari and Nidala, who were born on the Indian Ocean coastal land of their Yawuru Jabirr Jabirr father, invented a counter-response by saying to their schoolmates that they were 100% Aboriginal (like their father's mother), but also 100% Polish (like my parents), Jewish (like my mother), and Scottish (like their father's father), and French because my nationality (through family collective "naturalization" when I was 18) was automatically transferred to them at birth, at the same time that they were recognized as Australians via their father and birthplace. They are also proud to say that apart from all these lines that they share together they have their singular becomings, Sea Eagle for one and Black Snake for the other. The way they have been living with the multiplicities they embody is not divided into a measurement of blood and essence but related to a series of reticular relationships that redefine them in each context that they share with others.

If one attempts to look at things, not from the point of view of "beliefs," but from lived experience of something that is shared (either because of familiar past, present, or future aspirations), certain pathways open towards striking resonances. What Félix Guattari called *singularity traits* emerge in many ways, in the respect of the heterogeneity of every context, whether it is love (between two people attracted by traits of *visagéité* or "faceness"), or familial, social, cultural, religious, artistic, or political, they invite us to partake in infinite forms of recognition.

Beyond the way Descola defines his four ontologies—animism for Amazonia, totemism for Australia, analogism for Afro-American cults, and naturalism for the West—my anthropological quest consists in tracking commonalities of singularity traits. In the current global world, there are individuals and collectives that can share "trans-individual subjectivities" as well as features that, through experiences such as shamanism, art, street movements for justice, freedom and alternative futures, demonstrate a commonality that could be called "animist" as well as "totemist" or "analogist." Such subjectivities are usually micropolitical and ecosophical, as Guattari discussed in his later work. They are revealed by contexts and actions that enable commonalities to emerge, not as fixed ontologies, but as ontological becomings in a performative way, recognizing people's power to act in their own names. Many social actors, including indigenous peoples, currently demonstrate networks of political solidarity that can be transnational and transversal at different levels (class, race, gender) of their local situations intertwined with the global society. Interestingly, an indigenous group is currently more globally connected to the world through all the economic threats to its mode of existence than a western scientific laboratory, or other closed social circles, whose actors seem to protect themselves from



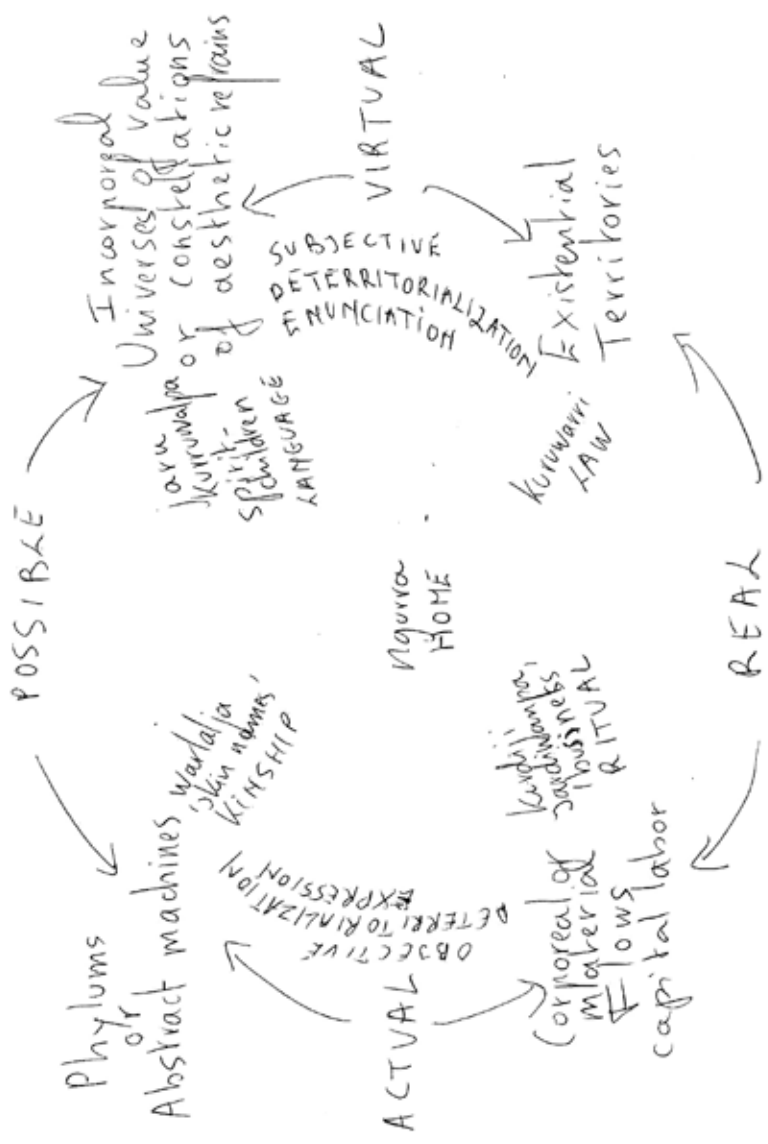
the rest of the world and are studied in their collective “modes of existence” as were small “exotic” societies of the colonial times. The new transversalities respond to the active awakening of critical awareness in relation to colonial global history and its current global consequences. Creative initiatives look like “nomadic journeys which are racialized but de-essentialized,” gendered but not biologically determined, socially defined but also mentally and environmentally dependent. Anthropology in that sense has a responsibility to enhance heterogeneous diversity at all levels, in such a way that culture and nature are not reified as fixed domains but understood as a symbiotic “*milieu*” that people can transform to stimulate improved coexistence. Such an endeavor intersects with Deligny’s wander lines, Ingold’s wayfaring, Viveiros de Castro’s perspectivism, and Guattari’s ecosophy, what I call a reticular way of anchoring and transforming existential becomings, just as Aboriginal Dreamings do.

Therefore, freeing ourselves from a false nomadism that in reality leaves us remaining in place, inside the void of an exsanguinated modernity, in order to gain access to the lines of escape<sup>50</sup> of desire to which machinic, communicational, esthetic deterritorializations invite us. Creating the conditions—when we have the opportunity to re-appropriate the resources of our world—for an existential nomadism as intense as that of the Pre-Columbian American Indians or the Aboriginal people of Australia to emerge.<sup>51</sup>

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50 *Lignes de fuite* is also translated by “lines of flight,” but none of the current translations suggest a meaning that is also encompassed in the French, *fuite*, that is “leakage.” See B. Glowczewski, recorded at Deleuze Studies Camp, Istanbul, July 2014.

51 F. Guattari, “Pratiques écosophiques et restauration de la cité subjective” in E. Portella (ed.), *Un autre partage, homme, ville, nature*, Paris: Erès, 1993, pp. 103-118. (A Conference in Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa, in Rio de Janeiro on May 1992, held in the margins of the UN Conference on the Environment and Development, June 1992), reprinted in F. Guattari, *Qu’est-ce que l’écophilosophie?* Texts introduced by S. Nadeau. Paris: Lignes/Imec, 2013, pp. 31-57. Quote translated by John Angell, whom I thank for the long process of his patient English checking of this introduction. I am also very grateful to Mary Laughren for her final reading.



Mapping Warlpiri concepts of the Dreaming (*Jukurrpa*) with Guattari's chaosmosis.



Nangala painted with her Rain Dreaming at Lungkatdajarra

# WARLPIRI DREAMING SPACES (1983)<sup>1</sup>

FÉLIX GUATTARI — Barbara is an anthropologist specializing in Australian Aboriginal peoples who has written a fascinating piece of work<sup>2</sup> about the dreaming process. I'd like her to tell us a bit about the collective technology of dreams among the Australian Aboriginal people she has studied. In this context, not only do dreams not depend on individual keys, but they are also part of an a posteriori elaboration of the dream that anthropologists have characterized as mythical. But Barbara comes close to refuting that definition. And dreaming is identified with the law, and with the possibility of mapping the itineraries of these people, who circulate all the time since they cover hundreds of kilometers. Barbara, I would like to ask you to try to tell us how the dreaming method functions. My first question is to ask you to explain the relationship between dream, territory, and itinerary.

BARBARA GLOWCZEWSKI — I'll start from a language and translation problem. There are five hundred ethnic groups with different languages in Australia, each with a term that describes something that has been translated into English as *Dreaming*.<sup>3</sup> This word (*Jukurrpa*, in Warlpiri) corresponds to a mixture of things, referring simultaneously to a mythical time, to a series of itineraries on the ground that crisscross Australia in a vast web, and also to the heroes (described by anthropologists as totemic) who are thought to have followed these itineraries in their travels. And it also corresponds to what anthropolo-

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1 Seminar discussion between F. Guattari and B. Glowczewski. "Les Warlpiri. Espaces de Rêves. Exposé et discussion (January 18, 1983)" in *Chimères*, n° 1, Paris: 1987, pp. 1-14. Translated by John Angell.

2 *Le Rêve et la terre. Rapports à l'espace et au temps chez les Wa(r)lpiri*. PhD, University of Paris VII, 1982.

3 The original French text contains the word "dream" in English because the transcriber of the audio recording did not hear the "-ing" ending. French has no equivalent to the English progressive form—the *-ing*—that translates literally as "dreaming." The author uses a capital letter to distinguish dreams (*rêves*) from the Aboriginal cosmological concept of the Dreaming(s) (*Rêve/s*), which is also often written with a capital D.

gists call a totem, i.e., a power of identity stemming from these heroes, who may have taken various forms—human, animal, or plant—to travel throughout Australia and who have transmitted their totemic identity to the clans. So, that's what dreaming is about.

F.G. — When we were chatting a while ago, you said you were not describing an archaic conception of the relationship with dream, but that the notion remains totally contemporary and has even been adapted and transformed via a range of acculturation phenomena. When you were there with them, the people would ask you what you had dreamed in the morning, and it was really conceived as a laborious form of work. Can you try to explain that a little bit?

B.G. — Well, actually today Aboriginal people refuse the English term *myth* (for their Dreaming stories). They do not accept the classical separation (and I would like to say Anglo-Saxon, because I think the French word *mythe* has a different connotation) between reality and something that would belong to the realm of appearances. Still, markers of difference do exist. A whole series of limits are at work, but the way the boundaries are drawn does not seem the same as our distinction between reality and dreams. But still, it depends on who is speaking.

Whites arrived in Australia two hundred years ago. In the area where I worked, contact took place around forty or fifty years ago, depending on the group, and Aboriginal peoples were forcibly sedentarized. We don't know very much about what happened at that time in Australia. The question of massacres did not come up like it did with Native Americans because of a fairly curious phenomenon—a lot of people just let themselves die. There was a more or less general consensus that they were lost anyway. They weren't traditional warriors, so the confrontations were not particularly violent, although there was fighting in certain areas. The entire period just slid invisibly into history.

The odd thing is that, in the 1960s, people said that Aboriginal people were going to completely disappear, and instead, since 1970 their numbers have grown. People wondered about this increase and how the culture stayed vibrant even though they were forced to lead a sedentary existence, whereas they were nomadic. One answer can be found in their specific vision of space and dreaming, which allows them to keep traveling even when they are sedentarized. Even though they have to stay in one place, they can continue to reenact their celebrated travels thanks to their ceremonies, songs, and night dreams.

F.G. — And to literally manage the territories of the dream!

B.G. — Yes, and re-experience passages of their itineraries.

F.G. — We need to be specific: They manage territories that are at least two-dimensional. Dancing, et cetera, “mythical” territories, but also real territories in the sense that it is through their dreams that they re-actualize the fact that

a given territory—a particular tree or object, or a particular configuration of the landscape—has its own particular function in the dream. And this is even more true because it crosses a series of segments of territory, and men and women do not have the same way of managing the territory.

ANNE QUERRIEN — I want to address a question about the notion of “tracing” (*frayage*), a term often used in discussions about dreams. I am aware of two kinds of *frayage*. The first, in fact, is the dream. You encounter a space that is hostile in the real, you’re frozen in fear, and the last thing you want to do is stay there. That said, this hostile space actually has a number of advantages: There are mirrors, cars, good things to eat, wealth, and so there is a dimension that is literally tempting. And in the dream you can enter this space, and little by little, by dint of years of dreaming, create a bridge using this modern space to which they have been forced to adapt. Then of course, there is dancing.

I had a crazy experience in Brittany one winter with children between 12 and 18 the night of the Saint Sylvester’s Day. The church had a nightclub that played reggae and punk and so on for the tourists between ten o’clock to midnight. After that, they played totally cool recordings of old French songs. As “emigrants,”<sup>4</sup> we adore the old French songs! All the kids do a line dance to the recording—I mean, once all the tourists leave, except me, since I’m not a tourist. The recording is very well made because it gives the illusion that it is all coming to an end. And then, right when everybody thinks it’s about to stop, the music stops, but the party keeps going and we play cassettes. It’s very strange—the music is French, like Renaud. At that time in my life, I was a good dancer of punk, Afro, et cetera, but the amazing thing is that they were doing a Breton folk dance! That’s what was going on! We spent an absolutely crazy evening doing Breton folk dancing to punk music! It’s a pairing that matches dance and music from two spaces that at first glance have nothing to do with each other. And up to that point, these kids had done Breton dancing only as folklore or for tourists in the summer. So it became a modern dance, perfectly dance-able to “Renaud.” It kept going, and then at three in the morning, I used totally crazy thinking based on Einstein, Zen, and things like that to reinvent the oldest Breton dance-step, which involves hopping from one foot to the other non-stop, like a bouncing ball, for several hours. Because the actual principle of Breton dancing is that you don’t stop for thirty-six hours (except for pauses to drink cider and eat *crêpes*) in order to compact the soil floor of a house... So that was the night we reinvented Breton dancing.

For me, dreaming and dancing both provide spaces for technology transfer.

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4 According to Anne Querrien, it is an inside a joke for some Bretons to call themselves “emigrants from Brittany,” a region of France treated like a colony by the government, where children were punished in schools for using local languages, such as Breton.

And it is these spaces that can allow a so-called “archaic” culture to communicate with ours. These are “tracing” or *frayage* spaces.

B.G. — When I was with the Warlpiri in 1979, I was lucky enough to attend an initiation cycle that was performed in a parallel way by men on one side and women on the other.<sup>5</sup> It had been going on for a month when I arrived and continued for another four months. The principle of this kind of cycle is that for two hours almost every day, and sometimes all night, the itineraries of the totemic ancestors who are being celebrated are performed. What I am saying is that we re-traveled hundreds of kilometers in small sequences, a straight itinerary over a five-month period, but gradually; as you advance, it unfolds as a series of sites that intersect with other itineraries that in turn involve other clans that are connected to the guardian-clan of the itinerary being celebrated, and every time, a new scene is played.

F.G. — And that’s the moment in the series when they come in?

B.G. — At the time, a certain phase of the itinerary is scheduled for a particular evening. The dance area is essentially like this room, and each step you take is the equivalent of a giant step in the actual itinerary.

F.G. — That kind of tends to confirm what Jean-Claude was saying—recounting the dream using a scenario—because it’s ultimately a staging technique.

B.G. — I was also thinking of something else related to this question of hostility in the city that attracts. Maybe it’s also the ambiguity of what they call the secret, sacred sites that explains something about the fact that they could not return to their sites for two generations because they were locked up on reservations and not permitted to travel. Ultimately, even prior to contact with whites, access to their part of the earth was not completely unrestricted; there were places you didn’t go, or where you would only go as an exception. So this exceptional emotional ambiance could be reenacted in a sedentary space, particularly because those specific sites have become dream places. Regular, physical contact is very important, and that was the first thing the Aboriginal Australians did at different periods. In 1967, a referendum recognizing them as citizens<sup>6</sup> was passed that gave them back the right to travel around like everyone else.

X<sub>1</sub> — And what was their status up to that time?

B.G. — They had no status before then. And in 1967, the Warlpiri settled down in their country again, and the first thing they did was to touch the ground, the stones, and the trees in the places that corresponded to their ancestors’ sites. There are thousands of similar sites in Australia. You have to picture it as resembling a web of networks with all these little nodes on it. So the contact is

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5 In camps separated by gender.

6 In fact, the referendum entailed counting all Aboriginal people as Australians in the census; some Aboriginal people already possessed citizenship at the time, but many others had no rights.

important and, as I was saying a little while ago, if it's an effort when we dream at night and we wake up tired, a strong dream is in fact also experienced like a real voyage during which you have touched the time and space of the dream-land (of the Dreamings).

JEAN-CLAUDE POLACK — Do the Aboriginal people all live a long way from the ocean?

B.G. — There are places in the North and West where they live near the coast. But an extremely confused controversy developed about that, as always in anthropology. In fact, there is a tendency to argue that Europeans were able to colonize the Southeast coast because there were no Aboriginal people in the area. And other people have reacted by saying that it was obvious that when they (the Aboriginal people) saw Europeans arriving, they ran away and didn't want to have anything to do with them. In fact, though, there were massacres.<sup>7</sup>

There were numerous attempted exchanges. Which is also fairly interesting, because it continues to be relevant. It's an idea of a symbolic exchange, in a way. In fact, they feel their culture so strongly today that they can assimilate things from Western technology, and they consider that it's their due, because the fact that they exist means giving something to the whites, while also keeping secret what has to stay secret. As the Aboriginal people see it, it's an exchange: "If you agree that an entire part of our knowledge remains secret." There are two irreducible zones, and that's how the exchange is possible.

So, to go back to the question of the ocean, some anthropologists have said they ran away. And after that, a third anthropological wave, rather than justifying the absence of Aboriginal people as a reaction to colonization, said that there was a life choice to make, they had to walk, and water couldn't be there, next to them.

A number of relatively recent anthropological studies have shown that even in desert areas, hunter-gatherer societies that do not practice agriculture spend less time working to feed themselves than sedentary societies. That's also one of the theories that allow certain researchers to argue that living by the sea was perhaps ultimately an exception. But why were you thinking about that?

J-C.P. — I just wanted to know if there was an idea of a limit, an external limit, for example, in the cartographies of dreaming or dancing.

B.G. — I think it's not all on just one level. There's overlap between "it's a long way away" and "it's here," and between past and present. An endless back-and-forth

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7 The new history movement in the 1980s and 1990s revealed violence, massacres, and Aboriginal resistance that had been buried for decades. In the 2000s, a revisionist movement began to deny this history, but an excellent documentary series called *The First Australians* (2008), produced for Australian Television, provided massive evidence of this hidden Aboriginal history (See: R. Perkins, M. Langton and L. Nowra, *First Australians: An Illustrated History*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2009. The seven episodes of the series are accessible online at <aso.gov.au/titles/series/first-australians>.



between time and space that is explicitly referred to; the sites are caves, and when they plant sticks into the ground in a dancing area (I'm referring to the women here, because the men use different objects), it is said that the two sticks connect two points underground, forming a circle beneath. So I don't think it is perceived as a flat space.

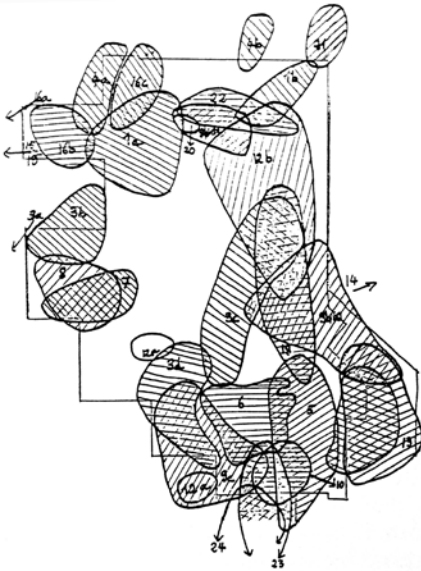
J-C.P. — But is there a limit somewhere?

B.G. — It is full of limits! But they're not in close proximity. They discuss a separation endlessly. It starts with initiation, when an individual is separated from his or her mother...

F.G. — There is something I want to remind you about on this subject that I thought seemed extraordinary—the fact that there is no numbering system beyond the number two. That must totally reconfigure the idea of limits from top to bottom, and of the difference between time and space. In effect, once you don't have a numerical system for recording information (which seems to me a theorem in need of examples)... if I understood correctly, it is numbered 1, 2, and then several. So that's a technique for totally altering how we keep track of coordinates. I mean it already simplifies things a lot for Oedipus! [*Laughter*]

B.G. — On the other hand, there is a difference between the "us" of two people and the several people's "us." And in fact, where the third party comes in, without being expressed explicitly, is in the difference, when I talk to somebody, between enunciating an "us" that includes "you" (the person I am speaking with) and another "us" with others (that excludes "you," the person I am talking to)). That's pretty important.

And about this question of borders, I just wanted to give an example of a territory that's about 600 kilometers from North to South and 200 from East to West that has a population of 3,000 people. There (see map) are about twenty or so territories defined by circles, but in a completely simplified way in order to facilitate land claims. In truth, each bubble represented here is not a territory in its own right—it's always the same—it's part of a web, and you find ramifications of the bubble in a discontinuous way inside a different bubble. So the same group will have territorial rights over a web within a bubble and also a bit elsewhere, but most importantly it will have a site that establishes the link while also explaining the discontinuity. And the hero, for example, will have traveled underground at that moment.



The hatch-marks indicate the heartland areas where the majority of the sites associated with a local group (patriclan). But every group has interests and responsibilities that concern external sites inside well-defined areas. NB: This map was created by the Central Land Council as legal proof (Exhibit n°. 172C) to support the Warlpiri's land claim (in 1976.).

$x_2$  — How does time work in dreams?

B.G. — Dreaming is the present, and it's also “a long time ago.” For me, this present that is also a long time ago is not historical time but a time of metamorphosis. It is a dynamic time, but a time of transformation. So it's a time of the dynamics of transformation, but all of the roles and all of the forms of metamorphoses also exist in the present, except that everything changes form by changing places in this ultimate time of the present. And it's extremely dynamic—in fact, transformation is the main aspect related to the dreamings that is talked about.

J-C.P. — But it's hard to express problems in terms of time, when we are actually dealing with the interplay of territorialities, which is highly spatializing compared to dancing.

B.G. — An Aboriginal person does not say that a territory belongs to him, but that he belongs to the territory.<sup>8</sup> So it isn't so much that a territory is occupied, since the land isn't there to be conquered. It gives meaning to people. It is dynamic and ever changing. It is not by chance that most of the sites are mineral outcroppings, and there is a connection between all these itineraries and the

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 8 Land claims have officialized the legal status of claimants as “traditional owners”; The Native Title Act 1993 (*Cwllth*) recognized “Native Title” and invalidated the notion of “*terra nullius*,” which defined the colonization of Australia as the occupation of a land that belonged to nobody: <[www.nntt.gov.au/Information-about-native-title/Pages/The-Native-Title-Act.aspx](http://www.nntt.gov.au/Information-about-native-title/Pages/The-Native-Title-Act.aspx)>.

underground. And also, for example, the itinerary of the kangaroo corresponds to a zone where kangaroos were located, and the itinerary of the wild potato refers to a zone where there were wild potatoes growing. The ecology of this landscape thus determines its general outlines. Then, small events become part of the record from one generation to the next—a hunter goes a little further and finds a place where nobody has been; he comes back and talks about it, and people go there and it gets dreamt about, and somebody in the next generation decides that some child's life force came from that place; and the dream made by one of the child's relatives will determine that that space corresponds to a particular plant or animal species. In this way, there is a multiplication of plants and animals, and small deeds become grafted onto other itineraries and gradually, across generations, it has shifted; you even see the same phenomenon today, meaning that contacts with whites (and life is riddled with contacts) that are dreamt, interpreted by the groups, and reintegrated into an existing itinerary. And that is how things change. Now what I do not know is what makes it so that something that happens to someone in one generation is retransmitted to the next generation and passes into the dream memory of subsequent generations.

J.-C.P. — Tell me, this really is dream-work they're doing—they're not just storytellers?

B.G. — Everyone is also the storyteller of his/her clan's traditional dreamings and mythical stories. And there are healers, but they have a particular zone. And the rest...

F.G. — They are initiates? Non-initiates can...?

B.G. — Yes, that's it, after a certain age. But what happens is that children become familiar with all of that when they are small. And since every morning people tell each other things, they see it. People tell each other their night dreams using words and their hands, a manual sign language, and by tracing signs in the sand. The word is given meaning like that in the air and...

F.G. — You need to be specific about a very important point for us, if I may. It relates to the fact that there is a language of the hands that is as elaborate as a real language.

B.G. — So dreams are related using words, the hands, and tracings in the sand. It goes really fast. And children see that from a very young age. Ultimately, it seems like they understand what is traced in the sand more quickly than the words. So they learn this code quickly. It always resembles cartography, and all of the stories are travel narratives, so it's always—walk, stop, and sit there...

F.G. — You said that time is conceived of only as the present. Does that mean that from the linguistic point of view, there is no future, no imperfect, no simple past? Does that have a bearing (on life in general t/n)?

B.G. — No, that's not it—people do say tomorrow, and they say yesterday...

F.G. — And verbs? Are they all in the infinitive? How do they work?

B.G. — The forms are totally different...

A.Q. — Like in Breton. To be doesn't exist, only becoming exists.

X<sub>1</sub> — Is there a notion of time?

B.G. — No, in most (Aboriginal Australian) languages. I have the impression that they refer to time-space in a single word. It doesn't mean privileging space, but that the two are inseparable. That does not mean it's static.

J-C.P. — It's a way of referencing time that is possible only if using spatial coordinates.

B.G. — I was thinking that the time I spent there was in the middle of a ritual period, but up to 70% of every day was related to the Dreamings (dancing, singing...). And there is something that may be a far more generalized phenomenon, a detachment, that sets in once basic tasks such as finding something to eat and that kind of thing have been taken care of. Going hunting is not the main thing anymore. Of course, they also dream about daily life. I had the impression when I was in the camp that even when there weren't any ceremonies, there was a way of walking, of moving in the zones (to prepare food or a place to sleep...) as if the people were spaced out, like they had taken acid. Now, it's difficult to know where that effect comes from. Is it sedentarization? Has it always been this way? I don't know. I was there in 1979. But there's a blend of serenity and total apathy and then, all of a sudden, there's this absolutely extraordinary burst of energy during the ceremonies. In fact, you really have the impression of being in another place and time. I mean, maybe it's subjective...

J-C.P. — The work of the dream is to endlessly re-nomadize, to endlessly smooth something out that had a tendency to become striated.

F.G. — Well, if I have understood correctly, it is a re-actualization, in the sense that Barbara explains in her thesis; there are drought zones that mean that nobody can go to certain places, or else, because of the fact that several tribes find themselves together, or ethnic groups, in the same places. In that case, they have to redefine what the dream territory is. Or, as you were saying a while ago, the definition, a child's essence, will be one of these territories that he is attributed to.

B.G. — There's something I haven't described in detail yet, which is that a child is not truly considered the product of his parents. A woman does not become pregnant because of sexual relations, but because she is penetrated by a spirit-child. There was a whole controversy about that in anthropology and about whether the Aboriginal people knew or did not know how children are made! And now more people say they know. But that's part of the secret. It's something men talk about among themselves, and women among themselves, but

it's not something that circulates. Meaning children never hear about it, since it is only spoken of in ceremonial spaces where children are not present. And then it is said that the father, the mother's husband, provides the child with his vital force, but only after the child has been conceived. And, although it is no longer done now but was still practiced fifty years ago, a woman had to have sexual relations with other men so the baby could have more life force, because the father's was not enough.

But what's really significant is that beyond the level of the discourse surrounding the ceremonies, these things are unimportant. In fact, it made them laugh when whites living in the region said that Aboriginal people didn't know how babies were made. Which is fairly interesting, because like on numerous other subjects, the Aboriginal people do not seem to feel they need to prove anything. I observed scenes in the city where people who are perfectly lucid when they were in the camps passed themselves off as stupid even though privately they were laughing, maybe as a way of keeping their relationship with whites simple; if you have money, you give me some, you buy me a drink. It's "I don't know anything." They don't need to prove who or what they are to whites, except for land claims, because since 1970 they definitely have to prove that a particular piece of land has been rightfully theirs for generations.

When you think about what is sacred and about religion, at least for me, there is a traditional stereotype, a visual cliché, of something very serious, silent, and somber. But what is really extraordinary is that there is something very powerful during sacred activities, an emotion at the limit of pathos or tragedy. The people are often crying due to particular emotions or contact with an ancestor, but there are also children shouting, dogs barking, people preparing food, laughing, voicing obscenities, all completely blended together. There is a playful quality, but it is play to the bitter end, like in a movie...

E.G. — In fact, everything is so obvious, there is such widespread sacredness, that there is no need to lay it on too thick, or wear a chasuble, or create some obscure practice. In Africa, I attended a N'Döp ceremony,<sup>9</sup> and it was a little like that at the moment of the sacrifice.

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9 According to his son, Bruno, in a personal communication with Anne Querrien, Guattari went to Senegal in 1967. He may have attended a N'Döp Ceremony as part of his therapeutic experiences at the Fann Psychiatric Hospital in Dakar. The ceremony is described as follows: "More specifically focused on managing psychiatric disorders, the N'Döp Ceremony conducted by Michel Meignant and Andrés Zempleni was intended to show practitioners that traditional trance-based rituals should be considered authentic therapeutic approaches that mobilize the social group, making it possible simultaneously to treat the patient and to reinsert them, restoring their place in the community. This second film had even more impact on the profession, because it was focused on the late, much-missed Professor Henri Collomb, Chief of the Neuropsychiatry Department at the Fann Hospital in Dakar. Financed and produced by Sandoz Laboratories, the film was screened in psychiatric services, where it never failed to generate the same questions concerning the singular effectiveness of the treatment, its amazing complexity, and its esoteric character." Available at: <[www.ethnopsychiatrie.net/Pratiquer\\_%27ethnopsychiatri.htm](http://www.ethnopsychiatrie.net/Pratiquer_%27ethnopsychiatri.htm)>.

J-C.P. — I want to know whether what you're saying is totally true, I mean, whether there isn't an increase in things that makes it so that at any given moment, all this agitation is interpreted as a kind of momentary wrinkle in the process. It's like Indian ceremonies, with this music.

B.G. — Well, following up on what you're saying, I was thinking of... this continuous/discontinuous question. Something has an effect on a small scale, and the same thing on a large scale exerts precisely the opposite effect. Somewhere, there's a discontinuity, but we don't know where it is. On this subject, I'm going to tell you a typical awkward ethnographer's anecdote. Early in my stay, I heard a woman singing one day, and I approached her and said, "That is so beautiful!" She didn't answer. Some time later, I heard the same song—it wasn't really a song, but something more like a modulated voice—coming from different places in the camp; after that, it went higher and higher, increasing in volume, and it became extremely disquieting. In fact, this song is what people do when they're in mourning, and when the entire camp started doing it, it was totally unbearable... But what's crazy is that the first time I heard it sung by a woman by herself, it seemed quite joyous to me, and in fact, if you break it down, it is a call to the dead and a kind of communication that connects an individual with a particular dead person, a space where people meet and find themselves. It's also a little sad, but above all, it is a successful communication event. So when the whole community turns into this whirl of sound, it is extraordinary. It's an example. What I mean is that these episodes of noise and agitation, with all of it happening at the same time, is perhaps also what sacredness feels like. And it's not like, you stop, you get serious—now it's sacred. But there comes a moment when the accumulation of the same element makes it so that you find yourself absolutely at the opposite extreme. It's as if a line stretched between two opposing poles is crossed...

E.G. — Asymptote!

X<sub>3</sub> — How do the Aboriginal peoples go about naming each other?

B.G. — Kinship terminology also reflects this history of children with respect to their parents. As in most of these societies, a kinship system implies that you say "mother" or "father" to different people, even when you know who is supposed to be your real mother and her husband, and therefore your real father, since in theory he's the one who determines your heritage on a mythical itinerary. But it is so not because the father conceived the child, but because, in crossing the father's territory, the mother became penetrated by the life force of this territory, which is how the child received the life force that made his conception possible.

This type of itinerary, which anthropologists have called a *conception totem*, can be a plant or animal species... It's something the child will keep throughout

his life, but it's just about the conception, nothing more, and it doesn't necessarily mean he has any rights over a territory. Although in fact it was usually arranged to coincide with a vaster territory that was the father's or the mother's and that, consequently, provided a new totem, which wasn't the same species but was associated with it. If the mother conceived her child on another territory, he will have that conception totem, but if the father absolutely wants his child to enter his clan, he can transfer the rights to a territory to him at the time of his initiation. In this case, you have two totems. In fact, there are even more, because the child can have a totem from his mother and in addition be adopted by another group.

What is also interesting is that it's not the mother or the husband who determines the conception site—a relative dreams it. So that's the strategy, and you enter into tribal and kinship systems that mean that someone from outside the couple determines where the child was conceived (the location at which the spirit entered the mother and the identity of the spirit), and therefore whom within his generation the child will share rights with. Since they are sedentarized, the conception totem is the one associated with the place where they are settled. But in earlier generations, somebody in the community would wake up one morning and say, "I know where she conceived her future child..." It can be linked to the fact that she ate something found only in a particular region, or for example, coming home from the day when she ate that thing, and she was sick the next day. Then everything works backwards from that.

The name of the clan totem coincides with a system of classificatory kinship that defines eight subsections or "skin" names. Everybody has one of these eight names, and that's what establishes that particular kinship. But it is not given freely to the child; it's a deduction that means that someone from a subsection can only marry someone from one of the seven other sub-sections. So the child bears a third sub sectional name that is the result of the conjunction of the two. That is always determined. So what happens when a couple gets married and aren't in the right subsections? Traditionally, it was only the mother's subsection that counted, meaning that all acted as if she had married a man from the appropriate sub-section, and the child bore the correct name. Today, it's the opposite, because in recent years it has been considered urgent to keep the clan territorialized because of land claims, and also because there are more and more marriages that don't respect the subsections. So it's the father's subsection that determines the child's. The term "no-name" (*kumanjayi*) is used when somebody dies and everything associated with the deceased first name is banned from being pronounced for a minimum of a year. You can refer to the name with gestures, but nothing related to it can be uttered. That is how the language became richer. In fact, these names always correspond to plants

or animals or other things, and that eliminates a whole cluster of words. So these are replaced by the expression “no-name” or another term, but the taboo word can come back with the next generation.

x<sub>3</sub> — That’s how it is with Inuit people.

B.G. — When I arrived there, someone named Francis had just died, so I couldn’t say “France” because it sounded the same. The fact that it’s not the same questions that are asked by different generations of ethnographers, even though basically the materials are the same (even more four generations ago), it’s because maybe you’re not aware here that you see those things, but I think that if you can see them somewhere else, that means in fact that you felt you saw them here. If you see those things in other societies, it means we have the possibility of seeing them here, which functions a little like a reflection.

x<sub>1</sub> — And these interlocking territories, do they sometimes have a city in the middle?

B.G. — The itineraries used to go all over Australia, but now there are cities...

F.G. — Sometimes there are trash piles, Coca-Cola bottles...but the itinerary goes over them without any problem.

B.G. — In any case, these itineraries are invisible to us.

x<sub>1</sub> — An important place now is I don’t know where...

B.G. — An important place, that’s exactly what is so terrible, that becomes more and more difficult in fact, and I wonder how things are going to be in the future, since there are mineral deposits on sacred sites and real struggles. The curious thing is that a legalistic obsession in Australia allows a zone for the recognition of rights. Since 1976, when Aboriginal peoples were allowed to legally show that their painted boards are like identity cards and geographical maps, they have been recognized by the courts as representing legitimate claims to particular sites. That happened in 1976 at the federal level, and now the authorities do everything they can to reverse directions. Which is fairly easy to do, because the states’ legal systems (Australia is a federation of seven states) do not recognize this Act (which applied to the Northern Territory).<sup>10</sup> Which does not prevent the federal government from having the right to question legislation passed by the states. Which has produced interminable trials. That is how it went with uranium mining in Australia. They took ten years to discuss it before beginning to do it, although they might just as well have begun ten years earlier because of this kind of legalistic blockage. In the long run, the Aboriginal people are not at all happy with the results, and they believe they have lost. But after all, they did gain ten years! And that’s the way everything

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10 Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 available at: <[www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol\\_act/alra1976444](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/alra1976444)>.



goes. It even becomes absurd, because most mining companies are multinational corporations. And some people get discouraged and are ready to abandon the project, and it's the government that tries to move forward quickly and pushes them. When I came back in 1980, there was a nation-wide protest movement on the front pages for about a month. Aboriginal peoples from every region were protesting in support of a small community of five hundred inhabitants at Noonkanbah, and even whites participated in marches in every city. Priests got arrested, and there seemed to be a broad consensus, but the problem was oil and a company named Amax. And Amax was leaving, ready to leave, and the government of Western Australia and the miners' and transporters' unions boycotted transportation of the equipment. The government wanted to show its power, so it hired people from the Pacific islands as a special brigade of a kind of mercenaries to escort convoys of enormous trucks. People were posted along the road everywhere in the desert to try to stop them. They cruised along in huge convoys of about twenty trucks like a sort of freight train. Once they arrived, the Aboriginal people painted themselves and blocked the entrance to the community. And they didn't dare push them out of the way. As a result, after a while things became increasingly tense, and the government passed some laws and arrested a lot of people and started drilling. But the most recent reports say that they had totally over-estimated the deposit and that it was not close to worth it! [*Laughter*]

A.Q. — The Aboriginal people tolerate people exploiting certain sites?

B.G. — In general, they share a certain philosophical intransigence that proscribes touching the earth. But some communities accept it on condition that they receive financial compensation for mining activities.

Audrey Nakamarra painted *yavakayi* Black Plum for Mulyukarriji





Kungariya Gladys Napangardi, painted *piija* Goanna for Yinapalku

# WARLPIRI DREAMING SPACES (1985)<sup>1</sup>

BARBARA GLOWCZEWSKI — I have given examples of animal, bird, and plant Dreamings (*Jukurrpa*), along with mythical dreaming stories of phenomena like water, fire, and the stars, of objects like digging sticks and initiation poles as well as dreaming roles, like Initiated men, Single women, and Invincible, the incestuous patriarch. In fact, everything in nature and culture has its dreaming, but not every dreaming element is actualized in the same way. Only about a hundred elements are used to identify the approximately forty Warlpiri clans. They correspond to very long invisible trails or itineraries that can extend for several hundred kilometers, crossing the territory of the clans that carry the corresponding name. The other elements of a dreaming form a kind of reservoir, which is the point at which sleeping dreams become relevant. They can draw on this reservoir to provide a new child who is going to be born with an individual identity. This transpires as follows: The conception of every child is announced by a dream experienced by the mother, the father, or another relative. The dream indicates the site where the mother was penetrated by a spirit-child, the pre-condition for making a child. The dream also indicates which specific element of the site provides the spirit-child's identity. It is possible to dream that the child was conceived on the father's land, in which case the child is the incarnation of his clan's dreaming. But they usually dream that the child is the incarnation of a different dreaming. This other dreaming, i.e., the element that identifies it, can sometimes be the one that gives another clan its identity, in which case, as the child grows up he or she will have individual rights to the territory and rituals corresponding to that clan, which is not his birth clan. But it is also possible to dream that the child's dream-element doesn't correspond

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1 Second Seminar discussion between F. Guattari and B. Glowczewski. "Les Warlpiri. Espaces de Rêves. Exposé et discussion, (February 26, 1985)," in *Chimères*, n° 1, op. cit., pp. 15-28. Translated by John Angell.

to any particular clan but comes instead from the reservoir of plants, animals, and objects not already celebrated by the clans.

A child who receives this kind of dreaming has options: if his or her clan is too big, in the past, instead of staying in the father's territory as is customary, he or she establishes his/her own clan based on this new dreaming. In a sense, this could be perceived as a new creation, but the Warlpiri just perceive it as the reactivation of the dreaming memory, because the dream-element that the new clan is based on was always part of the dream reservoir and thus present in the environment. The only thing human beings did was to remember the dream-element and bring it into being by connecting it to existing, well-known itineraries.

This is why it's important to emphasize that the notions of Dreaming and of a dreaming's ancestors—of dreamtime—do not just refer to the distant, original past. Instead, it is a time-space that simultaneously encompasses the present, the past, and the future, and in which every possible combination of the elements of existence is stored. There is no notion of new elements, because every element already exists even before it has taken shape, as each element is itself a composite of other elements. In other words, the dreaming includes everything that is possible; it has no specifiable beginning point or ending point. It is the condition of life and of every transformation.

Any element can be a dreaming, but that element is also connected to other elements, and together they form what I call a constellation. For example, the Sand Dreaming is connected to the dreamings of honey, bees, green parrots, and owls. Why? Because the myth—what we call the myth, but the Warlpiri call a Dreaming—recounts that the sand dunes were formed at the dreaming sites when honey was flowing in the trees and under the ground and the bees carried it to another land, and the owls, birds of the night, and the green parrots, and the daytime birds, were the witnesses. The story is far too long and complicated to relate in detail here.<sup>2</sup>

So every dreaming constellation is said to have sown the earth with first names. And these names are the spirit-children—the dream children—who are reincarnated from one human generation to the next. But an individual is not just the result of the incarnation of a spirit-child. If he remains alive, it is because he is the recipient of the life force of his clan's dreaming, in other words, of a force transmitted from mother to daughter. The same dreaming constellation—the clan's Dreamings—is always transmitted from father to son; they are therefore always the same names. Because of the obligation to marry outside of one's clan, the wife's dreaming constellation is always different. What

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<sup>2</sup> *Du Rêve à la Loi*, op. cit., pp. 329-32. Story by May Yiripanta Napaljarri; Warlpiri audio accessible at <[www.odsas.net](http://www.odsas.net)>.

is handed down from mother to daughter results from the fusion of the mother and father's dreamings; they are therefore combinations of different dreamings from generation to generation. Which is why this force has no name.

But even all of this is not sufficient to make a full human being because the spirit-energy is still missing. Spirit-energy, which is a specific property of an individual, resembles our concept of the soul, and it resides in the individual's belly. It is this spirit that leaves the body to travel at night in the dreaming. It is possible for it not ever to return to the body, in which case the individual will be sickly and extremely weak and therefore run-down like an electrical battery that he can die from it. If the spirit-energy returns, it can return to inhabit a different part of the body than the belly where it normally resides. In this case, the individual is always in poor health, although a shaman can help.

When a person dies, these various vital elements become redistributed. The child-spirit returns to the site where it emerged to await reincarnation. The father's and the clan's life force are dissipated throughout the length of the itinerary of the clan's dreaming, or rather the constellation of clan dreamings. The nameless life force transmitted from mother to daughter must be conjured for funeral rites, and it circulates among the clans in the form of the dead person's hair and, after several years, returns to the mother's clan. The dead person's spirit-energy is carried away into the cosmos, beyond the Milky Way and the two galaxies, the Big and Small Magellanic Clouds, but only if the man or woman died of old age and not of illness or accident. If the cause of death was illness or accident, the spirit-energy behaves as if it was short-circuited and disappears; no one knows where it goes. Once these forces have departed, there is still not an empty void in the place of the dead person, however. An image rises from him or her—a shadow, a double, or a ghost—that is the image of the body emptied of every other element, and it arises from the dead person. It wanders and haunts people, appearing particularly in the dreams of the dead person's relatives while they are sleeping. This is the downside of memory. People go to great lengths to avoid invoking this image or even remembering it. No one in the tribe is allowed to pronounce dead peoples' names, and no one can sing their dreaming-songs for two years; no one can return to their territory. But nothing can really be done to totally prevent the image from returning to haunt them.

This is a very important point, because it is in fact the only thing that humans create. Everything else comes from and goes back to the dreamings. Once all of the elements of the dreaming that combined to form the individual have decomposed, however, the dead person's image becomes an indivisible residue. The only difference between the dreaming and life is that living people produce images of the dead that they reinsert into the dreaming. Once the images are

reinserted into the dreaming, they become part of the limitless possible re-combinations. In summary, it is possible to assert that the dreaming is responsible for making the possible, while humans are responsible for making the past. There is an essential point of discontinuity between the dreaming and humans, however, based on the discontinuity implied by the transformations proper to the dream itself. This raises the problem of defining the concept of Dreaming.

If you imagine dreaming as a space (a dreamscape) in which everything combines with everything else, it can be envisioned in a sense as a continuum. The Dreaming is also the myth, though, or rather the myths, meaning it is the sum of all of the stories that arrange the elements among themselves and that create order from the disorder of every possible combination. Such narrative sequences produce permanent discontinuities, because mankind is capable of making dreams that reveal narrative sequences that people had forgotten. These new sequences can be integrated into the corpus of myths, but only on condition that they are accepted by the group, which is by no means a given and which triggers all kinds of 'payback' as the Warlpiri and their neighbors call it.

In a way, then, myths create order among the different elements. The question then is whether there is order or disorder among the myths. If one is looking for order, I think the structural process of isolating the poles and articulating the constellations among themselves is stimulating but ultimately is a highly sterile mental undertaking. It cannot be argued, though, that disorder reigns among the myths. The Warlpiri express very specific connections, either when several dreaming myths cross paths at a single site, or when two dreamings are connected via a third dreaming. It would be pointless to inventory all of the connections, though—that isn't what preoccupies the Warlpiri. They do not try to attribute meaning to these connections, but on the contrary to experience them by making them non-signifying. This is the power of the rituals. Compositions between dreamings are executed through dance, and what connects the dreamings must not be said but lived by every individual and by the entire group. A man or woman, after years of ritual activity, can be unable to explain why a particular dreaming is connected to another. It is not his or her concern, because it has become a part of the secret that is negotiated with age. The important thing in this process is not that the secret conceals a missing meaning but that, on the contrary, it is indispensable to have experienced the connections. A Warlpiri would say that what is important is to have lived the land in a different way but also in a way that can be aligned with others and within the body. Only then does the meaning find a receptacle, only on condition that the body exists can the meaning of the connection take shape, and only then can it become a revelation. And the body only exists through dancing and singing, and through being painted with the elements that transcend the senses.

Based on these observations, I thought it was necessary to build a model in which the organization of the myths and the rituals was un-dissociated and that would be articulated around what I will call cores, a kind of black hole that represents the absence of meaning, the condition of existence and of meaning. This model would be used to analyze not only myths between themselves but also the elements that compose every myth. Because beyond signifying interpretations of why a particular element is part of a constellation of dreamings, there is the same phenomenon of gravitation around a core, where in order for the magic of the story to work, you have to *not* look for meaning.

We had a discussion with Félix to prepare this presentation, so I'm going to read what Félix said in relation to what I was just explaining, unless he would rather tell you himself!

FÉLIX GUATTARI — What is this core that you see as traversing all of these ritual modifications, body tracings, and so on? Is it another structuralist key? B.G. — First, there is not just one core—there are several—and I was also talking about axes or lines. I perceive them to resemble black holes, as though all of mythology were a sky, a cosmos that is beyond our galaxy, and the myths form inter-connected galaxies among themselves. Every core or axis forms a black hole because it's something that exists, and there are forms around but it cannot be named. In order to continue to exist without being named, it would have to remain unchanged and not be able to metamorphose; it has no shape. Concretely, inside the group this corresponds to a secret that must always be transmitted in the same way. What is important, the only meaning of this thing, is that it remains unchanged, even though everything else shifts.

F.G. — In your earlier talk you clearly stated that the thing had to exist as it is, as an existential repetition, as I was translating, then, that it couldn't only subsist in a paradigmatic field of significations. In my current preoccupations, not only is it not a matter of a structural key for the interpretation of different mythic components, it is a matter of a certain use of the semantic material put into play which has to be actively rendered non-signifying. It is not only the fact that there is, in a contingent fashion, a fact of non-sense or a rupture of signification, but that it has to be actively rendered non-signifying so as to function as a means for what I call existential territorialization. And it is precisely these non-signifying elements which will constitute what I call the transversality of assemblages: they are what will traverse heterogeneous modes of expression from the point of view of their means of expression, or from the point of view of their content, mythical content, for example. Because what will function from one register to another is not axiomatic, a structure articulating signifying poles, but what I will call an ontological logic, a fashion of constructing existence in different registers, what, with Eric (Alliez), I call ordology, in opposition to a cardology.



B.G. — When you say transversality, that's the way I use the word to connect, things connect themselves among themselves, but you can't do an analysis of how they connect in a general sense, or designate particular meanings that connect things. That's not how it works. It is not, for example, a structural opposition that makes it so that things are connected; it's a whole dynamic process that causes the mythology and the society to exist and that makes it so they're inter-connected.

We have seen the constitution of existential territories through dreams, and also as mythical stories and rituals. Let's look more closely at what happens with body painting. In the Warlpiri sense, painting involves identifying the body with the life force of the dreaming that is being represented, or else as an element in general, or a particular site, or in a constellation of elements. We have seen how every design corresponds to one or several names that refer to a dreaming or a site.

But that does not mean there is an equivalency between a particular design and the name assigned to it. It happens that the same design can be used for different dreamings. What matters is what the group has decided to do in a particular situation. If a certain woman is painted and certain songs are sung, the design is called a particular dreaming, and not some other dreaming. Félix would say that the pragmatic dimension takes precedence over the semiotic dimension. So when the women no longer recalled under what conditions a particular photograph was taken, they were refusing to give the name of the design. For that reason, I systematically made sketches along with their identification, while the women were painting themselves, which I later matched with the photographs. There are designs that always come back for the same dreaming; or rather, a type of design, because the variations are infinite, within the principle of white outlines or the number of tiny little features. The important thing is the freedom of the women who paint to improvise once they know the subject. When the painting is finished, it is possible to decompose the elements, or some of the elements, to attribute meaning to them. An animal footprint, a woman seated, a camp, a cloud. This is what I did with certain photographs. Most of the time the women do not like doing this kind of interpretative "pulling apart" (*décortiquage*). Sometimes they offer different interpretations. It is not a problem as long as the elements are part of the dreaming.

What happens at the moment of painting is highly ambiguous. It seems as though the laying out of the basic elements to be outlined is not done with a meaning attached to each element. But sometimes a woman painter intervenes, or even the one who is being painted says what isn't right and that they have to start over, that they're not going to do, for example, vines, but instead the river. The vines and the river refer to the same dreaming. And so they erase everything and start over.

It's fairly complicated. There is not a particular vine design or river design. But there are certain designs that cannot be either vines or rivers. This may need to be thought of in terms of its relationship to Aboriginal peoples' memory. Nothing is invented since everything is already part of the dreaming. It suffices to remember it. On the one hand, there is no copying, but you always start at zero, you crystallize your own dream memory. I have heard women say that they copied a motif drawn, for example, of a man on a box and then do something completely different with it—for them it was the “same” thing.

All these Warlpiri notions about same and different seem to me more crucial than trying to identify iconographic codes. In fact, since there is basically an alphabet of four elements—a straight or a curved line (like an arc), a circle or a meandering line—all possible meanings are necessarily distributed among these four elements. What counts is not how these elements are combined, but what is the context attached to the combination. This is how recognition functions. It's interesting that some whites—teachers or missionaries—have tried to use these four iconographic elements to get their messages across. Unlike whites, though, the Warlpiri only understand the messages if they remember what the individual who drew them told them.

Although they often use small arcs to represent seated people in both body painting and sand-drawing on sand to tell stories to children, it would never occur to anybody to systematically interpret the small arcs in a missionary's drawing representing the community of the Church as people, because the arcs could just as easily represent animal footprints, or—why not—animals in the church? I'm going to read what Félix said about these questions of iconography:

So there is this signified landscape that corresponds to a particular signifying tracing (picture), a variation between these two elements—signified/signifier, based on an array, that we could call discrete, of asignifying expressive figures. But what seems equally important to me to consider is the following movement: First, the fact that there is a composition of an array of asignifying expressive figures and of signifying landscapes, in the passage from a motivated landscape to a non-motivated expression, what I will call an arbitrarization. Second is the fact that these arbitrarized elements are formed among themselves so that they in turn form a certain type of asignifying landscape. What is the benefit, and I would say, the sense of pleasure or fulfillment (*jouissance*) to be gained from this operation? It's the fact that in the first situation, you are under a system of constraints, which is that you take the landscape as it presents itself, you have to adapt yourself to it in one way or another, you have to take responsibility for one mythical sequence or another, for a particular relationship between people, groups, or elements. By passing along a chain of asignifying expression, you acquire considerable degrees of freedom.

You still have denotation or signified landscapes, and you compose an asignifying landscape about which you yourself say that it offers a quasi-infinite variety of compositions of elements. So in principle, there are two ways to view the result. A general semiological way that would consist of saying that you have developed a code, a means of expression that is involved in a relationship of dependency with its contents. This is not what seems to me the most interesting path to take. If I am talking specifically about the asignifying landscape, it is because—independently of or in parallel with the promotion of this code—there is a phenomenon of pragmatic fulfillment, of pleasure via the constitution of existential territories. It's more than the recognition of something that resembles content, it's a simultaneous self-appropriation of this content, which is therefore determined, and a self-appropriation of the coefficients of freedom introduced by these signifying chains. It is the fact that, now that I have fabricated an asignifying existential territory for myself, I am mastering something in terms of content but I am enjoying my own freedom, managing my own space (*mon aménagement*). I am in my territory and I can play with it, just as I can play with a range of discursive elements.

I have often asked myself questions about individual freedom relative to the group among the Warlpiri. Félix says, and I quote, that “individuated enunciation can be perfectly homogeneous with collective enunciation. Conversely, a group enunciation can be perfectly personological, capitalistic.”

I objected with the example of Warlpiri dreamers who dream new body designs or songs and, unlike what might be expected, it's actually fairly common, the group does not take up these designs and songs at all. To that, Félix replied:

What the individuated enunciator does is maybe a kind of prospective work that could be taken up by the group. Like a researcher or a mystic, he is working based on the idea that somebody else might take up his idea. And this repetition translates the fact that he is participating as a collective enunciator.

So I objected, citing the case of a mother who dreams her child was not conceived on his clan's land. Before he was even born, she gives the specific identity of the other land she dreamt of to the child. The group will have to accept this as a fact. The child will be initiated into his clan's dreaming-totem, but he will always have the protection of this individual dreaming that his mother, or another relative, gave him through his own dreaming-totem. You might say this is how the dreamer expresses his/her freedom relative to the group. Félix answered that you can see it as an individual choice that is opposed to the group consensus. But for the subjective economy of groups, it is more helpful to say that the most enriching aspect is specifically the existence of singularization

processes, whether or not they are taken up by the group.

Instead of saying that “the creative process is generated by the cut of the individual in the group,” the proposition is “the creative process emerges with the entrance of a singularity that can come from an individual but also from a sub-group, or from something else that has nothing to do with the group but that comes from an esthetic conjunction, an external intrusion, a cosmic assemblage that begins to speak, a voice from elsewhere.” I agree with this, on the condition that in our societies we also think about how the alignment of the individual in a collective enunciation. But what was bothering me is that Félix is talking about individuated subjectivity in the context of capitalistic subjectivity. I quote:

It is no longer existential territories constituted through collective enunciators that produce subjectivity. It is collective equipment—machines—that produce subjective individuation. In other words, subjectivity is normed to function in the context of abstract equivalent—money, work, and all the systems that are involved in machinic production. This production needs to deny the existential logics which are operating in territorialized subjectivity; but in order not to produce robots, the machinic production must produce its antidote, territorial subjective equivalents, i.e., new nationalities, new family types, of new kinds of ego.

I witnessed a phenomenon among the Warlpiri that is both specific to their culture and perfectly reflects this definition of capitalistic subjectivity. The problem is to find out whether the elaboration of this phenomenon corresponds to anticipation of the threat of the whites’ arrival or to the independent evolution of an aspect of Aboriginal culture. The phenomenon in question began a hundred years ago, well before white people arrived in the region, and also before rumors of their arrival began to circulate. The Warlpiri and the other tribes of Central Australia experienced a kind of intellectual epidemic. One after the other, they began adopting a new kinship system that gave them brothers and cousins and uncles in all of the clans and every tribe. At the same time, marriage choices for all of them opened up enormously. Still, they followed a kinship model, but not using a genealogy based on blood kinship—the genealogy was expanded into a classifying system. For instance, the Warlpiri previously could only marry second-degree cross cousins, but under the new system a sixteenth of the tribe, and of all the tribes that had adopted the system, became marriageable “cousins.” Around two hundred different kinship relationships, each designated by a different word, were distributed within a system of equivalence. This system was so successful that more isolated tribes are currently in the process of adopting it.

I was lucky enough to observe this adoption process, because a tribe that did not use this system had invited the Warlpiri to visit them to bring them a ceremony. The Warlpiri themselves had adopted the ceremony a hundred years ago; at the same time they adopted the kinship system. The new system gives everyone names that Aboriginal peoples call “skin names” and that anthropologists call “sub-sections.” The Warlpiri not only distributed these names to every man and woman, but also to all of their ancestors—the heroes of their dreamings, their myths.

And so the two ancestral heroines, celebrated in the new ceremony that the Warlpiri were adopting at the time of the new kinship system, were assigned the skin-name that corresponds to “mothers” of the paternal clan; in other words, the name of a woman from outside the clan, because the Warlpiri are exogamous (i.e., they marry outside of their clan). In this ancestral story, the two women were sisters, and under the new system, sisters share the same skin-name. So they received the same skin-name in addition to their two ancestral first names.

This was a new ceremony because it came from a Northern tribe, but it became “Warlpirized,” with a new dream-myth-itinerary (dreaming) called *kajirri* that the Warlpiri elaborated for the occasion. The ceremony was originally linked with a specific dream-myth. But here is a good example of how, in a space of fifty years, the Warlpiri conceived other ceremonies also called *kajirri*. They expanded the initial *kajirri* model: two sisters, mothers from the clan and from outside, from other dream-myths. This process of equivalency could be seen as parallel to that of the new kinship system. Nevertheless, it is hard to say that these equivalency models become implanted against the existential territories, as Félix says about the capitalistic subjectivity of equivalency. On the contrary, it seems like the existential territories are reaffirmed and clan identities are maintained via these assemblages of models. Even if people don’t return to their lands, they continue to celebrate them. But how can you distinguish between what an Aboriginal person experiences now and what his or her ancestors experienced?

What I was saying to Félix is that even in the 1940s some isolated groups had never seen or heard of whites. There were bomb tests in the Southwestern deserts in the 1950s and 1960s, and un-sedentarized groups would see an explosion and not know where it came from. And when the whites came looking for them, they had never heard of them before... And groups that had never seen whites didn’t even bother with describing them, but they did organize a camel and horn ceremony, because another group had seen camels. The word that went around wasn’t “we saw some camels,” it was dancing, and that’s very important because, as I said earlier, the important thing is not that there are rituals, or knowing what they mean, it’s that the rituals take place. So

they danced the camel, but they didn't call them camels... Maybe the whites were camels with horns!<sup>3</sup>

E.G. — What seems to come out of all this is a series of activities with multiple entry points, through body paintings, dancing, singing, dreaming, and so on, but approached with a certain pragmatism that says well, if we don't get there one way, we'll get there by a different one, which explains the relativity of the entry points and the impossibility of an analytical coding system. What seems to be the objective is an abstract, machinic fulfillment (*jouissance*), and gaining a certain possibility of playing with the coefficients of freedom such that one has an array of asignifying expressive figures, which are in fact supported by all kinds of correspondences. For that reason, the various territorialized semiological economies have that finality on every level, including in terms of kinship ties, preferential marriages, and so on. And as a matter of fact, it makes me think of the finality of the child, who also has this objective of being able to create increasingly abstract games. We could demonstrate that the goal of children's games is to master articulations at an abstract level via a similar entry point. Moreover, the difference between this and capitalistic abstraction is that the abstract quantities involved are in fact regulated, and they don't factor into the coefficients of freedom because the economy of abstraction is literally colonized, literally articulated, and because there's this notion of a coefficient of libertarian fulfillment (*jouissance*) of abstraction that is a goal, whereas the activities of abstraction in capitalistic subjectivity are highly regulated.

JEAN-CLAUDE POLACK — The ways the people you are talking about express themselves are very close to the discourse of one of my patients who tells me similar things, where I get especially lost... There are dreams, and there are stories, objects, phenomena, substances, and materials, all of which enters into extremely complex articulations with body parts and with moments in the story. What strikes me, too, is that she tells stories to me today that are not so different from those she was telling me twenty years ago. It's at the same time somewhat enriching and yet impoverishing in certain ways, but something has remained constant—it can't be said that she constantly invents new things, there's a transmission. What her case shares with this one is this kind of enormous effort that she continues to make, even though we are working in an Assistance Center through work<sup>4</sup> and she lives in specially-provided housing; and she continues doing her cartographic work, which at the same time takes

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<sup>3</sup> The horns imitated bulls and other cattle that had been introduced by settlers. When Europeans started to cross Australia on camels (with Pakistani guides), Aboriginal peoples first viewed them as new creatures, half-man, half-animal. The dance was circulated as both news and entertainment (See Rosy Napangardi's first contact story at <[www.odsas.net](http://www.odsas.net)>).

<sup>4</sup> Regarding this organization, see J.-C. Polack and D. Sivadon, *Intimate utopia*. São Paulo: n-1 edições, 2013.

elements of her story, events she refers to, and that I am sometimes involved in (“In Egypt, three hundred years ago, when we met outside the mosque...”). It’s very complicated, but when she said that three or four times in a row in ten years, it compels me to think she’s not simply dazzling me on purpose so that I get confused, there’s something more important going on. It always consists of creating a kind of continuum between these stories and the system of involvement of her body, which is in a state of dispersal and is unbelievably complex, in which I am trying to gradually... It is astonishingly difficult, and I have realized a certain number of things: Her syntax is so bizarrely put together that if I don’t understand what she’s telling me, I am incapable of remembering how she said things after she leaves, to the point that I asked her if she would allow me to record our sessions... What I find striking was when you said “It’s not the same thing,” which introduces a shade of meaning, starting from when we short-circuit the phenomena of signification between semblance or identity and analogy; I mean there’s something that only goes into formal levels of presentation, drawings etc., and you have the impression of a transposition of multiple effects in a trajectory onto the field and in traits to, on the skin, and even still there is this continuity—but there is this permanent flow consisting of always deciphering the maps and identifying the tracings, in fact there is an inscription. There might not be signification, but there are tracings, there is an ongoing cartographic effort, and it may be that pragmatic process... what is very interesting in the case of my patient is what you say about the benefits of fulfillment (*jouissance*), she talks about them: She has things with her urethra, for example, or her asshole, when there is a certain kind of event happens that can interact with what she calls, in her words, the little skin there on the groin, there are special moments when one has the impression that she has a real orgasm, a partial organ-pleasure, and so there is something that can be referenced on the map. That way we know that it works. When she noticed connections like that, you get the impression they are ongoing, and that’s what I find so striking: Ten years later, it’s always the same story, I mean the meeting with Ho Chi Minh at the Château de Langeais who made her a child up her ass... So there are in any case things that hold up amid all that, it’s precisely these localizable fragmented productions of fulfillment (*jouissance*) that are not very numerous—perhaps five or six—that are very precise on her body, and they are the only points around which one has the impression that one can try to get something stable to stay in place. And in addition, it is articulated in a very complex manner, that I have not been able to understand, with her medications. And her prescriptions. Because medicine is one thing, but prescriptions are totally different! They have to be written in a particular way...  
x<sub>1</sub> — I have the impression that these people travel so they can make history.

Ultimately it's through traveling that this history is made; it doesn't need to be made by seizing power.

B.G. — In New Caledonia, too, stories of land distribution are complicated, not because there are dreaming stories like for Aboriginal peoples, but there is a historical memory about the itineraries, the pathways that people from previous generations moved along/walked through...

J-C.P. — There's also something else... Potocki's novel, *Le manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* (The Manuscript Found at Saragossa) where numerous trajectories are also told by different personalities, because each of them discovers his buddy, who tells a story, and after a certain number of pages you no longer know who is saying what. What's extraordinary is that, no matter how varied the adventures of the different participants are, there are matrices and constants that regularly return, like the hero of every story who always ends up meeting two women who are sisters, very beautiful; he wants to sleep with them, he falls asleep in their arms and wakes up under a gallows with two hanged men. There are many variations on the appearance of the two sisters, and on the hanged men, too, but what is never missing, I mean, what is in every variation of the story, is always there, even though the variations are multiple, there are the two sisters, the hanged men too—they vary, but they're never missing. Which means that the multivariate nature of the story is still connected through a kind of structure...

F.G. — Oh yeah! That's where we reconnect with our debate with Eric (Alliez)! Is it a structure? It seems to me very interesting in Barbara's description that you can't talk in terms of structure. Because she presents series of variations that are in fact infinite variations; she says there are four fundamental semiotic elements—the circle, the half-circle, the straight line, and the meandering line—but that the system is ultimately open. In fact, how can you reconcile the fact that there are these open variations with the fact that there is this rigorous individual or collective apprehension: That, what you did there, it's OK! But that isn't OK! It is unacceptable! So there are imperative judgments. It's this knowledge of a composition of intensive traits that, unlike the cohesion that might occur between discursive elements, have no referent, or in any event, whose references are, shall we say, self-referential in nature and that only refer to their own environment within a specific context, but they aren't translatable in the way that you might be able to situate various local referents that belonged to a whole to create a general structural map. I am trying to distinguish between two kinds of logic—a logic of discursive wholes from an ordological logic, meaning that its procedures and purposes are totally different from the cardological logic, which is the logic of articulated wholes, even though these two logics are not entirely unrelated. In a certain way, ordology expresses itself



through languages constituted via cardology, the logic of wholes, in which there are relationships between the signifier and the signified, but in fact, it puts them to a different use, because it is a use that targets an existential effect, with thresholds, meaning that this effect is more or less traversed, it is crossed, it is not crossed, but it is incontestably either crossed or not crossed.

I have the impression that what Australian Aboriginal peoples contribute to us is a high degree of ease that worries us a lot, not so much as participants in a capitalistic kind of subjectivity, but because this subjectivity relies on vast disorganization, an immense crushing of every other mode of existentialization—in dream, in desire, in daily life, in every way.

Kungariya Gladys Napangardi dancing with *yukurrukurrri* boards



Nakakut Barbara Gibson Nakamarra painted *yawakiyi* Black Plum for Mulyukarrji



# THE VOICE OF THE NIGHTS<sup>1</sup>

Nakakut returned from Yuendumu, where she had attended a meeting of the Central Land Council, gathering all the representatives of the groups having rights on the Granites land. The only woman invited, she told me of her shame to have had to speak in front of so many men.

“In the plane that was taking me to the meeting, I was sick. But it was not only the flight. The night before, I had a dream. I was seated with Yakiriya and some ancestral women under a bough shade. We were getting ready for a ceremony and a crowd of Whites were taking pictures of us! My mother-in-law accosted me, very angrily saying she didn’t want the Whites to take photos of us. I answered back: Don’t worry! They are going to give us a truck!”

“And didn’t you want to ask for a truck at the meeting?” I observed, bursting out laughing.

“That’s true!” Nakakut confessed, having a laugh too.

She added that, if she had dreamt about having her picture taken, it was undoubtedly because of the photo she had asked her daughter to take, a photo of herself, her sister Beryl, me and Yakiriya, when the latter had given me a wooden egg, a sacred object of the Emu Dreaming.

“But my dream carried on. I heard two new songs, one for the Emu Dreaming and the other for the Rain Dreaming of my mother-in-law. The two trails follow each other in parallel from North to South of the Warlpiri territory. Emu guided me. More accurately, it’s the egg that has sung for me. Not the male egg that you own but its little sister, the female egg that Yakiriya has kept. I’m the one who made them for her, on the occasion of an old ceremony. The poor little egg has been separated from its brother, that’s why it sang for me.”

Nakakut talked at length about a long journey which, in her sleep, had taken her with other women, Yakiriya and Betty among them, on the ancestral trail

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<sup>1</sup> Transl. by Catherine Petit & Paul Buck from *Les Rêveurs du désert*. Paris: Plon, 1989, pp. 191-197.

of the Emu and the cloud-men of the Rain people. While they danced that last Dreaming, a sandstorm had awoken her in the middle of the night. She had remembered with sadness the old deceased relatives who had taught her the Rain Dreaming in her childhood. Falling back to sleep, she had resumed with a few companions that journey on the ancestral tracks. Dancing all night they were hurled from a swamp with black stones called *Black Clouds* to a site with several rockholes. They *tasted* the water from all the holes with their feet and did the same with the sea on the Darwin Coast where the brother and sister of the Emu Dreaming disappeared. Then a giant wave took them back to the swamp, the final site of the Rain Dreaming, and Nakakut had woken up.

“You know,” I recounted, taking my turn, “while camping with the family of the old Jungarrayi on the way back from the Granites, I had a funny dream. I was floating with them in a kind of boat on an immense black lake. The water rose and a gigantic silhouette appeared, bigger than a mountain, very thin, with the face of an unknown black woman. She stretched out her hand towards us, palm up, with a terribly sad look on her face. We placed a handful of earth in the hollow of her hand, that earth was in fact really our boat. The giant smiled as she disappeared beneath the water that became earth.”

“You dreamt about water because the Nangala spouses of the old Jungarrayi came from the Rain Dreaming,” Nakakut told me. “The gift of earth to water is a sign of a good meeting between the land of Jungarrayi and the Rain images (*kuruwarri*) of the Nangala. That should be the same between you, Nungarrayi, and the Jangala who will marry you.”

“The Nangala noticed that that dream had perhaps been given by *Wapirra*, the Christian Father,” I said, “but that, above all, it came from the land as a sign that it welcomed me.”

“It is possible that White people receive their dreams from the one they call the Word,” Nakakut said. “But it is Mungamunga or Yiniwurru who gives their dreams to the women of the desert. For the men, it’s different.”

I was extremely excited. With the story of the oneiric revelation of Rosy for The Granites, and now with Nakakut’s dream, I could at last tackle the subject which haunted me since the beginning.

“What happens when someone dreams?” I asked point-blank.

“Well, *pirlirra*, Kardiya would say the *spirit* or the *soul*, leaves the body and travels. If someone wakes up the sleeper too abruptly, one risks preventing *pirlirra* from regaining its place, loins for the men and uterus for the women. And then the person falls ill.”

Nakakut explained that without a *soul* every Warlpiri becomes weaker, cannot act anymore, nor concentrate. Similar to a robot whose batteries were not recharged any longer, he wastes away and can die, unless in the course

of another sleep the soul finds its way back to the body. Sometimes, it lodges itself in the foot instead of the belly. In that case, a ritual cure helps to direct the soul towards its vital centre.

“And what becomes of *pirlirra* when one dies?”

Nakakut hesitated a little before answering. After a long discussion, I discovered the destiny of that individual *soul* varies according to the age of the deceased. For a child, *pirlirra* seems to mingle with the *kurruwalpa*, the spirit-child which, returning to the site where it had entered its mother, waits to be reincarnated into another child-to-be-born. For the youth and adults deceased through illness or a wound, the soul is condemned to wander in the shape of a dead ghost, *manparrpa*. It has to find the way of the trail of its Dreaming clan to rejoin the Dreaming space-time both subterranean and interstellar.

Sometimes the lost soul of a dead one becomes a *kurdaija*, a sort of vampire who attacks the living isolated in the bush, makes them unconscious to drain their blood and steal their own *pirlirra*. The victims wake up without remembering what has happened to them, but from that day forward they are no more than a semblance of life and die soon after.

Finally, the soul of old people who die of old age are carried directly onto the way of the Dreaming space-time. It leaves the body at the moment of agony. The relatives make the dying person repeat, site by site, the steps of their Dreaming trail. And through that last journey, which makes them relive their life, their soul enters the earth at the place where the clan's dead join to find itself carried away into the sky, beyond the Milky Way. It is said that one can see the milky stain of Magellan's Little Cloud drawing slightly nearer the Big Cloud, a sign that the two galaxies are drawing the soul into another dimension.

“But what is the relationship between that soul, *pirlirra*, and Mungamunga or Yiniwurru?” I asked Nakakut.

According to the anthropological literature I had read, Yiniwurru was a word used by women for spirit-children<sup>2</sup>, while Mungamunga, a term originating from the Northern and Eastern tribes, designated the ancestral heroines who had sown the spirit-children.<sup>3</sup>

“Mungamunga and Yiniwurru are the same thing,” Nakakut told me. “It's like a womb, our common mother who guides the women's soul *pirlirra* in their sleep. She inhabits other caves and dark holes. But in dreams, she speaks to us with the body and face of who we know.”

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2 N. Munn, *Warlpiri Iconography*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973.

3 D. Bell, *Daughters of the Dreaming*. Melbourne/North Sydney: Spinifex, 2002; C. H. Berndt, “Women's Changing Ceremonies in Northern Australia” in *L'Homme*, n° 1. Paris: Hermann, 1950; Sir B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Northern tribes of Central Australia*. London: Macmillan&Co., 1904. Trans. by C. Petit and P. Buck from *Les Rêveurs du désert*, op. cit., pp. 231-239 [T.N.]

And so I learnt that Mungamunga-Yiniwurru is a truly cosmological system restricted to women, designating the principle generating dream images. The mythical elements which appear in the dreams—landscape, animals, plants, phenomenons, ancestral heroes, spirit-children, songs,—seem to be a manifestation of that *Voice of the Nights*. Feminine, for it is called *Mother*, the dreaming womb was nevertheless moved by a masculine force, *mangaya*. Phallic symbol? Sexuality is rather transcended here in a cosmic embrace.

Sung in the most secret feminine rituals, the *mangaya* force is the exclusive power of the desert women who often designate by that name their sacred poles. One of the rituals aimed at activating it consisted in the *businesswomen* smearing their pubes with yellow ochre and depilating them by burning the hair. The depilation was carried out in the greatest secrecy during different ritual contexts: by the widows at the beginning of a mourning; by the mothers-in-law during ceremonies of settlement of conflicts; finally by the custodians of the Kajirri cycle just before the young men are released from their initiation seclusion.

I could not help comparing that pubic depilation with our aesthetic “ritual” of depilating our legs. Warlpiri women have virtually no hair on their limbs, which the men value as a sign of their femininity. However, men do carry out pubic depilation<sup>4</sup> and, in some South-Eastern tribes, the entire body was depilated during the masculine initiation. They were submitted to that ordeal preliminary to the marriage, using beeswax. Curiously, Warlpiri women associate the ritual with the Honey Dreaming, but they do not use wax. What was the symbolic function of the masculine or feminine depilation? To differentiate humans from animals? To remember the hairless body of the new-born babies? To control fecundity? Or to make sexual difference ambivalent?

Considering that *mangaya*, the power of the Voice of the Nights is the women’s secret, I asked Nakakut if the men have another power.

“They have *maralypi*.” Nakakut murmured.

During several stories narrated by women, each time they pronounced the word *maralypi*, it was always whispered and in connection with the secret site, inaccessible to women, where the souls *pirilirra* of the dead of a clan merge with the Dreaming space-time. Of all the sites of a Dreaming trail that place is the most sacred and most dangerous precisely because *maralypi* is there, that mysterious power which condenses all the *kuruwarri* images of a clan. Because of that link with the dead, *maralypi* also designates a funeral ceremony which consists in *opening* a Dreaming and a site whose celebration had been made taboo by the disappearance of an important ritual custodian.

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4 N. Peterson, “Buluwandi: A Central Australian Ceremony for the Resolution of Conflict” in R. Berndt (ed.), *Australian Aboriginal Anthropology*. Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1970.

Nakakut told me she could not explain to me if *maralypi* operated in the men's dreams. The men simply said that their soul was guided in their sleep by a spirit-child that they incarnated. Like the women they too saw the spirit-child of a future child announcing its birth.

In reality it is often in dreams that the spirit-children signal their forthcoming birth. The stories of annunciations of birth are absolutely fabulous. I had quickly succumbed to their magic which showed the extreme poetry with which the Warlpiri handle their desires. The spirit-children often penetrated a future mother through the ingestion of a fruit or an animal which had placed itself in her path to seduce her. They were *ngampurpa*, desirable. For that reason, they could light fires, provoke conflicts and urge men to fight. That is exactly what happened in the *conception* of one of Nakakut's sons. I was also told masculine ceremonies attracted them and at that time they *caught* mothers and fathers. For the Warlpiri it was thus the children who, before being born, chose their parents.





Mary Napangardi painted *kana* Digging stick Dreaming

# THE BLACK DOG<sup>1</sup>

September 1984. The end of the cold season was approaching but the nights were still chilly, and the wind blowing up as if a storm. An old Nakamarra custodian of the Curlew Dreaming fell very ill. Neither the massages of the women, nor the medicines of the health clinic had managed to relieve her. She proclaimed she was going to die. The Voice of the Nights had predicted it to her by revealing the Black Dog in her sleep, the one every Warlpiri dreads to see.

When he comes close to you in a dream, licks his lips in a smooth manner and scratches your shoulder in a sensual way, it is the sign of approaching death, probably yours. Nakamarra was prepared to die and nobody tried to force her to eat, take her medicines or protect herself from the cold. Not any longer.

Was she condemned beyond hope? I proposed to the woman I was living with to take care of her in our house. At first there was a slight reticence. She probably feared the patient dying in our place. Eventually she agreed, in that way giving a sign there was still some hope. Nakamarra let herself be carried from the camp, where she slept under the stars, into the house where we made a place for her between our mattresses. Washed and dressed with clean clothes, she agreed to eat a little and take her medicines.

Her hips were swollen through dehydration and the pain prevented her from standing up. I massaged her several times a day. Each evening, after hours of immobility and silence, her eyes closed or open, she was seized by verbal delirium and spasms that shook her violently. They continued into her sleep with murmurs and screams, the words always incomprehensible.

After a few days, she asked me to lay her down beneath the shade of a tree in our enclosure. I went back to the house to do some typing when suddenly a vicious barking broke out. Through the open door, I caught sight of a female dog rummaging in the stone container where the women placed their bottles

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1 Transl. by C. Petit and P. Buck from *Les Rêveurs du désert*, op. cit., pp. 209-218.

of oil for painting and other bric-à-brac (jumble). I approached and found in the bottom of the container a second dog rolled in a ball, shaking and barking too. The intruder withdrew a few steps before coming back immediately to lean across the container. This little game was repeated several times.

I pushed aside the undesirable dog and looked in carefully at the other one. A slimy substance was coming out of her, that she was licking steadily, revealing a tiny black thing, so small, fragile and unreal that I felt my throat knot with a strange emotion. I could not hold back my tears, I was completely moved, as if I sympathized with an irrational pain. Was it not simply an animal having a premature delivery? I went out on the veranda.

“The dog has had a pup!” I said to my patient. “But it’s real tiny.”

Nakamarra, as if she already knew the birth had just happened, remarked in a grave tone: “It is black, isn’t it?”

I nodded, the pup was as black as its mother was grey. Again, I felt totally shattered. A gruesome shiver went through me. The word *black* became the abyss of an endless night. The day after Nakamarra had completely recovered. I confessed that when the pup was born I had cried.

She looked straight into my eyes with her strange smile, which reminded me each time of the *babayaga* of Slavic tales of my childhood.

“The Black Dog of my dream has gone. You’ve fixed me.”

For a few seconds my mind reeled. There was a relationship between the image of her dream and the dog’s delivery, as if the dreaming obsession of Nakamarra had been made flesh to exorcize her disease. And me, a witness from both sides of the story, had I become the involuntary catalyst?

Two nights later, when Nakamarra had returned to her camp, my companions had a fit of giggles. Between chuckles, I heard:

“Kajirri has eaten her pup!”

Irony of the spells. Our dog, which bore the name of the Kajirri initiation ceremony, had swallowed the thing she had given birth to, exactly like the Kajirri heroines are reputed to *swallow their sons*, the novices, in order to engulf them for the duration of their initiation in the subterranean depths and Dreaming space-time. Simple coincidence or the destiny of her name?

In any case, it seemed that the words *Kajirri* and *Black Dog* had played a role of transference which had allowed the recovery. The pup had come to materialize the Black Dog of the Dreaming and to suppress another possible development of that image—the death of Nakamarra. The fact that the dog bore the name of mythical heroines considered as initiators, who acted as mediums of *rites of passage*, had allowed a possible transference to happen (through that dog) momentarily.

That her pup was premature confirmed that it had another destiny than

that of living. As for my own intervention in that *cure*, it was induced when I invited the patient into the house, then attended the birth. When the dog re-ingested her pup, the coincidence with the attribute of the *ogresses* of the Kajirri heroines became a pretext to laugh, for the dog seemed to perform a role without her knowledge.

Of course, the pup digested by its mother did not prevent the Black Dog from returning to haunt Nakamarra or anybody else in their sleep. But it was not a question of a reversible process like the eternal return. Rather, similar to a feedback in an infinite spiral, the passages from dreaming to awakening were numerous and constituted, from the Warlpiri point of view, the condition itself of the development of things and their transformation.

To be born, in Warlpiri, is said *palkajarri*, to become flesh. What becomes flesh in a human being is a spirit-child, that is to say a virtuality of life crystallized in the verse of a song sown by the Images produced by a Dreaming name. In that sense, the human development materializes words, images and a rhythm at the same time. And everything reproduced outside the human is equally a manifestation of images and sung words coming from the Dreaming space-time.

The Warlpiri philosophy does not set images in opposition to the substance or essence of things. The two are indissociable. If every hero or heroine is *kuruwarri*, Images that unroll in the stories and register as visible traces in the sites, he/she is also *Kuyu*, Flesh which gives form and substance to all that bears his/her name: the clans, animals, plants, phenomenons etc.

A Warlpiri man or woman talks about their Dreaming, their totemic name, as well as their Flesh which they share with their mythical ancestors, the members of their clan and the things that act as totems: the goannas, yams, rain, stars or digging-sticks. Without Dreamings, that is without original names, all things that exist would not be. The words are in a sense a guarantee for the fact that the real is already in the image: the Kangaroos can only exist because, while saying the word “kangaroo,” one perceives corresponding images that allow the numerous forms and substances which give meaning to that word to be recognized. But, on the other hand, without movement which animates the images, the names could not materialize.

The Warlpiri do not mix dream and reality, but build their relationship upon a discrimination other than our opposition between imaginary and real. The cosmology is explained as a movement to and fro between *kankarlu*, the *above* which refers to the present and all that constitutes the celestial and terrestrial environment, and *kanunju*, the *below* which refers to the past, the underground, the interstellar space and all that can occur. In certain circumstances, the *above* is identified with women, and the *below* with men. Finally, one is sometimes

synonymous with public and the other with secret. One could also translate the *above* as the manifest and the actual, the *below* being the latent and the virtual. In other words, beneath all apparent things hide secret principles. What men virtualize, for example, reproduction, women actualize by giving birth.

Ritual life consists in reaching the world of the *below* by making of forms from the *above*, songs, paintings, dances and coded gestures, which acquire in that way a sacred and secret attribute. In that process, the role of men and women differ. Women transform *below* into *above* by giving birth to embodied spirit-children as well as by propagating the forces of the Dreamings in their rituals. In reverse, men transform *above* into *below*, by making the boys *die* and *be born again* through initiation and by going into the sacred caves forbidden to women. As for the dreaming experience, it is, for both sexes, a journey into a dimension situated at the crossing of the *below* and the *above*.

Whether it be in sleep or in awakening, the Warlpiri distinguish *true* from *false*, *lying* or *mad*. Falsification and lie are a deceitful use of language, while madness is a disorientation, a lack of reference marks which beacon the paths of speech. That is the reason why the term *warungka* (mad) also designates babies, the very old, those who lose their way in the bush and deaf. It is the absence of recognition of words and places which makes the vision and hearing incomprehensible in awakening or in sleep. The discourse becomes *senseless* in the proper and figurative sense.

It is amusing to note that in the xv<sup>th</sup> Century, the French *rêver* (to dream) was *desver*, a word derived from the latin *esver*, which meant *wandering* and gave the word *endever*, to go mad. In our tradition, the dream was thus also linked to spatial and mental disorientation.

Twenty years before the story of the Black Dog, Nakamarra, who had just arrived in the old reserve, received, following a long delirium, the revelation of a ritual for women and another for men. Everything had started with that bough shade where the suitcase in which she kept her sacred objects was to be found. One day, on her return from the mission where she worked as a cook, she was told that her sacred objects had burnt. Flames had mysteriously sprung up from her shelter and, although her companions from the camp had tried to smother the fire with branches, it only extinguished after consuming her suitcase. Straightaway, Nakamarra thought: It's a spirit of the Fire Dreaming which has thrown a spark in my suitcase. Why though?

"A terrible sadness took hold of me and I lay down," Nakamarra told me. "That night, in a dream, I saw two Nangala coming towards me, each carrying a sacred board *yukurrukuru*. They shook them while dancing and put them down before me when they sat. Then a crowd of women of the Dreaming arrived and danced, I didn't know their faces. On the other hand I recognized

in the two Nangala, two of my *daughters-in-law*. When they danced, I saw myself looking at them. And I felt ill each time I caught sight of the boards they were carrying in their hands. Those boards were painted with designs I didn't recognize. Seeing them in dream really weakened me."

Waking in the morning, Nakamarra was so exhausted, she had to go to the health clinic. The nurse, panic-stricken by her strange state, wanted to send her to the hospital in Darwin.

"But I knew I wasn't really ill. It was only the dream which hit me too hard. The spirit of my dead mother and all those women of the Dreaming had taken hold of the forces of my spirit, making me as mad. Remaining in the health clinic for the night, I had the same dream again. The day after, some women came to visit me, among them my two *daughters-in-law*. As soon as I saw them, I pointed to them with my finger and shouted: You two! I can still see you dancing! I was delirious."

Nakamarra stayed at the health clinic for one month, one month of delirium. Night after night, she dreamt the same thing, or else new things which related to her first dream. Meanwhile, two men elders received similar dreams. Nakamarra recovered her health. She asked the women to come together with the men. They all came to the camp where her shelter, with her sacred objects, had burnt. It was the Mosquito camp which borders Lajamanu on the West side.

"I said to the women: I'm going to give a new *yawulyu* to the Nangala and Nampijinpa, custodians of the Fire Dreaming. And to the men, I announced I was going to give them a new *purlapa* for the Jangala and Jampijinpa, custodians of the sacred site Jurntu. They listened to me."

Nakamarra taught the women and men a new way to paint their bodies, and to sing and dance in celebration of the Fire Dreaming of Jurntu.

"If I had seen in my dream my two *daughters-in-law*, it was because their deceased fathers, two Jampijinpa, wanted to use me to teach us how to celebrate the Fire Dreaming in a new way. It's one of them, Munkurturru, who had set fire to my belongings. The spirit of my dead mother told me."

The two deceased Jampijinpa were the custodians of the Rain Dreaming in Lungkardajarra. In her dreams, Nakamarra saw them in the company of a third Jampijinpa, Werrilwerrilpa, custodian of the Fire Dreaming in Jurntu, who was killed by his brothers because of a transgression when she was small.

"I saw the spirits *manparra* of the three Jampijinpa lighting a big fire in Kartarda (a site of the Budgerigar Dreaming). The three men carried on their way, flying towards the North to arrive at Lajamanu. I heard a music of clapping boomerangs and I came closer to the place where the sound seemed to be coming from. It was the big hollow trunk of the Mosquito camp. I said to myself: Well! They are singing a *purlapa*! Then, all the men of Lajamanu

appeared and sat down near the ceremonial shelter. The three spirits came out of the tree trunk. They wore a head dress, *kutari*, very big with a tuft of emu feathers on the top. The Fire and Python Dreamings *pirntina* shone in red on their bodies covered with white down. At the same time, I saw big white clouds coming, carrying rain. A fourth spirit accompanied them on their journey but he didn't stop, carrying on his flight, far away, towards the North, as far as the sea. He dived into the ocean and re-appeared, forming huge splashes. Seeing the sky, he said to himself: I've gone too far. He turned back to land here, in Lajamanu, on the landing strip. He brought back a spear that he brandished to dance at the meeting with his three newly found companions. Then the Munkurturru spirit exclaimed: Look! *Kamangirpa!*"

Nakamarra explained to me that Kamangirpa, which designates that type of spear, is also the name of that fourth spirit of death (a Warlpiri who died in the 1930's). In her dream, she followed the four spirits to Palwa, a sacred site of the Wallaby Dreaming *wampana* that women cannot usually approach. But it was there the dreamer saw them showing the men of Lajamanu the *purlapa* dance, which mimes the murder of Werrilwerrilpa and the arrival of Kamangirpa, the man with the spear.

"You saw that dance in your country when our men came to present it to your people," Nakamarra reminded me. "Would you believe it, the Voice of the Nights took us beyond the sea, further than the Kamangirpa spirit which had dived into it! The men are proud of the *purlapa* I gave to them and, each time they dance it, they have to *pay* me the *kunari*. But, when they accepted the *purlapa* and danced it for the first time, it was me who had to *pay* them the *kunari*: dampers (flatbreads) and tea. The women to whom I had given the *yawulyu*, the Nangala and Nampijinpa, helped me to pay the *kirda* custodians and *kurdungurlu* managers of the Fire Dreaming."

After that ritual gift, the *kirda* men made *yukurrukurru* two sacred boards for Nakamarra so that she could paint on them the designs she had seen in her dreams. Except for the digging-sticks and the fighting sticks which are used as sacred poles, it was always the men who made wooden objects.

Nakamarra waited for twenty years before receiving a new revelation, this time for her own Dreaming, *wirntiki* Curlew. That happened when she camped with her niece in Yiningarra, her Dreaming place she had not visited for a very long time. The niece dreamt about the *kunarnturu* Bean Dreaming whose people followed the smoke of the beans they cooked on their way until they disappeared underground, whence came out the Curlew Dreaming. Nakamarra dreamt about the Curlew, the bird-man who saved his people from a gigantic bush fire coming from Jurntu. She saw the Kajirri heroines burning their pubic hair before leading the boys underground for the initiation. She

saw women dancing and painting themselves in a new way while singing new songs. Nobody contested her vision. Nakamarra had already proved she was a dreamer chosen by the ancestors.





Janjiya Herbert Nakamarra painted with wirntiki Curlew  
and kumarnturu Bean Dreamings for the cave at Yiningarra

# SHAMANS<sup>1</sup>

My head was full of rituals and myths that I was turning over and over in my mind for days on end looking for numerous associations and the principle of organization, which would bind them together. For nearly seven months I had not left Lajamanu, except with the Warlpiri for trips into the bush or an epic journey to Katherine. Men and women had gone there to march in the street and dance for it was the National Aboriginal Day.

One morning I woke up paralyzed by a pain in my kidneys. Impossible to stand up. The illness forced me into a welcome respite. One of the teachers lent me a book, Gödel, Escher and Bach by Hofstadter. What pleasure to rediscover Escher's drawings that had made me ponder so many times about optical illusions during my adolescence. On the other hand, I found it difficult to follow the comparison with Gödel's information paradoxes and Bach's fugues. But the hilarious dialogues the author placed in the mouth of Achilles and the Tortoise, characters inspired by *Alice in Wonderland*, set me on the track. The question that seemed to drive the book was that of self-reference. For example, in Escher's drawings, where the hand draws a hand that draws it, how can a system generate itself?

Again, I was sent back to my Warlpiri material, where most of the Dreaming narratives are self-referential. The mythical heroes and all that exists stem from their respective names, themselves stemming from the Dreamings of those names. No origin or finality. No Dreaming generator of all the others. Each ancestral or eternal being generates itself. Moreover, through the kinship relationships that link them to the other Dreamings, each can be seen as the generator of others. Hofstadter says that Bach would have died writing a fugue composed with the notes corresponding to the letters of his name. Perhaps, like the Warlpiri, we all incarnate a verse of a song which unfolds our destiny

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1 Transl. by C. Petit and P. Buck from *Les Rêveurs du désert*, op. cit., pp. 231-239.

towards the Dreaming which has generated that verse.

I had been lying in bed for three days and Pampiriyla decided it was time to call in a *ngangkari*, a traditional healer. He arrived, accompanied by his two wives, “to reassure me,” they stated. He leaned over me. I could not work out if he was smiling or grimacing behind his grey beard. His very thick lips were curiously flabby. He ordered me to turn on my stomach. I felt my T-shirt pulled up, my skirt down, then strange touchings around my kidney that came to a halt at the precise point of my pain. The healer said something quickly to the women.

“Don’t worry! He’s going to do *something* to you and after he will spit on that,” they warned me, showing me a metal plate.

I was slightly worried, but thought: He’s just going to do the number of the Amazonian shaman who spits a stone or a bone, making you believe that that just came from the sick person and thus been rid of their illness. I felt an unpleasant pricking on my back and I was told to look.

On the plate lay a little pool of blood in which floated a kind of kidney tinged with blood, all of it a rather brownish colour. This time, no doubt, the man smiled at me, his teeth shining and his lips smeared, with what, according to him, he had just spat out. A vampire faced me and I did not find that very funny! I felt nauseous and could not help it, even thinking it could very well not have been my sucked blood, but what he already had in his mouth before his arrival.

I was dying to check the state of my back. Impossible, the operation was not finished. The healer started again. A new pricking. I identified the bristles of his beard rubbing against my back. He spat again: no kidney, only a little pool, very red, like fresh blood.

“All the bad blood has gone,” Pampiriyla commented. “You see, your blood has a good colour now.”

Third operation, on the left side this time. There too, the blood spat was very red and liquid. In the logic of the analogy between my illness and the blood there was nothing surprising, the pain came more from the right side. I was ordered to get up. That seemed beyond my strength. The women became impatient and urged me to try. Woefully, I got on all fours and pushed on my hands with an unbearable effort to lift myself onto my knees. Miracle! The pain had disappeared. The old man looked at me with a mixture of irony, tenderness and assurance.

For the first time I trusted him. I twisted my body to see the state of my kidneys: on my skin, a big bluish mark on the right and a smaller one on the left. Had he really sucked my blood or were those traces only like the love bites one received during school day flirtations? With that sudden memory, I was on

the point of bursting into laughter. Not being sure the shaman would appreciate the comparison between his practice and that of teenage crushes, I showed content with a smile. Everything was alright, I was entitled to the diagnosis.

“I was told you had carried very heavy bags,” my healer said in Warlpiri. “It’s normal you had a pain after. But something else was needed for the pain to persist like that. A *stone* has hit you.”

The word “stone,” *pamarrpa*, designates pebbles and rocks as well as the mountains. But here it concerned foreign bodies, which crystallized in humans attacked by spirits or witchcraft. The shaman would have rid me of my “stone” by spitting the bloody kidney. I learnt other diseases can take the shape of a bone or a real stone that every *ngangkari* has the power to extract with that same suction technique.

I could not help thinking the blood really came from my body. Most certainly I would have had more difficulty believing if the healer had spat a real stone or bone. The fact was that deprived of periods for months without any reason, I associated the kidney with a materialization of the blood which refused to discharge! Hysteria? Psychosomatics obliged: a few days after I had paid the forty dollars fixed fee for my *cure*, I finally had my period!

Pampiriyla told me that on the path I had taken when carrying the heavy bags was a zone that concentrated all the hitting *stones* of Lajamanu. Most Warlpiri avoided going that way: a place where, by coincidence, white people lived. For the Warlpiri, the association between an organic disease and a place is not unusual. For example, it is said that non-respect for sacred sites provokes pains defined by the corresponding Dreaming. Where the Digging-Sticks heroines have gone underground, women risk no longer having their periods. And where the Invincible hero lost pus coming out of a wound in his testicles, men risk infections.

In a word, every disease has its origin in a Dreaming and every Dreaming has its benevolent and malevolent sides. The first anthropologists who thought that the totems represented what men need to survive, did not understand why some tribes have totems like Fever, Cod etc. That antimony disappears if one considers totemism as an attempt to regulate everything that exists. As there are some sites of power for the Yams and rituals associated to ensure the reproduction of those tubercles, there are also sites for illnesses and witchcraft practises to direct them onto enemies. Thus, men make every effort to control the circulation of totemic forces localized in places.

Soon after my illness, a Japaljarri in his forties, very lean and jolly, came to tell me about his own experience as a shaman.

“When I was little, one of my brothers-in-law heard a strange sound coming from my stomach, and exclaimed: Heh, listen, boy, to your father, there, speaking

in your tummy! He explained that it was the voice of Jungarrayi the Invincible, my skin father and the Dreaming father of the first *ngangkari*, the Two-Men (*watijarra*).”

It was a curious story, that one about the father of the shamans, who married all his daughters, forcing them to kill their male offsprings. But, secretly, they brought up two sons they had from their lover, the Wind. And those two decided to kill their Invincible *father* by a stranger who died too. But Invincible came back to life and, followed by his daughter-wives, wandered with wounded testicles. He finally went underground and from that sprung a huge Rainbow Snake, which swallowed the women before hurling them into the sky where they became the Pleiades, chased for eternity by their jealous father-spouse. As for the Two-Men, they went far away to the West, changing into tornadoes to sweep away the women they seduced on their path.

“Some men moved closer,” Japaljarri continued, “and all noticed that there on my arm were small waves which undulated like a snake. That was the second sign: I had the *ngangkari* power inside me. When I was driving the cattle in Western Australia I was always asked to heal people. I was assisted by two little spirits with children’s faces, the Wind brothers: one roots out diseases and the other sees through the body.”

“The Kardiya doctor needs machines to see inside the patient’s body. The Yapa doctor goes directly through the skin to find the disease.” Nakakut told me that later when we talked about shamanic power.

According to old ethnographic narratives most Australian shamans pride themselves on possessing a kind of X-ray vision. There is also a *X-ray* art, the paintings on bark from Arnhem Land which represent animal or human figures with their skeletons and organs seen in transparence through their external wrapping.

That internal vision does not only refer to the perceptible inside of the body, the shaman also sees the *underneath* of the patient, his intimate identity with the Dreaming. The figurative paintings on bark testify to that with the characters sometimes entirely hachured, the images of their mythical cartography. It is also the case for the apparently abstract paintings of the desert which trace on the ground or the body the signs of trails and sites of the Dreaming.

The terms by which the Warlpiri designate the *medicine men* or shamans, *ngangkari* or *mapanpa*, signify their power of vision and extraction. That power is supposed to materialize itself through the *stones*, quartz that inhabits the body of their healer. It is the shaman’s quartz which allow him to see through the patient.<sup>2</sup> And sometimes he spits one or two of his own quartz to catch

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2 M. Meggitt, “Djanpa among the Walbiri” in *Anthropos*, n° 50. Sankt Augustin: Anthropos Institute, 1955, pp. 375-403.

and extract the disease. The *stones* are thus double-edged weapons: agents of disease or healing. Some shamans who practise witchcraft can also use their *stones* to make their victim ill.

The sorcerers are called *kurdaija* from the name given to the death spirits who, for not having found their way, become vampires who suck the blood and soul of their victims. Curiously, it is precisely through the technique of *vampires* that the shamans heal. *Kurdaija*, a term taken from the Aranda tribe, is also the name given to the shoes plaited with hair strings and emu feathers which allowed sorcerers or members of a punitive expedition to walk without leaving footprints, even to become invisible. Independent of all witchcraft practice, shamans were said to have the power to move about without leaving traces.

But witchcraft is not the shaman's prerogative. Traditionally, everyone could cast spells by following precise practices. Killing at distance by *singing* or *pointing a bone* is supposed to penetrate the victim and tear them inside, or make them ill, blind or unable to walk by manipulating a drawing or an object etc.

"It's Mungamunga (the Voice of the Nights) which throws *stones*," Japaljarri had stated.

Until now I had never heard it said that that oneiric matrix could be maleficent. On the contrary, several times I was told stories of children lost in the bush who were guided by the Voice of the Nights to find their way back. Some would have become shamans just after getting lost.

"You do know that men don't talk about Mungamunga," Nakakut explained when she was transcribing my conversation with the Japaljarri. "He said that because you are a woman. You can leave it in your book, for it's somewhat true. As Mungamunga can make us ill by showing us too many things in a dream, in the same way the *stones* hit us when we are weak in our head."

Does that mean that like the dreamer who succeeds in making out of his visions a ritual for others, the patient can transform his *stones* into a healing power? The answer was not clear, shamanism being a secret business. It seemed the shaman's quartz both *hit* him during an illness and was injected into his body by other shamans through an initiation. Numerous descriptions that I have read in old books concerning other tribes than the Warlpiri have remained incomprehensible to me. The body would be emptied of its organs to be replaced by new ones, the joints turned around before being put back into place etc.

Strange people of the desert. In the past men and women knew the medicinal plants and poisons to throw into waterholes to send wild animals to sleep. Some could treat the teeth, using a small worm as a drill, filling the hole with a special amalgam.<sup>3</sup> They all munched the *pitchuri*, the wild tobacco which,

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3 M. J. Barrett, "Walbiri Customs and Beliefs concerning Teeth" in *Mankind*, v. 6, n° 3. Yuendumu: 1964, pp. 56-59.

mixed with ashes from a certain bark, takes the appetite away and allows one to stay awake. However, they did not resort to the magic mushrooms found in Australia. The landscape and the rituals were enough to make them lift off.

It is said that once all elders were more or less shamans. They not only had the power to see the *underneath* of things but also to feel in precise parts of their bodies when a particular relative was in danger, ill or on the point of returning from a journey. Today, a few sometimes interpret an itching in that way.

During my stay in 1984, a group of eight Pintupi arrived in a southern community. The adults had spent thirty years alone in the desert where their children were born. They returned to their tribe to find spouses for their daughters and also after the death of the patriarch who had made the choice not to let his family to be made sedentary during the systematic implementation of reserve for the Pintupi in the Sixties.

The Pintupi, neighbours of the South-West Warlpiri, had been so traumatized at the time that some had let themselves die. The others persisted in returning to their land to set up the first Outstations. When they saw the return of that group who had remained faithful to the life of hunter-gatherers, they decided to protect them by forbidding journalists and research workers to come and pester them. The Pintupi, however, asked an American ethnologist, who worked with them for years, to come and meet the group.<sup>4</sup>

The press did not fail to grab hold of those “last nomads” and news spread throughout the world. The excitement was no less strong with the Aboriginal people of the Centre themselves who attributed to those *returners* all the powers about which they felt nostalgic. They said that, like the shamans, those women and men could have travelled awake in the past of human beings, the past of the Ancestral Dreamings, and anticipate what would happen. They could simultaneously find themselves in two different places, materialize there and bring back an object. How to be surprised, in such conditions, that the Dreamings generate themselves?

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4 F. R. Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self-Sentiment, Place, and Politics among Western Desert Aborigines*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986.

Kungariya Gladys Napangardi painted *kanta* Insect Call Dreaming for Parrita







Three Lajamanu men painted with the Fire Dreaming for Jurnitu

# IS GOD A DREAM(ING)?<sup>1</sup>

Missionaries only arrived in New South Wales and Western Australia in 1821. Twenty years later they settled in Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. In the beginning, meeting with the indifference of the Aboriginal people, many missions were abandoned, and it was only around 1940 that they succeeded in gaining a hold in the Northern Territory.

Towards the end of the Forties a scandal broke out in the Phillip Creek Reserve where some Warlpiri lived. A protestant missionary was sexually abusing the Aboriginal girls he took away from their families to place in dormitories. As in the other missions, every *half-caste* or *mixed-blood* child, as opposed to *full blood* child, was systematically taken from their mother to be sent to special centres all across Australia. Some Warlpiri mothers recalled with pain that theft of the children they never found again.

Today, with the exception of certain Aboriginal communities, like Jigalong in Western Australia which rid itself of its missionaries,<sup>2</sup> most harbour one or other of the Churches represented on the continent. A large portion of Western Australia is under Catholic *monopoly*. But in the South, North and East of the Warlpiri, the Churches are Lutheran, Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian or dependants of the fundamentalist Evangelical or Pentecostal movements.

In Lajamanu, as in Yuendumu, the mission was Baptist. According to the principles of that Church, one needed to be an adult to be baptized and become a member. Around eighty men and women from Lajamanu have made that choice. The missionary couple settled there with their children for fifteen years had trained a Warlpiri pastor endowed with a certain charisma as much through his intelligence as his presence.

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1 Transl. by C. Petit and P. Buck from *Les Rêveurs du desert*, op. cit., pp. 263-73.

2 R. Tonkinson, *The Jigalong Mob: Aboriginal Victors of the Desert Crusade*. London: Cummings Publishing Company, 1974.

That Christian leader, a descendant of a family of rain-makers, dreamt at the beginning of his conversion a certain number of songs in Warlpiri respecting the traditional rhythms, but relating to biblical episodes. In 1979, he gathered his relatives once a week to sing them at night in the camp, while on another evening, the missionary made a sermon with a megaphone in the park. At the time I was dead against those sessions, I could not bear speeches like: "You are *black* with sin, all men *blackened* by sin will be damned."

But the Warlpiri explained that another Baptist missionary living "like the Yapa" died on their land in the past, and as the result of a decision by the elders had been buried in one of their sacred sites. His widow, who departed for Darwin, regularly sent tapes in Warlpiri on the Christian faith. I saw some of them listening to those tapes as if it was a message from the hereafter sent by one of them.

A few years before, the Warlpiri from Lajamanu had worked out a "Christmas *Purlapa*," a performance about the birth of Christ with songs, dances and paintings in the traditional fashion. The Warlpiri from Yuendumu had responded by creating in the same style an "Easter *Purlupa*." The stage and sound elements of those two entertainments were partially dreamt. Their execution mobilized a large proportion of both communities, including Warlpiri who did not consider themselves as Christians. It was for them a way to incorporate into the ancestral mythology the epic of Christ, Elder of the White people.

In 1984, two of the women who lived with me were regular visitors to the church, but without neglecting the traditional ritual activities. To show I had made peace with the missionaries, although they had taken a year's leave, they asked me to participate in one of their Baptist sessions. On the church lawn, I found myself naked to the waist, two crosses traced with red ochre on my shoulders and my chest painted with a design of traditional inspiration: a big arc representing the Church crowned with little lines symbolizing the divine light and encircling small arcs, the Christians gathered in one single family.

That design to be painted on women's or men's bodies, as well as on wooden dishes displayed in the church, had been developed jointly by the missionary and the Warlpiri leader. This one, working at the time on the translation of the Bible with a married couple of linguists from the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), had just learnt to read and write. Several of the congregation decided to do the same with the help of another missionary linguist. That attempt at teaching the adults to read and write was indeed very laudable but, as supposed by the SIL strategy which sends its missionaries to translate the Bible throughout the world, the fact of making equivalent indigenous concepts with Christian ones is often the most perverse weapon to destroy a culture.

The woman, who knew by heart some verses of the Bible already translated into Warlpiri, were perplexed. A word like *kuruwarri* designated now both the

Images of the Dreaming and the sacred text of the Bible. *Wapirra* was both God and the totemic *fathers* of the Dreamings. As for *pirlirra*, was the *soul* that left the body to dream different from the Christian soul? In the Book of Genesis they could find neither the reference to the Aboriginal people nor the animals native of Australia. So it was with a lot of pride they showed me in a Christian booklet, illustrated by the SIL, drawings of black people and kangaroos springing from God's hand.

I accompanied them to a collective Christening that gathered together for a two days period a hundred Warlpiri and Kurintji on a sacred site belonging to them. A magnificent natural pool stretched for hundreds of metres in the hollow of a valley of sand and rocks. There the Rainbow Serpent was supposed to live, as well as the mermaids with long blond hair, manifestations of Mungamunga, the Voice of the Nights, which sometimes caught on the hooks of the Aboriginal people who fished there. It was in that water full of mysteries that they plunged the thirty men and women dressed all in white who had decided to be converted. The day after, the newly converted and the older Baptists explained at a session of public confession the reasons for their conversion, a monotonous litany: men because they had understood, thanks to Jesus, that they should not drink any longer, nor beat their wives; women because God had shown them the way to make an example for the men.

Returning to Australia in 1988, I witnessed an even greater syncretism. With B, we had met the Warlpiri at the sports meeting in Yuendumu where the women were preparing to paint themselves with their Dreamings to dance the *yawulyu*. Informed by mail of my arrival, Nakakut and Beryl had been awaiting me for several days.

It was real bliss to meet them again, as well as the *businesswomen* present, Betty Napanangka the Kajirri *boss*, Rosy Napurrurla the dreamer of the Possum ritual, Peggy Napaljarri and the other Napaljarri mother of the deceased Chairman, the two Nangala spouses of the old bespectacled man, the old Nakamarra whom I had taken care of, the Napangardi featuring in the video recorded at the Granites, and some others too. More than half of these *businesswomen* informed me that they were going to dance that evening, but this time the "Family *Purlapa*," a new Baptist show.

At nightfall we were invited to sit amongst the Warlpiri men and women in the audience. With the exception of Tony, Paddy, Peter Japanangka and their spouses, most of the elders were present to sing along to the rhythm of clapping boomerangs. In front of us stood the *actors*. On one side women in red skirts, their chests painted with the design of the Church, on the other men, equally painted, but their bodies and faces covered with down (or wild cotton) tainted in the traditional fashion.

A young Warlpiri explained at the microphone that “through *Wapirra*, God, all the *kuruwarri* (the Images of the Dreaming) have come.” A few months ago the Warlpiri had danced the “Family *Purlapa*” in Sydney during the festivities of the Bicentenary of the arrival of the Europeans in Australia. They had created that spectacle to show their solidarity with the other Yapa of the continent and the Kardiya of the government who considered the signature of the first Treaty between the Aboriginal Australians and Europeans.

Contrary to the Native American Indians, Aboriginal people have never signed a treaty validating the occupation of their lands by the settlers. A few years ago some intellectuals launched a movement to prepare such a treaty, but the idea did not suit all Australians, Aboriginal people or others. I discovered the Baptists were in favour, the show being their peace manifesto.

Two men began to dance, one coming towards the other. When they came face to face, they embraced and bowed, their hands joined as if in prayer, before venturing together to sit near a fire. The Warlpiri at the microphone announced they represented the reconciliation of the Kardiya and the Yapa, Whites and Blacks. Two other men did the same dance, this time miming the reconciliation of young and old. Two female dancers took their place, one carrying a handbag, the other empty-handed, the rich had to give to the poor. Then a woman arrived, her hands shackled in chains and another dancer took them off, the slaves were freed. Then the Baptist leader danced to meet his wife and took her in his arms. The man at the microphone announced that men and women were equal. A final couple of dancers appeared representing those who have the “Law,” that is, the Christian faith, and those who are “without Law.” They all danced together. The “Family *Purlapa*” was finished and the audience delighted.

I was moved by that attempt, though a bit desperate, to place the Aboriginal people in our world. But I could not help thinking the idea of defining the non-Christians as “without Law” re-echoed that painful trauma of the time when Aboriginal people were not even considered as humans. Had they not insisted across the continent to translate into English their notion of the Dreaming as their Law: “*the Dreaming is our Law*”? Had they not tried for years to define themselves as living with “two Laws,” the one of the Whites and their own?

If, on the eve of the XVI<sup>th</sup> Century we were still identifying the Law of the Western World with Christianity, what augured for the future of the non-Christians? What about the Muslims, the Jews, the Buddhists, not to mention the laity and all those other religions which, like that of the Aboriginal people, had also the right to exist?

Under the pretext of general reconciliation, it was the most dangerous intolerance that started to emerge. The effects could already be felt. A few years

ago a preacher from a non-Baptist Church arrived in Yuendumu and settled in an Outstation whose members, nearly two hundred, were evangelized. On the same evening of the Baptist ritual, in another spot in Yuendumu, a meeting of a rival movement took place, which, with a thundering sound system, made its own show. The members of the two Churches, considering themselves as enemies, accused each other of having “bad” religion.

At the end of the Baptist ritual, the Warlpiri at the microphone announced that the Baptists from Yuendumu were invited to learn the “Family *Purlapa*” in order to join with the Warlpiri of Lajamanu who were soon to tour four Australian towns. A Nungarrayi, still painted with the design of the Dreaming of the afternoon *yawulyu*, proudly told me she will take part in the trip. Her husband, the elder brother of the Christian leader, would not accompany her for he had to take the *businesswomen* to a traditional intertribal gathering planned at Yirrkala in Arnhem Land. A distribution of roles to deal with the two Laws?

Not easy to reconcile all that. On the way back to Lajamanu after the sports meeting, I saw the Christians grabbed by a frenzy of painting. They had in mind to take advantage of their tour by selling paintings that represented their Dreamings. They calmed down after a week, once they discovered that they would not be authorized to *sell* their Dreamings but, on the contrary, they had to paint on panels the designs of the Church so that they could be *given* to the Christians they met.

The Warlpiri Baptists also planned to go to Israel to present their “Family *Purlurpa*.” They wanted, they said, to see the land of Jesus, the desert where he accomplished so many miracles. What would they see? The conflicts of the Jews and Palestinians? Or the perpetuation of a world of legendary wars recounted in the Book of Judges?

In the past, it was not rare that, denied the recognition of a religion and a culture, Aboriginal people were relegated to the level of animals dancing under Satan’s influence. Today, no official speech dares to call non-Christian the celebration of the Dreamings, a more subtle way to not recognize a statute of religion to those practises. The actual ideology of several missionaries nevertheless censures different aspects of Aboriginal culture as well as our own. On one side, it challenges alcohol, which motivates the majority of Aboriginal conversions, but also cards and sometimes Rock music and sports competitions, which is far from reconciling the converted. On the other, pre-arranged marriages, polygamy, mutilations during mournings, and traditional avoidance (taboo) behaviours are not looked well upon.

A fine theologian, the Warlpiri Christian leader tried to systematically revise all Warlpiri customs. Curiously it was the Old Testament which essentially settled in relation to the Aboriginal culture. Indeed in Leviticus one can find the

interdict to mutilate oneself during mourning, as well as that of eating lizards or wild animals like ostriches, the African *sisters* of the emus. Would it have derived from there, that repulsion of the first settlers towards the food offered by the Australian land, and which stays vivid for so many contemporaries?

Reading the Bible after my first stay in Australia, I was extremely impressed by the fact that the Leviticus normalises in its own way the passage from a life of nomadic hunters to that of sedentary agriculturists. The prohibited foods are all wild resources which allowed Oriental people—as people from other regions of the world—to survive without having to cultivate the land or rear animals. To forbid access to those resources can be considered as *a posteriori* justification of the cultivation of the land and a certain form of sedentarization.

The Warlpiri appeared to me to be sensitive to the fact that their life has certain things in common with that described in the Old Testament, like circumcision or the crossing of the desert. But the parallel is ambiguous for the Epistles of the New Testament no longer suppose that Christians are circumcised. And the crossing of the desert under the aegis of Moses is a punishment from God who made Man *regress* into a temporary survival similar to that of nomad-collectors: they had no village but *wander* and feed on the manna that the earth provides for them every day. To be specific, it is with the word *manna* that one translates the famous seeds of wild plants that Aboriginal people traditionally moulded on a stone to make dampers.

If one has in mind the mythical references of the Aboriginal people, the Old Testament takes on a curious colour. The story of Eve giving to Adam the fruit of knowledge and love certainly reminds us of the story of the Digging-Stick women who revealed their sexuality to the men and gave them their knowledge about initiations and hunting. The story of Noah is reminiscent of the myths of the Deluge of the Rain Dreaming. Abraham's sacrifice can echo the ritual death of the Aboriginal novices who are *reborn* at the end of their initiation. Finally, the Ten Commandments carved on the stone tablets given to Moses by God evoke that other Aboriginal Law carefully preserved by the signs of the Dreaming engraved on the secret stone boards, known in the Western world as *churinga*.

When I had come across Aboriginal people in books, two things had fascinated me, their relationship to walking and the absence of houses. Apparent wandering, in perpetual search of a home, continually recreated, left and found again by the return to the sacred sites. Sites which are not made to live in but to dream in, sites for singing, painting and dancing. Sites for love, regret and sites to keep in one's heart as a land of exile and nostalgia. For I too was living in a certain way in exile and my family was scattered all over the world. During my childhood, I had lived with the nostalgia of a mythical homeland on the other side of the Berlin Wall.

At fourteen, I had borrowed an old military vest from a friend covered with signs in felt tip, including a Jewish star. My mother froze in terror when she noticed it and asked me to get rid of it straightaway. That is how I learnt that her own mother was the daughter of a rabbi and had been baptised in order to marry my grandfather. She had never talked about it for the memory of the war and persecutions was too painful. I discovered later that old Aboriginal people had a similar attitude towards the traumas of their first encounters with the Whites.

Questioning my Jewish or Catholic roots, I have always been disturbed by the notion of an unique God. And it is precisely the apparent absence of that monotheism which attracted me to Aboriginal people. The religious question is not clear. If the first observers refused to recognize any kind of religion with the Aboriginal people, most anthropologists defined it as immanent, without deities but with supreme figures present in the whole of the terrestrial and cosmic environment. Others tried, on the other hand, to identify some ceremonies of the South-Eastern tribes with a monotheist cult.

Destroyed or dismantled, those tribes are no longer here to testify to their beliefs and the status of that so-called sky God, Baiame for some, Bunjil for others. Reading the disparate ethnography left to us, I would rather think it was not a divine notion but an extremely complex concept which crossed several aspects of the cosmology and society.<sup>3</sup> But, after all, what is God? If one takes it literally as the Word, could it not as well be designated as the Dreaming?

Aboriginal people say they are both spiritually and carnally bound to the landscape, animals, plants and stars. They are always looking out for signs in the universe which talk about their individual mortality and their eternity in the cosmic forces of the Dreamings. Such a relationship with the cosmos, if it respects the individual singularity of everyone, has nothing in common with the individualism that the relationship of the Christian or the Jew with his God supposes. It is to reinforce inside them the vital and emotional forces that take part in the reproduction of the world, that Aboriginal people practise rituals. It is in the circulation of goods, paintings, dances and songs between people and not in offerings, sacrifices or prayers addressed to a superior authority that they celebrate their heroes of the Dreaming.

Their traditional answers to the mysteries of life and death seem sufficient for the Aboriginal people to carry on finding a meaning to their place on this earth. So how to understand the conversion of some to Christianity? Do they find in the Bible a symbolic justification for their sedentarization? Or are we the ones forcing them to do it so that they can communicate with our logic?

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3 A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*. London: Macmillan, 1904; A. Van Gennep, *Mythes et légendes d'Australie*. Paris: Guillemot, 1905.





Yiripanta May Napaljarri, mother of Maurice Luther, painted with the cave and sand dunes of Yinapaka

# THE HYPERCUBE<sup>1</sup>

Coming back to the Warlpiri after years of theoretical speculations about their society, I wanted to confront them with my conclusions. It was not easy. I brought a copy of my thesis<sup>2</sup> to the literary centre in Lajamanu, but it was in French, and, in any case, most of the elders could not read. Not easy either to make a summary of its six hundred pages. With the exception of Nakakut, I had never managed to talk with a Warlpiri for more than an hour. They always had something else to do or think about.

Nevertheless I gave it a try. First I presented my manuscript to the Chairman, Maurice Luther Jupurrula. Intrigued, he agreed to listen to the main ideas, the time it took to drink an orangeade at the door of the shop. I showed him the transcriptions in French of the stories of the myths and the oneiric revelations that several Warlpiri had given me. Literate, he took pleasure in recognizing the names of the narrators, the toponyms and the Warlpiri terms.

When I opened a page where a strange diagram of kinship was located, other Warlpiri edged closer. I explained it was about skin names. By considering several rules of Warlpiri kinship, I had been led to split those eight names into sixteen numbers that I had transferred onto a figure which combined eight intricated cubes. That figure challenged all form of normal perspective for the eight cubes are presented under angles of different projection. A way to render flat the fourth mathematical dimension which passes from a normal cube to the hypercube.

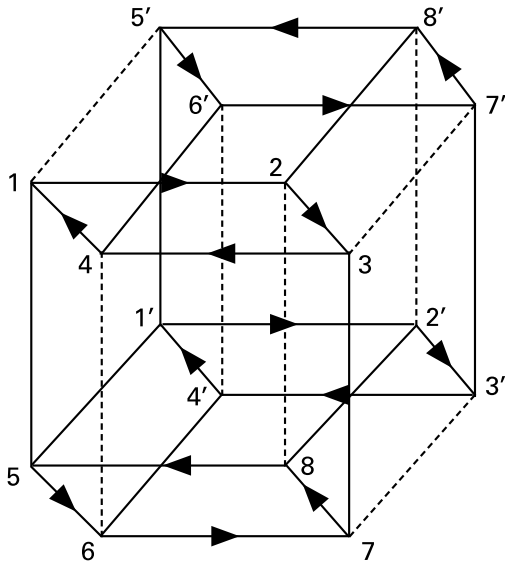
On that hypercube, the lines represent, as on the cube, the classificatory relations *fathers-children* (father's sisters—brother's children) and *mothers-children*

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1 Transl. by C. Petit and P. Buck from *Les Rêveurs du désert*, op. cit., pp. 274-729.

2 B. Glowczewski, *La Loi du Rêve—Approche topologique de l'organisation sociale et des cosmologies des Aborigènes australiens*. Paris: Université Paris I, thèse de doctorat d'Etat ès lettres et sciences humaines, 1988. Published as *Du Rêve à la Loi chez les Aborigènes*, op. cit.

(mother's brothers—sister's children) between the skin names. When I had pointed to three numbers of the figure, I had given the corresponding skin names, which were not written on the page of the thesis. Suddenly I hesitated before continuing. Immediately the Chairman gave me the missing name and, following the circuit I was making on the lines, he confirmed the correspondences between the numbers and names. The Warlpiri standing around enjoyed it enormously, finding the hypercube a “good game.”



Male names start with a J and female names start with an N. Male and female of the same name are “skin” brothers and sisters

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1 and 1': Japanangka/Napanangka  
2 and 2': Jakamarra/Nakamarra  
3 and 3': Jungarrayi/Nungarrayi  
4 and 4': Jampijinpa/Nampijinpa

5 and 5': Japangardi/Napangardi  
6 and 6': Jangala/Nangala  
7 and 7': Japaljarri/Napaljarri  
8 and 8': Jupurrurla/Napurrurla

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Four cycles mothers-children:

1 2 3 4  
1' 2' 3' 4'  
5 6 7 8  
5' 6' 7' 8'

Eight cycles fathers-children:

1-5 1'-5'  
3-7 3'-7'  
2-8 2'-8  
4-6 4'-6

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Marriages (male=female)

1 = 8    8 = 1'    1' = 8'    8' = 1  
2 = 7'    7' = 2'    2' = 7    7 = 2  
3 = 6    6 = 3'    3' = 6'    6' = 3  
4 = 5'    5' = 4'    4' = 5    5 = 4

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Hypercube with eight skin names split in two

I was overwhelmed, even if, secretly, I had hoped for such a reaction. Before leaving France, Lévi-Strauss, to whom I had given a copy of the thesis, had told me: "It would be amusing to know what the Warlpiri think of your hypercube." He has always defended the idea that structures drawn by anthropologists in the studied societies are unconscious for the members of the society concerned.<sup>3</sup> Now, directly with the Warlpiri, I was struck by their stupefying cultural concern to formalize the articulation of their society.

That those Warlpiri men consider the hypercube as a "good game" was even less surprising when one recalls that they are used to thinking complex mental maps, those of their Dreaming trails. In the same way, they play in the space

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<sup>3</sup> Lévi-Strauss sent me, in 1989, a nice hand-written letter of compliment about *Les Rêveurs du desert*, but he asked me to consider, if the book was reprinted, to add the following page in his work where he had discussed the conscienceness of their models by Australian Aboriginal people: C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*. London: Weidenfeld&Nicolson, 1966, p. 265. And also *Structural Anthropology*. London: Allen Lane, 1968, pp. 302-304.

with the kinship by distributing in the course of rituals, people according to their respective skin names. The graphics we need to understand the complex relations which govern the kinship or the mythical cartography have however not the same role of representation for the Warlpiri. Their body paintings or paintings on canvas *speak*, but what they are emblematic of is emotionally loaded for those who know their meanings.

The elders sometimes represented on the sand the real or classificatory relationships between people by dots or lines. Using exactly the same technique as that to recount, scene by scene, stories on the sand, they superimposed those connections one on top of the other along with their oral commentary without ever bringing it, at least publicly, to a *total* figure.

Did they have an idea of that *totality* to be able to master the local articulations? I thought so. That surely was much more complex than the hypercube.

Something was clear: Aboriginal people from the desert read time in space. On the one hand with their trails, on the other by identifying the memory of the past and the virtual with the world *below*, that of the subterranean and interstellar space, the present manifestations of that memory defining the terrestrial world of the *above*. In their rituals, the Warlpiri ancestralize what happens and make *become* the traces of the past, for the two dimensions are conceived as being in a relation of constant feedback.

While I was beginning to explain to the Chairman the way I had analysed the relationships between the taboos and the Aboriginal people, I felt an uneasiness on his part and mine. By saying a word like initiation, I was suggesting something secret, restricted to men. That was not my intention. The Warlpiri do not manipulate their concepts in that abstract way. For them, to enunciate a word supposes concrete situations and thus everything those situations can generate. That is precisely why women never pronounce the word circumcision. Although they know that that practise exists and that the initiation of boys involves several taboos, they are not allowed to talk about it publicly.

I hastened to add to the Chairman that in my thesis I talked about things accessible to women only. I admitted that I mentioned old practices that perhaps had been secret, but that I had read in books on other tribes. The discussion was closed. Out of the question to go any further. Anyway the Chairman had had enough. I asked him still to organize a meeting of the elders at the Council so that I could explain my work. He agreed in a vague way.

The month passed without the possibility of a meeting taking place. In truth there were many meetings and concerns preoccupying the people. One member of the Council did ask me to show him the manuscript. The Chairman had talked to him about it. Occasionally I showed it to other Warlpiri. One Nungarrayi thought the hypercube was “easy.” While I was reading the

distribution between the skin names of some hundred Dreamings, her old blind father-in-law laughed in his corner, repeating each word in an approving manner. Later, while I was resuming a trail of the Rain Dreaming related to me by a Warlpiri, her husband corrected me. I had made a mistake in a toponym.

When I opened the page on the photos, the Nungarrayi turned away abruptly, asking me to close the manuscript. Somebody in a photo had died.

“I can look, but you shouldn’t show that to the Napaljarri and Napanangka,” she stated, recovering quickly.

She asked me to open the thesis once again at the page of the photos, and, sweeping the tips of her fingers across the silhouette of the deceased, a Jakamarra, told me to blacken it.<sup>4</sup> I did so. I had already to erase the name of another deceased.

Of course I showed the thesis to Nakakut and her sister Beryl. They too found the hypercube amusing. But I had the impression they were ashamed of the fact that the Warlpiri were reduced to words on paper. Not being literate, writing disturbed them. I shared their feeling a little, having myself a relationship of both fascination and distrust towards writing. While I was reading to Nakakut her name and that of other narrators who had given me their testimonies she said quite seriously that I had to be extremely careful with those signatures. The stories narrated by each person do not belong to them as such, and I should not forget to mention those collective belongings.

Confronted by the Warlpiri deontology, I decided that, once back in Paris, in contrast to the thesis, in this book I was going to change all the forenames of the people I was talking about, citing instead in the acknowledgements the names of all the Warlpiri families who had helped me discover their universe.<sup>5</sup>

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4 “blacken it” with a pen because the dead person’s image can’t be shown during two years or more.

5 Things changed at the turn of the XVI<sup>th</sup> Century. Most of the people named in *Les Rêveurs* have become, like many other Warlpiri, famous artists. As the young generations are eager to find any written information about their elders, I was asked to give the codes for the names: Vera and Rachel Nakamarra (Nakakut Barbara and Beryl Gibson), Patty Napanangka (Betty Hooker), Josy Napurrurla (Rosy Tasman), the chairman (Maurice Luther Jupurrurla) and the old Nakamarra (Janjiya Herbert).



Yijatarru Liddy, Nakamarra painted Yam from Yumurrpa

# HOW TO SAY AFTERWARDS<sup>1</sup>

It is ten years since my first fieldwork with the Warlpiri and almost as many years spent writing on Aboriginal people. Year after year, stages both emotional and intellectual have moved the meaning of a meeting I did not know how to *realize*, in other words, how to share with people from here. A paradox to express. To bring the Warlpiri people close to here, I had to put distance between here and my experience there. Painful operation, yet vital in order not to confuse life with the image of its memory.

During my first stay, the Warlpiri had made me discover the importance of women in their social and ritual life, but also the ambiguous games of love and strength in the co-habitation of the sexes. I had been sent back to my own femininity in a collective symbiosis in which I had lost all notion of myself. Separated from that universe, I had seen the emergence of an urgency, finding connections here, in my own culture, and not there, on those desert lands, which speak to the senses and provoke multiple reminiscences.

I sought at home, in Paris, for the existence of mythical trails which, like the paths in the desert, would make my town a territory. I thought I had found them in a network of 300 kilometres of galleries of old quarries which ran beneath the Métro and across the southern districts of Paris. With a media sociologist, an ethnologist and a historian of the quarries, we *studied* those strange clandestine people, the cataphiles, who run through the night across the underground network forbidden to the public.

The genuine hidden lining of the streets of the surface, those galleries, cut into the limestone, without light, sometimes flooded or plugged with injections of concrete during foundation laying for buildings, tell a curious urban story. They were planned after the Revolution, when the Parisians noticed that the old quarry holes, which for centuries had given stone for constructing the city,

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<sup>1</sup> Transl. by C. Petit and P. Buck from *Les Rêveurs du désert*, op. cit., pp. 280-285. Written in 1989.



threatened the collapse of the houses and streets. They also took the opportunity to empty all the cemeteries and throw the bones of some six millions Parisian ancestors into what has become the ossuary of the catacombs of the Denfert-Rochereau square, the part of the network accessible to the public.

Strange that that sweeping of the past and the threat of physical collapse coincided with the social collapse of 1789. I noticed, by delving in the archives of the library of the Villa de Paris that that fear of instability of urban foundations re-appeared at every social crisis. The newspapers grew uneasy with the Parisian substratum of *gruyere* during the Commune, the First and Second World Wars, the Algerian War, May '68 and after the first election to the presidency of Mitterand, the time when we started that research. That continued after, at the time of the student strikes in 1987, radio and newspapers talked once again about the quarries visited by very innocent urban speleologists.

My friends took the mickey out of me passing from the Australian desert to the underground network of Paris where a few fall-out shelters were found. I gave the impression I was preparing a shelter in case of nuclear war. Admittedly, at the time I was obsessed by scenarios of survival, admiring the precarious life of Aboriginal people, and moving home unrelentingly, refusing to be burdened with objects! As soon as our research on cataphilic ramblers was published,<sup>2</sup> I responded once again to the call of the desert.

The Warlpiri still haunted me as a personal myth that I had to *deconstruct* in order to grasp the people behind their image. That work of deconstruction began as soon as I met once more the uncompromising and often critical look of the inhabitants of Lajamanu. I discovered, not "the Warlpiri," but individuals with whom one develops affinities or not. As the image of a Warlpiri homogeneity disintegrated, a passionate friendship drew me closer to my privileged *informant*, Nakakut Nakamarra.

When I came back after that long fieldwork of 1984 I threw myself into the project of this book. There was a malaise. Those men and women lived their lives while I wrote. Some had asked me to return, to apply for a job which would have made me work for them. I hesitated for a long time. On the one hand I felt I was committed to them. On the other, to manage Outstations or to organize tours for the dancers was not ethnology, and I was not sure I desired to live permanently in Lajamanu. Perhaps I would have accepted if I had had a partner ready to follow me, or children. My departure for Australia had provoked another break-up in my love life and I did not want to embark once again alone into exile.

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2 B. Glowczewski, J. F. Matteudi, with V. Carrère-Leconte and M. Viré, "La cité des cataphiles" (1983), republished with a new foreword by R. Peirazeau and a 75 pages appendix from a 1982 report for the Mission patrimoine of the French Ministry of Culture. Paris: ACP, 2008. Both editions have a foreword by F. Guattari, republished in his book *Les Années d'hiver*. Paris: Les Praires Ordinaires, 2009.

I would have liked to travel backwards along the path of a personal quest to restore in their entirety those who had contributed to it. But I could not separate that part of subjectivity from the real life of those who inhabited my dreams. I reached an impasse, a radical powerlessness. A year after, I finished a manuscript without having succeeded in saying what I felt I had wanted to say. I put it aside and waited.

Meanwhile I had met B. He pushed me to go back to a more *scientific* work. I analysed my Warlpiri data, comparing it with archives on other Aboriginal societies. Throwing myself recklessly into the quest of formalization, I plunged into a magical figure, a topological figure: the hypercube.

Topology is one of the tools of artificial intelligence. Reading in the field Gödel, Escher and Bach, the book of one of the most ingenious thinkers of artificial intelligence, I had not really understood why that reading brought me back to the Warlpiri. Later I realized how it was normal that an ancestral way of thinking comes to illustrate the problematics of the science which studied the activity of thinking in general. It was the union of physics and metaphysics which had seduced me with the Aboriginal people, and it was the human spirit I sought across society. In that sense only was I interested in anthropology.

With the hypercube, all aspects observed with the Warlpiri—kinship, taboos, myths, rituals—were articulated in an astounding logic. Everything made sense while defining a universe totally different from ours. But I rediscovered too the phantasms which had given me that feeling of strange familiarity while reading stories on Aboriginal people before meeting them. It was not the image of the primitive man I was catching a glimpse of, but that of the man of the future. The one who does not think of the universe as limited and men as elected but who examines thought in infinite cosmological paradoxes.

Return to square one. In order to understand better the Warlpiri, I had had to dissect them, and what god-like surgery was going to bring them to life there on the paper? By constantly talking about Aboriginal people on radio, in seminars and workshops, and by answering people's questions, I had acquired new weapons.

When the Warlpiri had come to Paris, their presence in the flesh, their dance and their painting on sand presented "to make alliance with the French" had met with misunderstanding by numerous journalists and spectators. Why, when rushing to see the last *savages*, did not most of the people want to know about their actual living conditions? Perhaps they preferred myth to reality? Confronted by that contemporary reality of the Aboriginal people, I had much trouble demystifying it. Too many things undoubtedly push us to praise the image of people untouched by our civilisation and to refuse that they are today part of our history as we are part of theirs.

Going back to Lajamanu in July 1988, I wanted to let everything fall. Faced with changes, the book seemed to have lost its meaning, and ethnology became completely vain. Anthropologists were, after all, continually condemned to be gravediggers, parasitic mushrooms on dead trees, as the population of New-Guinea call them. That morbid discourse about *ethnologized* populations already existed for last century observers and runs through Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes Tropiques* published after the war. But the announcement of the *end* of those cultures did not prevent new generations of ethnologists from travelling far away to find populations culturally very rich despite the contact. During my previous stays, I had refused all defeatist vision, and, with my friends working with other minorities across the world, we defended their survival.

So why that discouragement? I had to admit that, in the immediate, I no longer had my place near the Warlpiri. If I had had it in the past, it was only in the limits of a tacit contract passed with them. I had recorded certain aspects of their culture to make it public and I had gained a professional specialization. Leaving Lajamanu, I admitted the Warlpiri continued living, even if I did not know how to assess their situation any longer. I had to take up, in that changing world, the place of the Aboriginal people as well as my place and that of anthropology. It remained for me to write about what I had just witnessed.

Each new day spent writing alleviated me, as if I was finally managing to relieve myself from the emotional weight that until then had tied me in a double nostalgia: nostalgia of those desert dreamers whose faces and words mixed with the musky smell of the bush infiltrated my thoughts by surprise; nostalgia of losing myself in a tribal solidarity which having been my experience there, made me vulnerable here.

To accept living with nostalgia was right at the heart of the Aboriginal way of life. Thanks to the Warlpiri I was in the process of accepting not only my nostalgia of the time spent with them but also that of Poland. I began to mourn both my Slav and Warlpiri myth. I always felt the past as *perpendicular* to the present. Now I finally understood that any past is a dream which only exists in the present through the traces it leaves. Ten years to understand that ultimate lesson from the Warlpiri!

Finishing this book, I can say that my meeting with the people of the Australian desert has transformed my desperate search for an elsewhere detached from reality into a necessity to learn to walk on the ground. Surveyors of the imaginary, the Warlpiri had taught me that dreams are not a refuge but the mirror of desires that only exist on the condition that individuals and collectivities grab with all their might the paths full of traps and unpredictable events that they have traced for themselves.

(Paris, december 1988)

Yijaturru Liddy Nakamarra painted Yam from Yumurrpa





Agnes Napanangka painted *kana* Digging stick Dreaming for Janyingki

# ACTING AND BECOMING<sup>1</sup>

## **Men's secret: *Maralypi***

To explain their dreams, men do not refer to *yiniwurru* or *mangaya*. On the other hand they, like the women, say that they split in two: their *pirlirrpa* soul sees and hears the spirit-child they embody, and that leads them on the track of the ancestral heroes in *Jukurrrpa*. According to Meggitt,<sup>2</sup> they have in their shoulder a little lizard that guides their spirit. Thus the dream experience is different for each gender.

While women have special places in the sacred sites, men have others which are absolutely forbidden to women. This is where, traditionally, the sacred rites were performed to perpetuate clans and related species; at the Rain Dreaming sites, rain-making rituals took place. Men used to go into some desert caves to paint designs on the walls or to repaint them. Cave paintings are not only associated with specific ancestral heroes, but also considered to be their trace which, generation after generation, the initiates renovate. In this context, *kuruwarri* as a human drawing is, like the images seen in dreams, a pure copy of an ancestral imprint. If women come close to the cave, say the Warlpiri, they would put in great peril themselves, the men, and the future of the clan. This demarcation implies that “men’s business is not women’s business” and vice-versa but “without one or the other there is no business...”

Each clan, among all the sites on its path of travel, has just one which corresponds to the place in which are concentrated all the *kuruwarri* scattered inside the other sites, the members of the clan and all the things bearing the same name. This singularity which condenses all the living images is called *maralypi*, the power of generation of the clan and the species associated with

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1 Transl. by Pat Lowe from *Du Rêve à la Loi chez les Aborigènes*, op. cit., pp. 83-86 and 91-99.

2 M. J. Meggitt. *Desert People*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1962.

its path of travel. Reported by the linguist Hale,<sup>3</sup> *maralypi* is not mentioned by Meggitt, who only speaks of the “concentrated expression” of the *kuruwarri*, present in a clanic site, and at the same time in all the men under the form of the patriclanic and matriclanic spirit, *bilirba*.<sup>4</sup> According to my data, rather than a patriclanic or matriclanic spirit and a “concentrated expression” of the *kuruwarri*, *pirlirra* (*bilirba*) is the individual spirit, a person’s soul which is animated by the *kuruwarri* of the father’s clan and the mother’s clan, and which is also the medium for men and women, to attain *maralypi*, the singularity which concentrates the *kuruwarri*.

*Maralypi*, even more than the concentrated expression of the *kuruwarri* is the driving principle of all the forms the *kuruwarri* can take (totems, people, places). In this sense, *maralypi* is the secret of life, a business restricted to men. That is why women only whisper the word, and so refer to what is unmentionable because ineffable. There are many clanic sites designated by the term *maralypi*, as many as there are different clans or local groups. In other words there is no one *maralypi* centre for everybody. Neither is there any hierarchy between the diverse totems characterised by *maralypi* places: they participate together in the mystery of life. Hale (1974) remarked that men use the word *tarnnga*, always, as an antonym to *maralypi*; thus *maralypi* is opposed to eternity as process (coming into being, becoming). *Jukurra* is at the same time eternity and process, but these two attributes are distinguished one from the other as the two inseparable faces of permanence.

In a generic way, as a secret and spatial reference, the term *maralypi* designates male territorial rituals. On the other hand, when the death of an important ritual custodian, man or woman, is not just followed by the usual taboos on using the name and the songline associated with the deceased, but by a general prohibition extending to the celebration of his or her whole Dreaming path of travel and the approach to its *maralypi* place, this word is used to designate the ceremony that marks the end of mourning. It is said that *maralypi* “opens” the *Jukurra* that was “closed” during mourning.<sup>5</sup> In the context of sedentary life, the Warlpiri can perform this ceremony without going to the *maralypi* site; they simply retrace the songline through their ritual acting. The men dance in order to put back into circulation the *maralypi* source of life, and occasionally some older women witness it so that they can catch what is liberated from the ground and the *kuruwarri* living forces can propagate again on the earth. But women say that they can also harness this generative power at a distance, on

3 K. Hale, *Warlpiri-English Vocabulary*. Massachusetts: MIT, 1974. See the *Kirr Kirr* digital project, *Warlpiri dictionary* by Mary Laughren et al., ongoing.

4 M. J. Meggitt, op. cit., pp. 207 and 192.

5A *Jukurra* that is “closed” is said to have “no room” for singing, dancing and painting it.

their ground where they perform, parallel to the men, the *yawulyu* ritual associated with the same Dreaming. Once open, it allows them to lift all the taboos and to name again the *kumanjayi*, “no name,” people and things.

In 1984 at Lajamanu, I witnessed the female ritual activities accompanying the male *maralyipi* ceremony opening the Digging Stick Dreaming, which is connected to a site called Janyingki. Women, after having erected the sacred stick for this *Jukurrpa*, which has not been used during the two years of mourning, put a pile of cloth at its foot and a bag containing hairstring ropes and sacred stones. One after the other, widows, mothers and mothers-in-law of the deceased touched the stick, then sat among the other women. Then, contrary to the normal rule, men, nephews and cousins of the deceased, were invited into the women’s camp to touch in their turn the stick, the stones and the ropes. At a women’s signal, they took the cloths away with them, then one man was called back to pull out the stick and to put it on the bag with the stones and the ropes. Soon afterwards the women hid everything. Through touching these objects everybody is impregnated with the *kuruwarri* contained in them, and transfers into the objects part of his or her own living image which will strengthen the people who will touch the objects later. All become relays of a circuit through which the *Jukurrpa* power will actualise the *maralyipi* singularity. The intervention of the men on the women’s ground works in two ways: through the medium of the objects the men receive the *kuruwarri* of the women, to whom they give the *kuruwarri* they actualise in their secret activities. The first stage of the opening of the Dreaming is completed by entering it.

Two weeks later, around midday, ten young women joined the elders on a new ceremonial ground prepared in the bush, to be painted and to dance. At the foot of the two erected sticks connected by a hairstring rope, was a pile of blankets. The managers, members of clans allied to the Digging Stick (*kana*) clan, opened the dance. The elders gave them each a long *wurrrardi* branch that represented the spears the Digging Stick women gave to the Initiated Men. The dancers crisscrossed each other as they brandished the spears and danced around the two sticks. Then they piled the branches on the ground, and the Digging Stick owners took over from them. They advanced on their knees, one close behind the other, looking around everywhere like animals looking for prey or being tracked by predators. When they got up, they were given the *wurrrardi* branches in their turn, and also boards painted like their chests, with designs from their Dreaming. They danced forward to meet two new dancers painted with the Goanna (*pilja*) Dreaming and carrying under their arms dishes adorned with the same design. The to-ing and fro-ing that followed staged the meeting of these two Dreamings, at the end of which Goanna tricked the Digging Stick women by making them *minyeri* headbands and *makarra*, matrix,



ropes with the hair of the heroes of the Initiated Man Dreaming; he seduced them into giving up their knowledge to the men.

Having left their spear-branches on the ground, the Digging Stick dancers took their boards in two hands. They directed one end towards the ground, moving the boards up and down, as if drawing up and being drawn down by an invisible force. The women I talked to said that even though the myth says that the female ancestors revealed to the men the pleasures of the flesh, this to and fro motion does not refer to human sexuality, but to the palpitation of the underground forces, the breathing of the earth as a metamorphosis of the bodies of the ancestral heroes. Putting down their boards, the dancers then performed above them, with their hands spread apart, the same up-and-down movement that generally concludes all *yawulyu*; the image-forces of the Digging Stick Dreaming, liberated by the symbolic opening of this Dreaming and of its *maralypi* site, had just been put back into circulation on the earth and were now returning underground.

The two piles of blankets which, all through the ritual, had stayed at the foot of the two *kuturu* sticks, were taken to the edge of the ceremonial ground, and after finishing their own celebration of the Digging Stick Dreaming on the male ground, the men took them away. The *maralypi* ceremony was over. It has been staged simultaneously, in two different places, by the men and the women. The separation in space symbolised this polarity of gender as necessary for actualising *maralypi*. Some Warlpiri use the metaphor of an electric current.

### ***Kanunju/kankarlu*, below/above: ritual transformations**

To carry out a totemic and territorial ritual is not primarily to represent an ancestral epic. The purpose is rather to identify men and women with what they sing, paint and dance, that is, to give a body to words, drawings and gestures, to fuse *Jukurrpa* names and places into symbols supported and mediated by the participants and the ritual objects, to transfigure bodies or objects into *Jukurrpa* places and beings. The Warlpiri say that by painting, singing and dancing, men and women become the *Jukurrpa* ancestral principles and the sites they travelled through and where they sit or sleep for ever. The ritual metamorphoses the actors from agents into those acted upon. While in the initial state the actors paint, are painted, sing and dance, in the final stage it is the dances, the songs and the paintings that make the actors come into being. Does this mean that the action of painting, singing or dancing transform subjects into objects?

Nancy Munn (1970) has analysed the transformation of subject into object that characterises the Warlpiri and Pitjantjatjara myths: through identification with the sites or the sacred objects, achieved by metamorphosis, imprint or

“externalisation” of their bodies, organs or substances (urine, blood, milk, saliva, tears, feces, sweat), the heroes affirm themselves as eternal beings. From a linguistic point of view, in both languages the final state is expressed by the addition of a suffix (respectively *-jarri* and *-(a)rri-*) translating as “in the process of becoming” (coming into being). Arthur Capell (1979) concluded that in the Pitjantjatjara language there is no structural contrast between the metamorphosis and the process. He gives the example of Aborigines who say that they are “caught” by a game when they catch it. The inversion of subject and object does not signify that the hunter is confused with his game. Regarding the mythical beings’ relation to the sites, Nancy Munn writes of a “bi-directional transformation” because of a tension between the process of separating the subject from the object it creates, and the atemporal identification of the subject with the object. The “objectification” would then be perceived as a movement linking the subjectivity of a person to the exterior world. But, while the ancestral beings as subjects exists before the objects into which they metamorphose, for humans it is the other way round: in the ritual identification with these beings, movement goes from the object to the subject.

At this point, the notion of identification raises a problem: when Aboriginal people say in English that they “*belong*” to this or this country—it has them—to signify that it belongs to them—they have it—, it is not that they confuse themselves with the land. In Warlpiri, just as in Pintupi (Myers; 1986), they say that they *hold* the land in the sense that this verb, *kanyi*, is used to talk about adults looking after children. On the other hand they define themselves as the children of the earth that feeds them. It is not a confusion between subject and object, between being and having, but it is an enunciation that shows two points of view corresponding to different stages of the same process: they *are* the country as its children (coming into being), they *have* it as hunters and ritual custodians (action); they are the land not in order to have it, but in the process of coming into being through the country, they can act to master it.

Surely, as Munn says, landscape offers to the individual images or fragments of himself which are simultaneously exterior to himself and intrinsically connected with him. But when a Warlpiri becomes the land and the ancestral beings he is singing, dancing or painting, his human identity is not strictly confused with the identity of the ancestral beings. Contrary to what Munn says, (the construction of) the subject is not predetermined by the objective order represented by the sites, because this order is not a *fait accompli*, fixed once for all. Just as dream interpretation allows the mythic and totemic configuration of the topography to be modified, so humans are carried by a movement by which they can in their turn become singular entities as subjects objectifying themselves in the landscape.

I prefer to talk of self-reference rather than identification. Through their myths, rituals and their everyday use of language, the Warlpiri people and their neighbours seem to say that the subject is deconstructed in time through actions and comings into being which look like temporary metamorphoses. To understand these processes of transformation, one must follow a three stage argument. Instead of the “initial” and “final” states of a transformation, I would say there is a *before without a beginning* (the desiring subject), a *meantime* (the subject “imprinting” with the object of his/her desire), and an *after without an ending* (the subject becoming another subject). The objectivation of the subject in the myth or in the ritual is only a temporary final state, a step necessary for the process to be constantly repeated that constructs ancestral heroes as well as men as evolving subjects, becoming another subject.

The inversion of subject into object (and vice versa) in the myth, the ritual, or the everyday statement, is not a mirror effect but a self-referential movement that involves a third term. The ancestral being becomes, not only a hill or a waterhole but the eternal *Jukurrpa* principle living in this place; the ritual actor becomes, not just a painting but the *Jukurrpa* of which, like the site, this painting is a “trace”; the hunter becomes, not a kangaroo but the *Jukurrpa* of which this animal is a manifestation; similarly the Warlpiri person becomes, not his land but the *Jukurrpa* that gives him his name. The relationship to different *Jukurrpa* can only be understood in a feedback process: men are fed by the land because they come from *Jukurrpa* but they feed it in their turn when in their rituals they become different *Jukurrpa*. Every Warlpiri person is an aspect of the coming into being (becoming) of the many *Jukurrpa*, an active form of a living memory, *Jukurrpa*, the Dreaming space-time, which transcends that person, and which he or she has to actualise in rituals.

“Men have an *inside* story for this *Jukurrpa*, secret one, I can only tell you the *outside* story...” This statement is a reminder of all that can be divulged in public, but also of what women may or may not say. I have heard it many times, but it took me a while before I could understand the Warlpiri dialectics related to the concepts *kanunju* (inside-below) and *kankarlu* (outside-above). First, though (the) above is not secret, neither is it profane and opposed to (the) below as the only sacred realm; on the contrary, they are both ways of referring to ritual life and to the sacred links with the *Jukurrpa* totemic beings and the land. Furthermore, if (the) above is public, what it designates is not necessarily open to everybody; thus *kankarlu* is the name given to both the men’s ceremonial camp and to the women’s ritual responsibility, but it is forbidden for women to come close to the male camp and not conceivable for men to participate in women’s rituals. The fact that there are things that men and women exclude each other from does not signify that there is a male secret or

a female secret; there is only *a* secret that they approach differently, men from “below” and women from “above.”

Nancy Munn (1964), in an elegant structural analysis, identifies the below with the ancestral past, the above with the present. According to her diagram, the land and the *kuruwarri* forces are the media that ensure the passage from the past, *Jukurrpa*, to the present, *yijardu*. However, the word *yijardu* also signifies “true,” an attribute the Warlpiri use to define *Jukurrpa* as opposed to *warlka*, false, lie, meaningless, without ancestral references. Under the apparent ambiguity of these Warlpiri concepts lies an intentional complexity; it is thus reductive to restrict *Jukurrpa* to the past and to relate it to the present, as does Munn, as a “discontinuity of repeated contrasts,” mediated by the *kuruwarri*.<sup>6</sup>

In comparing *Jukurrpa* to a living memory (*en devenir*), I have attempted to show a way of thinking that integrates the past, the present and the future in one movement, not as a progressive or a circular continuity, but as a process of feedback that engenders matter and is engendered by it. I agree there is mediation with the production of *kuruwarri* forces (as ritual designs, myths or dreams), but for me the Warlpiri categories below/above, rather than being two realms of time, past and present, are two aspects of the living memory—the virtual and the actual—described in the previous chapter.

What is at play in Warlpiri rituals is always a double movement: an actualisation (above) when the ancestral forces emerge, and a virtualisation (below) when they are sent back underground and into the cosmic elsewhere of the Dreaming, where different potentialities are emerging waiting to materialise. Women, when they set up their ritual sticks and dance, harness the *kuruwarri* forces, exteriorise them on the surface of the ground, then send them back underground. Men, on the other hand, when they paint the ground paintings and dance on them, say they “go into” the ground and the Dreaming, then “come out” depicting the mythical heroes who emerged from the underground to travel along the earth before they reentered it (Munn 1973b). One can say that if men “go into” and “come out of” from *Jukurrpa*, women on the contrary “draw it” to themselves and “propagate it.” In fact, men and women participate in both movements but in different contexts.

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6 Cf. Munn, 1964, p. 98, quote: “The temporal model summarized in the diagram formulates the time process in a pattern Leach has characterized as a ‘discontinuity of repeated contrasts.’ Distinguishing this kind of temporal model from ‘circular’ and ‘progressive’ models, he suggests that ‘in some primitive societies (...) time is experienced as something discontinuous, a repetition of repeated reversal, a sequence of oscillations between polar opposites: night and day, winter and summer, drought and flood, age and youth, life and death. In such a scheme the past has no depth to it, all past is equally past; it is simply the opposite of now.” E. R. Leach, “Two essays concerning the symbolic representation of time,” in *Rethinking Anthropology*. London: Athlone Press, 1961, p. 126. Contrary to Munn’s interpretation, I do not think Leach’s model does justice to the concept of time implied by the concepts of *Jukurrpa* and Dreaming of the Warlpiri and other Aboriginal groups.

Sexual intercourse offers the model according to which men, as penetrating, are identified with “below-inside” and women with “above-outside.” Women in childbirth also embody the movement of externalisation-actualisation (*kankarlu*) relegating men to the opposed movement of interiorisation-virtualisation (*kanunju*). Apart from the physical interaction, the situation is reversed: man’s genitals are outside and woman’s inside. Nevertheless, she also has an external organ, the clitoris. This double aspect of the female gender is related to the myth of the knowledge taken from women and the male ritual of subincision: men symbolically give themselves a “hole” they are missing to mark their body with a symbolic ambivalence similar to women’s (Bettelheim, 1971). As such they also mimic the act of externalisation peculiar to women, in ritually making the initiates “born again,” or in re-enacting the mythical beings sowing images-forces and spirit-children (which explains the name *kankarlu* “above” given to their ceremonial ground.)

In other terms, when men and women define themselves in an autonomous way, it is with a bisexual body, related to the “below” as well as the “above.” But marriage alliance determines men and women in a gender, opposing them as “below” and “above,” and conversely enacting the double motion that defines *Jukurrpa*: the externalising of the “below” (in the image of the sex-hole being an envelop) and the interiorising of the “above” (in the image of penetration). Separated by their respective rituals, men and women replay this reversibility: men coming into and out from *Jukurrpa* re-enact the above-below-above process while the below-above-below process is played by the women who draw up *Jukurrpa* then send it back underground. The collective destiny of each gender thus concentrates in the body of each individual the autonomous but at the same time dependent destiny that is materialised by every *Jukurrpa*; abolishing for the ritual period the contradiction between gender autonomy and alliance with the other.

The mythical relations between ancestral men and women, and their transposition in the ritual and economic life ruling the genders, symbolises the tension between the differentiation and interdependence of all aspects of the natural and cultural environment. All the *Jukurrpa* are autonomous in their respective paths of travel but they are interdependent through their meetings, which transform both their stories and travels. The clans that identify with these routes are diverse in their identities but interdependent because, being exogamous, they can only marry, and reproduce, in alliance with other clans. Besides, every clan crosses the lands of others and uses their resources; on its own land the clan sustains itself on different species whose totems are owned by other clans who ensure their increase. The aim of rituals is to maintain all that is designated by a clan’s totems, but they also benefit other clans, since

increase rituals for a plant or an animal concern both the clanic land connected with these totems and the reproduction of the same species on the whole of the tribal land. In exchange, the rituals of the Rain Dreaming clans ensure the annual renewal of all the water reserves. This interdependence always affirms the autonomy of each Dreaming totem and associated clan.

Since for the Warlpiri everything that reproduces—humans, other species, atmospheric and cultural phenomena—participates in the same generative principles, women as procreators are the symbols of everything that is actualised; it is in this sense that they are finally identified with the “above,” and that the ancestral heroines are the keepers of a knowledge that reproduces both nature and culture. Thus the mythic theme of a transfer of female knowledge to the men, rather than supporting the hypothesis of a lost matriarchy or nostalgia for the foetal fusion (Roheim, 1970, 1973), illustrates above all a situation that is always present. The Digging Stick myth seems to insist that even today it is through women that sexuality is revealed to men, children given to them, and alliances made between clans and tribes. This presents the sexual act as a way for men to return to the world of “below” without returning to the maternal womb, thus legitimising the postulate that the men are the virtuality, that women actualise.

One can see that the “gendering” of the concepts the Warlpiri use to describe the generation and metamorphosis of all existing things is very ambivalent. The *Kurruwalpa* spirit-children take the gender of the new-born they embody, and when they show themselves in dreams their voice and their shapes are gendered to represent a specific person, living or deceased. As a virtual life without a body, the spirit-children remind one of the question of the gender of angels: the first names that identify the spirit-children (cf. chap. 1) usually belong to children of one gender; on the other hand, according to Meggitt (1962), for some Warlpiri men, every spirit-child is believed to change gender at each of its reincarnations.

The *Jukurrpa*, understood as ancestral principles and clanic names, are called “fathers” by their *kirda* (the clans that bear their names and the “brother” clans); in this sense, they are male even if the heroes are female. But the same *Jukurrpa* become female when they are called “mothers” by the *kurdungurlu* clans, allies of the *kirda*. The *kuruwarri*, as living images and forces that animate humans, animals, as well as plants and all other totemic things, are not gendered; they symbolise both genders, therefore they are bisexual or asexual. Finally, *maralyipi*, the singularity that concentrates in one site the *kuruwarri* of each *Jukurrpa* path of travel, is virtually double-gendered but one could just as well say non-gendered. We have seen that *maralyipi* designates the men’s secret, and *yiniwurru* or *mungamunga* and *mangaya* refer to the women’s secret. This does not mean that there are two secrets, but two ways to approach the secret of life: men, approaching it from “below,” define it as double-gendered or

non-gendered, *maralypi*, while women, approaching it from “above,” suppose a combined action of the female matrix, *yiniwurru* (generating dream images, mythical *Jukurra* and spirit-children), and its intrinsic male power, *mangaya*, the double-gendered aspect of women.

So, for men as for women, masculine and feminine are not conceived as separate but rather as two sides of the same surface, whatever the medium involved: a human, an animal or vegetable form which may be male or female, a mythical path of travel which is “father” for one side of the tribe and “mother” for the other, or a sacred object that takes the totemic and sexual identity of the ancestral being it embodies in each new ritual context. From this perspective, the binary opposition of the Warlpiri “above/below” categories is only apparent: they are two points of view of the same things which men and women ritualise between birth and death in a constant exchange.

| KANUNJU   | KANKARLU   |
|---|--|
| “below,” interiorised, virtual  | “above,” exteriorised, actual  |
| underground and cosmos<br>ancestral past and the future<br>space-time of eternal beings<br>virtual totems: not individualised<br>dreaming experiences of men and women<br>before birth (spirit children)<br>death<br>female gender                | earth’s surface<br>immediate past and present<br>signs of eternal beings in the landscape<br>actual totems: named and localised<br>experiences when awake<br>pregnancy and child-birth (incarnate spirit-children)<br>end of mourning for the living<br>male gender  |
| secret  | public   |
| male social prerogative<br>secret male rituals<br>secret power of women ( <i>mangaya</i> )<br>secret sites ( <i>maralypi</i> ) reserved for men<br>totems reserved for men<br>esoteric male versions of myths<br>secret paintings: male or female | female social prerogative<br>female rituals inaccessible to men<br>men’s ceremonial ground inaccessible to women<br>sacred sites reserved for the guardians of both sexes<br>mixed totems or those reserved for women<br>public versions of lyth or those reserved for women<br>public paintings: female or male |

Sexual Ambivalence of the Warlpiri “above/below” concepts

While the existence of all things can be explained by processes of reversal between “below” and “above,” the fact of death on the contrary marks the irreversible passage of time. Reversibility and irreversibility are like two modes of the *Jukurrpa* space-time. For the “above” world, a deceased person is lost for ever, and his/her corpse must disappear. But for the “below” world, the deceased becomes eternal through his/her depersonalised name, that is his/her particular identity, is lost. The deceased’s *kuruwarri* images-forces and *Kurruwalpa* spirit-child return to and dissolve into the places they came from, while the destiny of *pirlirra* soul is to accompany the images-forces on the clanic path of travel to fuse with the *maralyipi* singularity at the main site: by penetrating the earth, the soul is taken beyond the Milky Way, to be absorbed into the cosmos by the two Magellanic Cloud galaxies, like the ancestral heroes when they finished their travels. We have seen that this destiny only belongs to the very old people; the souls of children fuse with the spirit-children they embodied, who will wait in specific places to be embodied again, and the souls of all others are condemned to wander like ghosts, with the risk of becoming vampires if they do not find their way into the cosmic path.<sup>7</sup>

One can note that at a cosmological level “above” and “below” are not simply opposites like above and below ground. “Above” is the land, the world of people as well as ghosts, vampires and various spirits who show themselves to people who are awake, but it is also the visible sky. “Below” is underground, by definition hidden, and the infinite cosmos whose true shapes are visible to people only in dreams or on shamanic journeys; it is the domain of the ancestral and eternal beings, the deceased, spirit-children and all the virtualities. Some Warlpiri are not surprised that Europeans (*kardiya*) say that the earth is round and surrounded by the sky; they knew it already. But passage from “above” to “below” is of a different order from travelling on the surface of the earth: the dead, like the ancestral heroes, do not travel on the surface of the earth to reach down under but by penetrating the terrestrial surface, they pass to another dimension which projects them in the stars.<sup>8</sup>

For the Warlpiri, the coming-and-going between the “below-virtual” (*kanunju*) to the “above-actual” (*kankarlu*) is a process of transformations which are mediated by the production of dreams and ritual activities. In other terms, there is not infinite and reversible continuity but irreversible changes (events) which generate a certain reversibility. Virtual and actual are neither continuous nor discontinuous but both: for the virtual to actualise or for the actual

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7 Kurdaija soul stealers, see chap.1 of *Du Rêve à la Loi*, op. cit.

8 Modern mythology represented by science-fiction makes us talk of space-time travels, blackholes and fifth dimension; it is ethnocentric to think that traditional thought, imagination and dream experience had no potential to imagine the transcendence of space and time limitations.



to virtualise, the two levels have to self-penetrate and produce a third one: the level of dreams and rituals.

To try to visualise such a space-time journey is disconcerting, because it does not obey to the classical laws of Euclidian geometry. Topology, on the other hand, allows one to conceive such paradoxical journeys, to formalise properties such as self-penetration and reversal of the inside and outside, which seem to characterise cosmological concepts which lie at the base of Warlpiri ritual life. My purpose is not to demonstrate the correspondence between a mathematical object and an indigenous vision of the universe, but to find a topological figure whose properties allow us to search for a common logic underlying the different aspects of Australian societies.

Kungariya Gladys Napangardi painted with a special design for the Kajirri cycle initiation connected with the Ilbilili Hills





Pampiriya Burris-Martin Nungarrayi painted with filimi, the  
Dreaming hill of the ancestral women's camp at Kulungarhinpa

# THE PARADIGM OF INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

Anthropological Phantasies, Artistic Creations and Political Resistance<sup>1</sup>

The Indigenous Australians are still too often identified as a supposedly prehistoric prototype and survivors from the Stone Age, because they were not producing iron at the time of colonization two centuries ago. However, when I went to live in the Australian desert in 1979 with the elders who had experienced their first contact with colonization in their infancy, living the life of semi-nomadic hunters before their confinement in a reserve, I was struck by something very modern in their relationships to images, to the body, and to dreams. Their sense of modernity—some would say postmodernity—can be explained as follows: the West experienced a paradigm shift when it entered the audiovisual universe and later the Internet, but the widespread connectedness that characterizes the use of new technologies is also—in my view—a specific feature of the creative manipulation of myths and rituals carried out by Indigenous Australians. In fact, Indigenous Australians themselves use dream images as an associative memory, an articulate and contemporary virtual matrix to explain the dynamism of their combinations and connections, which are simultaneously semantic, analogical and performative. All the mythical narratives are rooted in the landscape and move from place to place across the entire continent like narrated and sung series, relayed and passed on

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier French version of this paper was delivered as a guest lecture during Philippe Descola's seminar at the Collège de France, on 2007, and in English at the Department of Philosophy of Sciences, Sydney University, also on 2007. A French and English version (transl. by Eriks Minette) have appeared in print in L. Strivay and G. Roux (eds.), *The Revenge of Genres. Australian Contemporary Art/ La revanche des genres. Art contemporain australien*. Paris: Aïnu éditions, 2007. Bilingual art catalog of an exhibition displaying fifteen Australian artists (Tracey Moffatt, Dacchi Dang, Archie Moore, Rosella Namok and others) at Les Brasseurs (Liège, 2007) and at La Cité Internationale des arts (Paris, 2008). For filmed interviews of artists invited is see: <[www.archivesaudiovisuelles.fr/FR/\\_video.asp?id=1489&ress=4469&video=91498&format=68](http://www.archivesaudiovisuelles.fr/FR/_video.asp?id=1489&ress=4469&video=91498&format=68)>. The version printed here results from English checking by John Angell.

from group to group. Each narrative is an itinerary that recounts the epic tale of ancestral heroes, animals, plants, fire or the rain, who have left their traces as features of the landscape such as hills or waterholes. These heroes are the ancestors of various groups to which they give their names, what anthropology has labelled totems.

A great deal of ink has flowed concerning the definition of totemism since Durkheim, Mauss, Freud and Lévi-Strauss. Totemism has recently been redefined by Philippe Descola as one of the four universal ontologies that recount all the combinations of polarities that one can encounter in the world in terms of Self/Other relationships. In this essay, I will try to show that the ontological category of totemism as understood by Descola cannot by itself encapsulate Aboriginal ontology.

Bruce Chatwin's novel *Songlines* has met with enthusiastic acclaim after its publication in 1987 for its long reflection on nomadism which compares Indigenous Australians to other groups. Chatwin used the metaphor of a dish of spaghetti to illustrate the Aboriginal "songlines." This may be a fruitful image for conveying the complexity of the entanglements of the songs and narratives that criss-cross the Australian continent, but there is also a risk of confusion because it gives a false idea of Aboriginal territoriality by implying that as semi-nomads the Indigenous Australians simply move around and travel, shifting from place to place. In fact, they also lived in places to which they were and still remain very strongly attached, named places that are as much memory traces or engrams of collective mythical and historical heritage as they are of familial and individual experiences. As it happens those songs enumerate place-names and are all linked to particular named stage in the journeys of the totemic beings who are all described as moving from one place to another.

A lack of awareness of the importance of places as memory engrams for Indigenous Australians can lead to major misunderstandings. One example was the nineteenth century French anthropologist Paul Topinard, who came to interpret his meeting with an Aboriginal man in Paris in an "inhuman" manner. This encounter, in 1885, is described by Roslyn Poinant in an excellent collection of papers entitled *Zoos humains (Human Zoos)*:

Replying to Topinard, who was asking him about his notion of time, Billy (the Aboriginal man) listed the names of all the places he and his companions had passed through since they had left their region of Northern Queensland nearly three years previously, taken from there by the showman R.A. Cunningham to be exhibited in entertainment halls in America and Europe. One woman by the name of Jenny and

her young son, Toby, also witnessed the meeting. The three of them were the only survivors of a group which numbered nine individuals at the start.<sup>2</sup>

Jenny's husband had died in Paris ten days earlier of tuberculosis. Roslyn Poignant stresses that the French academic Topinard did not understand "the importance of Billy's performance" in listing for him all the places in the world the Aboriginal group had passed through over three years. Topinard noted that after Billy was interrupted he resumed speaking "from the previous town" leading the anthropologist to conclude that Billy simply had a prodigious "automatic" memory. Instead Roslyn Poignant reminds us that it is actually a case of "transforming a method of conceptualising space by developing it..." consisting of memorizing the configuration of the terrain and the stages of the journey, rendering an account of this tour of the world and, as Poignant suggests, a method of potentially "locating—or even anticipating—the way to return home, to Palm Island."

This paper examines the relationship between the traditional ontology of semi-nomadic Indigenous Australians living by hunting and gathering, and the ties to the land and the territories of their descendants—who, having been removed from their lands and forced to become sedentary, as well as being separated from their families, are currently searching for ways to revitalize (*se ressourcer*) on the lands that they did not grow up on. Since 1993 Australian law favours the principle of Native Title inheritance on the condition that Aboriginal heirs can prove continuous occupation of the territory as well as sustained cultural practices (hunting, rituals etc.). In an attempt to legitimize the land claims of exiled Indigenous Australians, Benjamin Smith<sup>3</sup> defines their attachment to certain territories in a way that cannot be reduced to nationalist motives, and this for good reason: Indigenous Australians created stateless societies, but above all—as we will see—the logic of territorial inscription does not function as a form of collective or national identity. I also sometimes describe Indigenous Australians as "internal refugees," exiled from their lands even if they live in Australia. But in order to understand this attachment to the land which is at issue for Indigenous Australians, it will be necessary to take a step and revisit some notions of ontology, particularly in the light of certain current debates which contrast identity in terms of territorial anchorage, and diaspora.

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2 Roslyn Poignant, "Les Aborigènes: 'sauvages professionnels' et vies captives" in N. Bancel, P. Blanchard, G. Boëtsch, E. Deroo and S. Lemaire (eds.), *Zoo Humains. Au temps des exhibitions humaines*. Paris: La Découverte/Poche, 2004, pp. 103-110. Quote transl. by Eric Minette. See also her book, *Professional savages, captive lives and Western spectacle*. Sydney: NSW University Press, 2004.

3 B. R. Smith, "More than Love: Locality and Affects of Indigeneity in Northern Queensland" in *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, v. 7, n° 3. New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 221-235.

## **Totemism and connectedness**

In *The Savage Mind*, Lévi-Strauss, remarks in passing that the Australian myths recounted by various missionaries in the nineteenth century are not particularly appealing because they often consist of a simple list of toponyms. What bothers the anthropologist in the search for meaning becomes a goldmine for those who know how to unpack the information condensed within each toponym.

In fact, the information encoded in a name or a place is not only a mythical tale, but also a knowledge of events and performances that only gain relevance by being connected.

The connections link these event-narratives:

1. To other knowledge and performances concerning the same site
2. To other places on the same (song) line
3. To other places in other songlines of the same group
4. To segments of other songlines, since each narrative line and song is passed on in a relay, from language to language, over hundreds of kilometres, crossing the whole of Australia as a network stating everything that is named in the form of totemic narratives.

The cognitive complexity of the network of Australian toponyms constitutes what I have called Aboriginal mind maps.<sup>4</sup>

Let us try first to follow the dynamic and “connecting” aspect of a songline. We now know that language and song are not located in the same hemisphere of the brain. In other words, what happens in song is not only of the order of speech but is also about sound, pitch, the body, tone, and the imprint of sound on its immediate surroundings, whether as an echo, or the soil, or every person who is expected to hear this sound. A songline is therefore like a flow, a sound vibration, that runs from place to place and that emerges or vanishes, each place being thought of as the trace or imprint of the diverse activities of totemic beings.<sup>5</sup>

These links between places take on concrete form through songs and mythical tales that recount the voyage of these beings from one place to another, on the land’s surface, underground (particularly in the case of reptile heroes) or in the sky (for birds and the rain). The movements of these totemic travellers are not inscribed just once and for all time. One can always add a place between two others, skip a place, or create new narrative and sung links between the various sites. When I say that these paths and their content may be modified, note that this is on condition that certain rules are respected.

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4 B. Glowczewski, “Cartes mentales chez les Aborigènes d’Australie” in *Cahiers du Collège iconique*. Paris: INA, 1996, pp. 59-78.

5 Franca Tamisari, “Body, Vision and Movement: in the footprints of the Ancestors” in *Oceania*, v. 68, n° 4. Sydney: University of Sydney, 1998, pp. 249-270; B. Glowczewski, *Rêves en colère*, op. cit.

Each new connection must pass through a kind of black box—a dream-like or visionary experience. The interpretation of dreams and visions must be validated by the visionary's entourage as real, that is a revelation of the Dreaming ancestors, in particular by being localized in one or more places. Dreaming, in the Aboriginal sense, is what I have called a relative time-space. In fact, Dreaming both traces back the formation of the pre-human landscape and has a present dimension, that of a virtual life that continues to guide not only humans but also the universe. To summarize, the networks of Aboriginal songs already resemble a complex system. Like the Internet, it cannot really be firmly fixed, and other connections are always possible, but it is necessary to recognize some sites in order to validate the activities from which these links emerge. For Indigenous Australians, these sites are both geographical and virtual in the sense that they are like portals to another dimension. The desert Warlpiri say, for example, that through one site one can reach all the others, a holographic image in which each part already contains the whole.<sup>6</sup>

Howard Morphy has demonstrated the epistemological and performative importance of ancestral connections for the Yolngu of Arnhem Land very effectively, the title of one of his books.<sup>7</sup> The Yolngu became famous under the name of the Murngin via Warner's *Black Civilisation*, and later because of what Lévi-Strauss called "the Murngin kinship system."<sup>8</sup> The Yolngu are also the producers of most of the bark art in the Karel Kupka collection held at the musée du quai Branly in Paris, the Basel Ethnographic Museum (Museum der Kulturen, Basel), and the Canberra National Gallery, an art form that is remarkable for its paintings in the form of meshings, such as weavings or baskets, crosspieces of lines that form crosshatchings or "diamonds," as the Yolngu say, to express the brilliance and the value of these painted structures.<sup>9</sup> It is precisely the kinetic effect of these intercrossed lines—whose visual formula differs from clan to clan—which expresses the principle of connections, among others. Many other words in the language translate that as well, including, for example, *likan*, the "elbow," a body part thought of in terms of the concept of linking. Jessica De Largy Healy<sup>10</sup> works on the connectionist dynamism of the Yolngu, on the visual

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6 See also R. Wagner, *An Anthropology of the Subject: Holographic Worldview in New Guinea and Its Meaning and Significance for the World of Anthropology*. California: University of California Press, 2001.

7 H. Morphy, *Ancestral connections. Art and an Aboriginal system of knowledge*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991.

8 L. Warner, *A Black civilization*. New York: Harper, 1937; Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary structures of kinship*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

9 The style of Yolngu paintings is also often referred to as "X-Ray art" because they show the inner structure (bones and organs) of the painted bodies of animals or humans. For the Yolngu, the crosshatching also refers to the inner structure of the land or the sea.

10 Jessica De Largy Healy, "The genealogy of dialog: stories of fieldwork in Arnhem Land" in B. Glowczewski and R. Henry (eds.), *The Challenge of Indigenous Peoples. Spectacle or politics?* Oxford: Bardwell Press, 2011 (transl. from *Le Défi indigène*. Paris: Aux lieux d'être, 2007).



as well as the performative level. We co-authored a book<sup>11</sup> that compares the Yolngu way of translating connections with the Warlpiri and their desert neighbours, who use a different graphic system that involves the famous network of circles/sites linked by lines/paths against a background of small dots that has been spreading in the contemporary art market for thirty years.

Since my first encounters with Indigenous Australians in 1979, I have been highly impressed by the priority they accord to an existential “becoming” (*devenir*) rather than to the essence in terms of substance. The territorial identity of semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers is defined as something hollow, as an absence of what has been. The tracker who hunts looks for tracks (footprints or other marks) to catch the prey, and such traces of the absence are the sole proof that an action has taken place. In Aboriginal languages highly complex concepts often insist on this notion of trace, which is thought of as the only authenticity. Indeed, the image in this sense is always true as it traces out the action that caused it to be inscribed on the ground, on the body, or on an object.

Every person carries within themselves a multitude of becomings, including totemic becomings: he or she is always a constellation of totems, not just a single totem. These totemic becomings, some with behavioral and appearance characteristics, are virtual and are only actualized when humans activate them through singing, dancing, or forming alliances according to certain rules. If they do not do so, it does not work. In order to exist in totemistic becomings, it is necessary to become connected to places that act as wells of attraction, a little like synapses, which according to physicists and biologists are now thought of as dynamic and connected according to certain laws of affinity.

The multiplicity of Aboriginal avatars as a bodily extension of a particular ancestor, human or non-human, assumes a multiplicity of points of view that I called, twenty years ago, a topological form of holography.<sup>12</sup> Australian “totemism,” across all its local variants, insists on the fact that humans are the avatars of animals, but also plants and everything that is named within culture and nature, including places. For this reason, places are simultaneously localized and subject to displacement, walking with their avatars on dream pathways that leave identifiable and personifiable traces.

Indigenous Australians speak of the “Dreaming,” an English translation of local concepts expressed in different terms according to the Aboriginal

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11 B. Glowczewski and J. De Lary Healy, *Pistes de Rêves. Voyage en terres aborigènes. Avec les artistes de Galiwin'ku et Lajamanu*. Paris: Éditions du Chêne, 2005.

12 E. Viveiros de Castro, “Les pronoms cosmologiques et le perspectivisme amérindien” in E. Alliez (ed.), *Gilles Deleuze: une vie philosophique*. Paris: Synthélabo, 1998. B. Glowczewski, *Du Rêve à la Loi chez les Aborigènes*, op. cit.; R. Wagner, *An Anthropology of the Subject* op. cit. We are not here in the Amazonian perspective of Viveiro de Castro in the sense where in stories, personal pronouns manifest that animals would see themselves as humans, so long as they are in a position of subject.

language—there is more than two hundred—and according to the context (public, secret, ritual, joke etc.). Dreaming designates both the time-space of the memory of mythical actions with which humans communicate by dreaming, and an ensemble of religious and social operators. Dreamings, in the plural, designate all of the hybrid ancestors with totemic names, the mythical narratives of which these ancestors are the heroes, the sacred sites, the geographical journeys, and the designs that are painted, sung or danced. An Aboriginal man or woman, to define his or her link with a place, can also say “I am such and such a Dreaming” (thus naming one or more of their totemic names).

During rituals and negotiations for territorial compensation, totems (Dreamings) are perceived as energies that circulate among participants of the same or of different genders, whether they are connected through the father’s line (agnates), the mother’s line (uterines), or by marriage (in-laws), by direct touch, or through the mediation of blood, cut hair, sweat, or a ritual object, as well as paintings (executed on this object, the body, or the ground). The circulation of totemic energies, of “currents” (electric) and “waves” (magnetic) pictured by water and storms, as the Warlpiri and other groups say, also takes place in songs or simply in dreams. The spiritual force of that which circulates through the body and the visions transcends biological transmission, an idea found in other societies across the planet. One could thus justify the appearance of new songs, paintings, dances and rituals as a message from the ancestors, a rememorization of something that was always there in virtual form and was just waiting to be activated.

After the ground-breaking areas of investigation opened by Durkheim, Freud and Lévi-Strauss, psychoanalysis and the social sciences constantly return to the cosmology of peoples successively referred to as “primitive,” “savage” and “first nations.” In the film *Spirit of Anchor*<sup>13</sup> Tim Burrarrwanga refers to his “totemic” name as “scientific” because he knows that science classifies elements from nature and culture in the same way as the Yolngu of Arnhem Land do when they divide up everything that is named in two totemic halves and then amongst dozens of different clans. Behind this classificatory aspect, his name (Kungkutirrimirriparinyungu “the habitat of the stingray”) is scientific because—as with hundreds of other Yolngu totemic names—this name expresses a system of indigenous knowledge about relationships between species and about the environment, where the latter is thought of as being not “beyond” but an extension of the actions of all of life’s manifestations: animals, plants, rain, fire, wind, humans, seasons, objects and other forms named in the language. All

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13 *Spirit of Anchor/L’Esprit de l’Ancre*, documentary by W. Barker and B. Glowczewski (53 min). Paris: CNRS/Images, 2002.

these levels are called *luku*, “foot,” “imprint,” that is to say a prototype and a mould from which other “copies” can be produced as true because the imprint is the proof of the actor (the agent) and the action that produces the trace.

In the Central Australian desert, *kuruwarri* are the images sown by the eternal dream-beings in the form of virtual life particles, which are “developed” and “revealed” in humans, animals, plants or places. These images—which evoke the Turin Shroud on which the face of Christ is supposed to have been imprinted, or the negative of a film—are at once mental, like mythical narratives and the songs heard in dreams, and tangible, like paintings traced on diverse structures (body, sand, wooden or stone boards, canvases) in the form of imprinted signs. The word as sung is a moving image which leaves the imaginary space to alight on earth. The social structures which locate allies in a symbolic kinship network, the taboos which regulate drives through sexual and spatial restrictions, eating and speaking practices, the visual and performative arts which picture threads of pathways through dramatic narratives, all of these seem to be founded on an existential and emotional distance, in the interior and exterior of each individual and collective subject. Each is recognized as singular whilst also being part of a network which has no limits as it can combine with others infinitely, as it offers as many new relationships as new elements and emotions which can be connected. The myth reactivated by rituals gives rise to associations of meaning as an aspect of procedural or dream-like memory.

Didi-Hubermann<sup>14</sup> has pointed out the tension between continuity and discontinuity which operates in the dream work as defined by Freud, between condensation (two elements collapsed into one) and displacement which recreate the otherness: “we are not talking about isolated terms but about knotted relationships, crystallizing passages.” Experiencing dreams as knots and crystallized passages is something that can be observed in numerous myths, particularly amongst the Indigenous Australians, who have developed a relationship with dreams to the extent that they have become a fully fledged machine to think through the complexity of the real. Painting is mobilized to make the myths work as a process of creation which resists history by fixing itself (the process) onto places: every sacred site, which is represented by a circle (or concentric circles) in many paintings of the desert, is thought of as the space of radical transformation, a hole rather than a bridge. Every individual, seen also as a place, is thus also this hole in which are deployed different layers of stories, parallel time-spaces which reunite through the synchronicity of the dream: the core of what Indigenous Australians call by different names in their languages and “Dreaming” in English.

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14 George Didi-Hubermann, *L'empreinte*. Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1997.

As I have become more familiar with the culture of the Gidja people, I have noticed that the tension in the stories, whether from the Ngarranngani (Dreaming) or the frontier (colonial) or both, is always partly resolved by an ending or closure and left partly unresolved by various elements, and by stories told and retold, in the Joonba rituals, and in other styles, such as the Manthe, or welcome country, involving the singing and smoking of guests by the traditional owners and guardians of sites.

This statement by Marcia Langton,<sup>15</sup> an Aboriginal anthropologist who holds the Chair of Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne, insists on the conspicuous double characteristic contrasting the resolution/closure of totemic stories and the resolution/incompleteness drive of narrative and ritual performance (such as the presentation and identification of strangers to a place's spirit guardians). If one compares this double characteristic to Philippe Descola's four ontologies, defined as combinations of the four variables relative to the relationship between "Self" and "Other" extended to all existing things, Aboriginal ontology cannot be reduced to the category which in this matrix defines totemic ontology.

Descola launched his theory on the basis of Lévi-Strauss' definition of totemism (in *Totemism Today*): a very celebrated formula according to which humans distinguish themselves from each other according to the manner in which they differentiate and classify animals, plants and other supposed natural elements. According to Lévi-Strauss, culture is also to be distinguished from nature, the differences in nature being only useful as a model of differentiating between humans. But in his second approach, Descola on the contrary defines totemism as the ontology of a double continuity based on physical and interior resemblances between humans and other existing phenomena. In order to define this ontology of totemism as continuity between nature and culture, he leans above all on Australian cases: the resemblance of interiorities corresponds to the identity of soul-essences and to the conformity of the members of a class to a type, whilst physical resemblances are founded on the identity of the substance and the behaviour of the humans and totemic species which give them their name. Descola<sup>16</sup> however returns to Lévi-Strauss in granting him that discontinuity reappears between the clans while all the "entities" (*existants*) of each clan remain mixed up, forming a sort of collective ethos within the clan. Totemism in this way illustrates the "cosmogenism" which distinguishes itself from an "anthropogenism" illustrated by animism (the

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15 Marcia Langton, "Hungry ghosts: landscape and memory" in *Blood in the spinifex*. Melbourne: The Ian Pottery Museum of Art/The University of Melbourne, 2002.

16 P. Descola, *Nature and Society, Anthropological perspectives*, op. cit.; *Par-delà nature et culture*, op. cit., p. 324. English transl, 2013. See intro in this book.

ontology Descola defined for many Amerindian cases); the two distinguish themselves from anthropocentrism (as characterizing European naturalism) and from the cosmocentrism of analogism (characteristic of the European theory of signatures, or certain African, Central American and Chinese divination systems, according to Descola). The four ontologies combine continuities and discontinuities in different ways:

|                              | <b>Interior resemblances</b> | <b>Interior differences</b>    |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Physical resemblances</b> | TOTEMISM<br>cosmogenism      | NATURALISM<br>anthropocentrism |
| <b>Physical differences</b>  | ANIMISM<br>anthropogenism    | ANALOGISM<br>cosmocentrism     |

The polarisation of ontologies according to Philippe Descola

I have noted that the individual and collective practice of Aboriginal myths and rituals—when they are used to make sense of the past, interpret the present and provide future directions—, seem to be deployed according to all of the polarities proposed by Descola’s matrix, and not merely the physical and interior resemblances, which for him characterize the principal trend of Indigenous Australians’ totemic ontology. Certainly, Australian totemism has a cosmogenic aspect because of the moral and human continuity that each totemic group defines between the humans and non-humans that give their names to each entity (animals, plants, elements). But this moral continuity, which is brought into play when the totemic beings are advocated as models of human law, does not explain the power of their Law, that is their effectiveness in the present and the way they can affect people and their environment. On the contrary, the totemic beings can also embody the image of transgressions to be avoided, and in this sense they become “*yapa-karri*,” literally “indigenous-other,” that

is “non-indigenous,” “other than human,” an expression that the Warlpiri also used to designate other Indigenous Australians who they situated beyond relationships of alliance with the group. That which is “beyond the law” according to many Aboriginal people is also expelled from the domain of humanity as it becomes “non-indigenous,” a phenomenon that applies to humans as well as to any other “existings” (*existants*).

Many transgressive totemic beings are staged in Aboriginal myths. For example, Invincible married his daughters and their daughters, and so on (repeatedly), asking them to kill any male offspring. But they rescued two of their boys, who secretly grew up alone before ultimately avenging themselves against their father. They thus became the ancestors of the medicine men and inaugurated the laws of kinship among the groups that they encountered all along they way. But they themselves did not respect these laws seducing the women when changing into two whirlwinds<sup>17</sup> This Aboriginal myth of Invincible and the Dreaming fate of his rejected sons, called Watikutjarra, the “Two Men” (the ancestors of shamans for approximately a hundred Aboriginal groups that speak different languages), reminds us of the Greek myth of Chronos, who by swallowing his children was denying the process of successive generations and therefore condensed time in his name: Chronos means time. In addition, Invincible, who married his daughters, relates to myths about incest encountered all around the planet. Incest myths, which are common to both Freud’s psychoanalysis and Lévi-Strauss’ structuralism, resonate with a form of naturalism that presents culture as arising through a tearing away from a state of disorder or chaos. This naturalism, which is based on a material continuity and cultural discontinuity, embodies the anthropocentrism that in Descola’s view characterizes the European world.

Every incest myth—including the Aboriginal myth of the incestuous Invincible and his two sons, who resisted him and became civilizing heroes and gave many different kinship systems to humans of different language groups—raises questions about the definition of humanity. From the Aboriginal point of view, when the transgression causes a rift between the human and the non-human, it is worth inquiring whether it refers to something different from the West, which labels those who transgress the law or seem to resist it as (supposedly non-human) monsters.

Another hazy boundary also connects totemism and animism. Instead of “de-socializing” plants and animals, Aboriginal spirituality considers every form in the universe to be “animated” by a shared energy that is not human, even though it can be expressed through relationships of kinship with the

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17 See “Shamans” in this book.

species and individualized tutelary spirits. In this accepted meaning of the term, certain groups in the Amazon that practice shamanism that Descola defined as “animistic” appear to closely resemble Aboriginal societies classified by anthropologists as “totemist” but presenting shamanistic type therapies and features. Nearly every Australian group locates this essence, soul, energy, wavelength, and singularity common both to humans and their totems in their sacred sites. In Australia and elsewhere, the importance of sacred sites has been underestimated in the collection of myths. In fact, we are currently coming to understand the extent to which the localization of stories is crucial in mentally fixing the engrams of memory borne by the myths.

Descola illustrates his fourth ontology, analogism, by citing the examples of African geomancy and Chinese divination. Australia also shows various occurrences of analogism, a category that Descola calls cosmocentric, which corresponds to discontinuities (as much interior as physical) structured by correspondences within a network. We have seen that among Indigenous Australians thinking analogically is an inherent feature of trackers’ techniques, a way of reading by association all of the signs that mark nature as well as those that mark culture. The imprint of a foot is an individual signature that is identifiable by every good hunter who, if he does not know the person, can at least distinguish the walker’s gender, the age and the time of his/her passage. The landscape is riddled with other bodily images that are “animated” because they are recognized by contact with humans or their totemic avatars. Thus, the hole in a particular rock with an oblong shape in the desert is read as an ancestral vagina, in which underground water will only rise to the surface if it is stimulated by the presence of the guardians of the site, who pay the water a visit, camp there, sleep, sing, and dance its myth. In the same way, the Yolngu from Arnhem Land articulate hundreds of analogies that range from the public to the esoteric. For example, the anchor of the Macassar fishermen who have visited the north Australian coasts for centuries is a totem, a Dreaming (*Wangarr*) associated to the trident shape of the stingray, another totem of the same clan. The anchor that allows a boat to stop or sail away also has its analogy as an articulation, the movement also found in lightning or music, as explained by a Yolngu elder, Gaymala Yunupingu. This Anchor is simply called *luku*, the name for “foot” and “the print,” a term also used for the wheels of a car, the mast and sail of a boat—everything that sets something into motion, everything that “articulates.”<sup>18</sup>

One of the fundamentals of memory—and by extension, of the unconscious,

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18 W. Barker and B. Glowczewski, *Spirit of Anchor*, op. cit.; film documented in Glowczewski, *Rêves en colère*, op. cit., pp. 297-354.

the world of dreams, and hence all mythical thought—is undoubtedly the act of reading traces by means of the connections between forms (analogies). This may explain the sense of familiarity elicited by contemporary Aboriginal paintings, which resemble neural and synaptic networks. In the 1980s, I wrote about the relevance of open networks to understanding particular Australian Aboriginal thought systems and their relationship with the land, both in terms of the structures and in the Indigenous Australians’ discourse about themselves. At the time, I referred to Deleuze and Guattari’s work, including their analysis of the rhizome.<sup>19</sup> I was criticized for this approach for a number of years, but it captivated Félix Guattari and we published together in *Chimères* our discussions on the subject during two seminars.<sup>20</sup> I later used the topological figure of the hypercube to account both for kinship networks and for a cosmology in which there is no centre for everything, but as many centres as there are places or sites recognized as subjects. In the 1990s, I followed up on exploring the reticular model by engaging in a multimedia project seemed to me the ideal way of giving full value to the reticularity of the relationships between sacred sites and the stories that connect them in the form of an interactive schematic map, a network of points connecting the totemic songlines, which are intertwined with each other. The Warlpiri elders were delighted that designing this experimental digital tool enabled to bring to light and put into practice an insight into the reticularity required for navigating through the Aboriginal knowledges encrypted within places and songlines. A long negotiation over several years led to the production of the *Dream trackers* CD-ROM,<sup>21</sup> which was tested and has been used since 1998 by children and adults at the Lajamanu School and later distributed to a wider audience, including museums, to provide contexts for collections of Aboriginal desert art.

When I presented this analysis at Philippe Descola’s seminar at the Collège de France (4<sup>th</sup> April, 2007), his immediate response was that his four ontological categories are universal and can be found in all human societies, but that certain polarities are more highly emphasized in particular groups. He also added that it is clear that since the birth of anthropology, Indigenous Australians have continued to confound researchers because of their complexity, despite nearly a century of efforts to understand Australian totemism (including the illustrious Malinowski, who chose it as his first attempt at theoretical reflection before leaving for the Trobriand Islands).

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19 *Le Rêve et la terre*, op. cit.

20 *Chimères*, n°1, op. cit., english translation in the first and second chapter of this book.

21 B. Glowczewski, *Dream Trackers. Yapa Art and Knowledge of the Australian Desert*. Paris: UNESCO Publications, 2000 (interactive CD-ROM, Warnayaka Arts); see also “We have a dreaming’ How to translate existential territories through digital tools,” op. cit.



### Nostalgia and Otherness (alterity)

I have been struck by traditional poetry in Aboriginal songs that insists on the love and nostalgia for places, the sorrow at having to leave sacred sites behind when traveling along a songline. The songs are rich in expressions of grief about having to turn one's back on a place. The tears of sadness of diverse totemic heroes, animals, and plants become springs when one observes the territory disappearing in the distance as one walks. This is a recurrent theme in ritual songs. I have collected roughly a hundred hours of them among the Warlpiri of the central Australian desert. It is certainly possible that these songs of nostalgia became privileged because people were obliged to become more sedentary in the reserves that were imposed on the generation of the elders I worked with. But it seems more likely that it expresses what Michel de Certeau called the strolling, or "deambulation," of the *flâneur* that enters into play when a person walks. A popular word in Australian, "Walkabout," is also used to refer to seemingly aimless walks in the bush. It evokes an ambulatory approach to being in the world: "wandering," like the wanderer in Lou Reed's rock song or the German tradition of "*der Wanderer*" in the forest.

In order to survive in the Australian desert, one is compelled to leave places to which one has become attached. Journeys are necessary for hunting, and walks can cover hundreds of kilometers depending on the season due to the scarcity of water located along the way. The image of the self during a walk cannot be restricted to a single place: It involves instead the unfolding of the places that in a way make each subject implode. It is this process that is referred to when shamanic myths invoke the notion of the split subject. The internal otherness of men and women emerges from their experience of walking, and the subjectivity thus produced and reproduced is multiple.

The notion of Otherness in Aboriginal ontology appears, in my view, neither in the supposed distance from nature (as Lévi-Strauss claimed), nor in the divisions between totemic classes/clans and the collective alter ego (as Descola has suggested), and not even in gender differences. I have discussed the androgyny and even the transgenderedness of numerous totemic heroes elsewhere, as well as of the ritual processes that lead men and women to identify with—or rather embody—such heroes. It seems to me that in Aboriginal ontology, Otherness passes through every moving creature or object, translating this ritual relationship of turning from inside to outside (like the image of a glove with its fingers turned inside out). The Warlpiri call the outside, what lies above, the manifest and the actual *kankarlu*, using the word *kanunju* to refer to the inside, what lies below, the hidden, or the virtual. The passage from the actual to the virtual—when ancestral spirits are staged by performers—and the return from the virtual to the actual—when a ceremony is finished—characterizes nearly

all of the ritual activities, whether they are used to encourage the fertility of the totemic species, to make the spirit of the dead vanish during mourning rituals, or to spread singular “essences,” or rather life-forces, throughout all of the members of the collective group. The Indigenous Australians who were born on the land of their ancestors or who were brought there from elsewhere talk about the legitimacy of the return to the land of diaspora Indigenous Australians who are the offspring of children forcibly removed by the authorities for several generations (one estimate suggests that 1 in 5 children were removed between 1905 and the 1970s). The indigenous discussion of the legitimacy of belonging to what the Indigenous Australians today call “historical” people (because produced by the power of settler forced displacements) insists less on the principle of physical “detachment” than on that of performative detachment. In other words, descendants brought up elsewhere have a place on the land of their ancestors even if they were not raised there, but on condition that they can read the traces of the past with which they claim to identify. In this sense, coming to live on the land now, or becoming initiated, or relearning the language, is as much a sign of existential legitimacy acknowledged by the group as it constitutes proof of indigeneity with respect to a particular piece of land or territory.

The issue here thus pertains less to a logic of blood than to a logic of how to locate the active and enunciating body. The land has a language (as Alan Rumsey<sup>22</sup> demonstrated very effectively in 2001 in the case of the Ngarinyin). But this language is as much composed of songs, dances, and other actions as it of speech. Although a number of studies in the neurosciences have demonstrated that dance and song are not activated in the same part of the brain as spoken language, in a similar way, language is far more than symbolic in the Aboriginal knowledge systems. In Warlpiri (the language of the central desert where I have worked since 1979), talking is called *wangka*. But the same term is used for birds, thunder, and anything within nature or culture that is expressed by sound. From the Warlpiri perspective, everything speaks because its sounds can be interpreted by those who know how to “track” them, in other words how to make them become activated through the traces—visual and sonorous—that these sounds leave on the body and its extensions. Bodily extensions consist of everything that exists—every terrestrial and celestial element. In this sense, there is no such thing as “the environment,” but simply an elongation in the form of the metamorphoses of multiple avatars that are deployed in a continuous and a discontinuous manner, by breaks and cuttings. In effect, these

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22 Alan Rumsey, “Tracks, traces, and links to land in Aboriginal Australia, New Guinea, and Beyond” in A. Rumsey and J. F. Weiner (eds.), *Emplaced Myth: Space, Narrative and knowledge in Aboriginal Australia and Papua New Guinea*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001. See comment in B. Glowczewski, “Guattari and Anthropology,” op. cit.

forms become autonomous in order to move around and connect with each other in infinite variations.

New technologies and globalization have helped to usher in a universe of networks in which every subject negotiates its existence through intersecting a multitude of connections. The reticular model, although it can seem terrifying in its new form as it globalizes technological and economical rationales that span the entire planet, was in its way also global and integrationist for Australians prior to colonization. Before first contact, their individual singularity was drawn into the meshes of a parental network, while their local singularity was in a sense integral to a topology linking each person to the infinity of the cosmos as much to the same extent as to every minuscule particle of material substance.

“It seems that our societies consist of interactions between ‘the net’ and the ‘self,’ between the ‘network society’ and the power of identity.” I contend that this definition from Castells<sup>23</sup> of our contemporary universe could just as well apply to pre-colonial Australian ontology and to this paradoxical hybridization of a subjectivity that is simultaneously localized by totemism and multiplied through the connectivity of associations and alliances, in which the subject, enfolded within a network society, is perpetually in a process of becoming journeys with multiple roles. Still, behind the definition, it can be perceived that there are indeed (effects of) differences between globalization and the reticular cosmology of the first Australians. For example, we have a tendency to see the superheroes of contemporary films as monsters who partially metamorphose, even if their powers can become a source of identification for young people. By contrast, the hybridizations of totemic heroes—half man, half animal, half vegetable, wind, fire, or rain people—do not appear as monsters in themselves in the perception of Indigenous Australians who practice or acknowledge a totemic logic. Still, monsters do exist for them—they are those beings who cause fear because they arise “out of nowhere,” and their monstrousness seems to be generated by the fact that they do not belong to a given place. They can take on multiple appearances of succubae, young, beautiful women with long blonde hair, giants covered in hair, dwarves with a hole where their faces should be etc. Once a monster is localized, visitors have to negotiate their right to remain on the monster’s land. One needs to introduce oneself in order to be accepted by the monster. In this sense, the place appears to “familiarize” that which “deforms” it. In this way, every seeming monster can be virtually assimilated if it becomes familiar and mutual identification has taken place.

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23 M. Castells, *End of the Millenium. The information age: economy, society and culture III*. London: Blackwell Publication, 1998, p. 388.

In this way, every seeming monster can be virtually assimilated if it becomes familiar enough once the visitor has self-identified speaking to the monster.

What can emerge at the intersection of the reticular society (Castells' "network society") and the power of identity in our contemporary world? A multitude of identifications can emerge that bear discourses that are nationalist, xenophobic or monstrously subhuman, as well as assertions of sovereignty and common human rights that sometimes suggest, if not super-humanity, then certainly surrealism. In a general way, it is up to each individual to construct places, their "own places," that will be territorialized through exclusion and openness. These constructions are not arbitrary when their rootedness is determined by cultural, historical, religious or ethnic attachments. However, these constructions always remain experimental. To put it differently, the actors are allowed some interpretation, not only in terms of assigning significance, but also and perhaps above all in terms of performance.

In this game, to which we are all subjected, indigenous people today play a very particular role. First of all because they add the dream dimension to our disciplines, which find it relatively difficult to accept the loss of the wild and the exotic within critical approaches. But, more importantly, indigenous people are having their say and are taking initiatives to prove first of all to themselves—and to others by extension—that the ontology of the "performers of thought" that the Indigenous Australians are still have a future.

### **Articulating indigeneity**

My approach in anthropology is experimental in that it has been nourished by conflicting thinkers for more than thirty years. With writing, images, and the new technologies, I am seeking to restore the words and experience of indigenous peoples from the inside. And I am still on a quest for arguments to legitimize an anthropology that is truly in touch with our world. In the 1970s, anthropology was shaken by the emergence of minority, indigenous, and alternative groups, a trend further amplified by the explosion of the Internet. The resulting dynamics have informed the way I have worked. But for many years, the inventive social responses of each discriminated group were either trivialized or ignored. The media, public authorities, and humanitarian institutions manipulate, deform, or simply confiscate the spaces of action created by those who, under the pretext that they are victims, are witnessing the denial of the right to be not only political subjects but human beings. If, as anthropologists, we have a responsibility to present, analyze, and critique the manner in which each group engages on an existential quest, all too often—in anthropology as well as in cultural studies—this existential quest is reduced to terms of identity and territory, as though identity localization guaranteed the authenticity of the

group in question. Certainly, anthropology is built upon the study of societies considered circumscribed by a place and a name, and often a language. However, the past thirty years have shown the relativity of the various assemblages of identity—including anthropology.

Since Wagner's *The Invention of Culture*, Hobsbawm, and Rangers' *The Invention of Tradition* and Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture*,<sup>24</sup> there has been a great deal of writing that questions these contours, which were previously reassured by the "total social fact." In addition to the overall process of "metissage" or hybridization, population displacements, and the dance of genders, every identity concept has been critiqued in the name of historical dynamics—particularly the colonial empires of the West and the East—and the right of each society and its individuals to reinvent itself. In this process—certainly as salutary spring-cleaning—we have forgotten that each of us fixes onto diverse anchorings that have good or bad press depending on the time or the place. In the comfort of lounges or airplanes, for example, we are happy to call ourselves cosmopolitan or de-territorialized and to feel at home no matter where we are. Deterritorialization has become a program that primarily serves the wealthy, who have the means to situate themselves beyond borders that themselves continue to be produced through new technologies in order to prevent "the Others" from traveling.

"How is 'indigeneity' both rooted in and routed through particular places?"<sup>25</sup> asks James Clifford. "How shall we begin to think about a complex dynamic of local landedness<sup>26</sup> and expansive social spaces? Should we think of a continuum of indigenous and diasporic situations? Or are there specifically indigenous kinds of diasporism? Lived dialectics of urban and rural? On and off the reservation? Island and native mainland experiences?" according to Clifford "There are real tensions, to be sure, along the continuum of indigenous locations" that "we need to distinguish, and also (carefully, partially) to connect 'diasporism' and 'indigenism')." In this context, Clifford cites a Sioux shaman and Catholic catechist, Black Elk who, during a visit to Paris, said something like "Harney Peak (in the North Dakota Badlands) is the centre of the world. And wherever you are can be the centre of the world." This discourse on the multiplicity of "rootedness in displacement" characterizes a large number of so-called postcolonial writings. But Clifford is rightly attempting to critically

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24 R. Wagner, *The invention of Culture*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1981; E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; J. Clifford, *The predicament of Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.

25 The question seems to play with the homophony of root and route, as in the routers which transmit computer traffic.

26 The concept of "landedness" goes back to the idea of an ancestral space (which can be maritime as the islanders of the Pacific stress) in which places and singular individuals are intimately connected, positioned, but also in movement, and on which indigenous people base their identity and their claims (J. Clifford, personal communication).

underscore the fact that the cosmopolitanism of being at home in the world is not exactly the point that the indigenous people of the Pacific Islands are seeking to make when they talk about journeying.

In a text in the journal *Littérama`ohi*, which was founded by Polynesian writers in Tahiti, including Flora Devatine and Chantal Spitz, I discussed “pasts that anchor” and pasts that “help to move forwards.”<sup>27</sup> It seems to me that one cannot speak of putting down roots without discussing movement. Not because supposed postcolonial societies are adrift and diasporized due to colonization and globalization, but because even before colonization the ontology of these societies were thinking of movement in terms of the displacement of existential anchorings.

The dynamism of a tradition in movement is highly appropriate for the Pacific Islands considering the incredible distances across the sea covered by peoples sharing languages and customs, as well as the reach of systems of exchange established well before colonialism. But while this paradigm of localization-within-movement is embraced by many Pacific islanders (whether Polynesian, Melanesian, or Micronesian), I am convinced that it also applies to Indigenous Australians whose navigation was not maritime but mental, ritual, and geographical, especially in the desert. It is mental navigation, walked, sung, or painted, that I have called the reticular systems of thought that the Indigenous Australians modeled in their own fashion by projecting stories into a network of places inter-connected by them over the entire continent.

Since 1979, I have had the good fortune to share with the Elders their experience and their memories as semi-nomads in the central Australian desert. The majority of these Indigenous Australians had their first contact with white people in their youth. I have also travelled extensively across the desert—albeit by car—with Indigenous Australians who knew how to survive in that environment. I was very struck by the semi-nomadism of people forcibly sedentarized on reservations, their semi-nomadism being reproduced in their knowledge systems and encrypted into the myths and rituals that they used to travel virtually across their lands. This experience and performance of the world appeared to me to constitute a form of resistance to something ontologically incompatible with what capitalistic bureaucracy attempted to impose on the Indigenous Australians—money, prefabricated food, and managing budgets and plans that supposedly lead to development.

I do not wish to state absolutely that it is a question of a conflict between tradition and modernity. On the contrary, the attitude of Indigenous Australians

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27 B. Glowczewski, “Les passés qui ancrent et ceux qui aident à passer” in *Littérama`ohi* n°1. New York: Lehman University, 2006, pp. 66-71; “Aborigènes d’Australie,” “Rêves et mythes,” “Mythes et politique” in L. Gervereau (ed.), *Dictionnaire mondial des images*. Paris: Le Nouveau Monde, 2006.

in the 1970s and 1980s seemed to me strangely modern. In the 1990s, a young researcher named Stéphane Lacam<sup>28</sup> observed the same phenomenon among the younger generation, who only rarely referred to myths and rituals but travelled around without luggage for hundreds of kilometers in makeshift cars. But Lacam called them in French *Les Gens du non-voyage* (People of the “Non-Traveling”) to distinguish them from *Les gens du voyage* (Travellers) a common expression for Gypsies in some European countries. The young Aboriginal men wandering was a form of nomadic experience that had survived the supposedly functional nomadism of way of life of hunter-gatherers who must move around to feed themselves. The desert Indigenous Australians seem to be always on the point of leaving, as I have written elsewhere. It is not an idealized vision of the noble savage roaming in search of food. Very much to the contrary, because this being on the point of constant departure is often painful, unprompted, almost a form of a nostalgia cult, as the attachment to places is sorrowful when one knows that one will have to leave. It is not a question here of forced exile or traveling for the pleasure of the journey, but more of an endless walk, a seeking to inscribe and discover a series of traces. The walk is existential, and it says a lot about humans who only exist through action, when tracing the imprints that prove their existence. Such journeys are not as idyllic as Bruce Chatwin suggested in *Songlines* and in fact have more recently become quite self-destructive. But a sedentary life is an even greater source of anguish.

Clifford suggests defining indigeneity (in the Pacific, following the example of America) as being by nature “articulated.” Here, while also critiquing it, he draws on the postcolonial theory of articulation (as defined, for example, by Stuart Hall<sup>29</sup> (1986), partly inspired by Gramsci) which presupposes that indigenous discourse and the claims of peoples called “First Nation” are only the historical result of worldwide decolonization in the 1960s and the postmodern identity politics that followed, highlighting traditions said to be invented and claimed, arguments that are prevalent in various intellectual circles fuelled by exiles. Clifford,<sup>30</sup> on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of the Pacific sea of islands<sup>31</sup> because, he says, it “helps us conceptualize practices of subaltern region-making, realities invisible to more world-systemic, centre-periphery models of globalization and locality.” Clifford seems to have been inspired by

28 S. Lacam, “Nomads but Anchored, Desert People and Kimberley People” in B. Glowczewski and R. Henry (eds.), *The Challenge of Indigenous People*, op. cit.

29 S. Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity” in *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, n° 10. Iowa: University of Iowa, 1986, pp. 5-27.

30 James Clifford, “Indigenous Articulations” in *The Contemporary Pacific*, v. 13 n° 2. Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2001, pp. 468-490.

31 Epli Hau’Ofa, “Our sea of islands” in E. Hau’ofa, V. Naidu e E. Waddell (eds.), *A New Oceania : Rediscovering our Sea of Islands*, Suva: University of the South Pacific/Beake House, 1993.

the numerous students originating from the Pacific, such as Teresia Teaiwa, and who have published widely ever since.

I have no solutions to the problem of the Pacific's marginalization in a global arena. What I do know is that we must NOT stop our investigations, explorations, ruminations in Pacific studies simply because the world marketplace of knowledge does not value this region as we do. Neither must we give in to the tempting rhetoric of Pacific exceptionalism—our greatest crime would be to ghettoize ourselves.<sup>32</sup>

The vogue for the notion of “reinventing culture” has had the merit of making postcolonial and indigenous studies emerge into the light, even if only to open up new debates, and has given history the privilege of an anthropological re-reading which has led to a critique of colonialism<sup>33</sup> All the same, it should not be forgotten that many indigenous actors have criticized the notion of the “reinvention of culture.” This is a war of words that sometimes becomes bitter and can even turn into a blood bath. As Clifford<sup>34</sup> says, we urgently need to understand this “desire” that indigenous people call “the land.” It does not consist of an essentialist vision like those behind a range of nationalisms, sacrifices for a country, and ethnic cleansings. Clifford suggests that we replace the notion of the invention of tradition by that of a politics of articulation. The proposition is highly attractive, all the more so because the word evokes speech: being articulated means being capable of being understood.

The Warlpiri of the central Australian desert say that a child is above all the reincarnation of a “spirit-child” (*kurruwalpa*) that gives it the power precisely to “articulate,” that is to say both to speak and to move in order to walk, its way of being in the world. The dual meaning of articulation as language and the movement of the body is interesting in this indigenous perspective. It also provides a response to the false debate concerning “whether or not the Indigenous Australians know about the relationship between reproduction and the sexual act.” The articulating spirit-child is said to choose its parents in order to be born, because a sexual act is not sufficient to make life emerge; there is no speech without a moving body. The other ontologically crucial aspect, along with the Aboriginal notion of the spirit-child as a condition of “articulation” of body and spirit, is that it comes from a particular place, and this place will be the child's secret name, its conception totem. In this sense, we would have

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32 T. Teaiwa, “On analogies: rethinking the Pacific in a Global context” in *The Contemporary Pacific*, v. 18, n° 1. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010, pp. 71-87. (Keynote address at the European Society for Oceanists Conference, Vienna, July 2002).

33 For Australia and New Zealand, see for instance B. Attwood and F. Magowan (eds.), *Telling Stories: Indigenous history and memory in Australia and New Zealand*. Sydney: Allen&Unwin, 2001, pp.183-212.

34 J. Clifford, “Indigenous Articulations,” op. cit.



everything to gain by rethinking our understanding of indigenous knowledge systems in the light of various disciplines, notably the neurosciences, which, by carrying out experiments on the brain are unseating numerous assumptions.

### **The Future of Anthropology Faced with Agency**

“Long live interdisciplinarity” is the message from academic institutions, but there is not always an equal balance in the alliance between the disciplines. The French National Centre of Scientific Research (CNRS) announced in 2006 that in the new allocation of “disciplinary” departments, anthropology would become a part of the history department. The petition launched by French anthropologists and supported online by professional associations in Brazil, Australia and elsewhere saved appearances by managing to obtain some changes in the details of the proposed disciplinary partitions. But it remains true that the entire technical apparatus that evaluates research in France and elsewhere continues to operate as though anthropological questions arose from either history or from the cognitive sciences. In other words, either we are asked to bury our heads in the sand like ostriches when confronted by the current chaos the search for historical explanations that render the changes within (or even disappearance of) the societies we are expected to describe legitimate and necessary, or we are asked to restrict any effort to engage in social discussions or actions to the determinants, so called biological, of the actors involved. Both of these takeover bids—historical and cognitive—quite simply exclude people acting as agents in the social arena, who become no more than extras and no more significant than mounted butterflies. It is furthermore not surprising that the term “agency,” which spans anthropology, cultural studies, and so-called postcolonial studies in English-speaking countries, is little used in France. Quebecers translated it into French, creating a new word on the model of the English one, although it was in part inspired by Bourdieu and a number of other French thinkers ranging from Foucault to Deleuze. It is urgently necessary to restore anthropology to a place that does not reduce human experience to either the effects of colonial history or to cognitive systems. We must give full value to the fluidity of traditional identity assemblages such as those that flourish today, because the fluidity that they are based on expresses quite well how these pre-contact societies used to operate, even if it was underestimated at the time of colonization. It is only by ceasing to contrast and oppose tradition and change that an archaeology of knowledge searching for moving signs will aid us to hear the power of people who are resisting.

When I speak of resistance, I do not necessarily mean activism or resilience. What I understand by resistance is simply that which pushes humans, individually or collectively, to be creative in order to survive while leaning on

certain values. It falls to anthropologists to unpack what these values mean. To do that, we are obliged to take into account analyses being produced by the spokespersons, university-based academics or otherwise, of the peoples and populations with whom we are working.

For example, Martin Nakata, an Aboriginal academic working at the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning (University of Technology, Sydney) points out that indigenous studies, whether in Australia, the Pacific, or among Amerindians

are aiming to develop a discipline which can aid the already begun process of decolonizing education. The goal of Indigenous Studies in this approach is not just decolonization through reviving indigenous knowledge systems but to defend them through restoring indigenous ontologies and epistemologies by the development of new frameworks to redress the submersion of knowledge systems during colonization.<sup>35</sup>

In the Pacific, an indigenous elite, previously trained and educated by non-indigenous peoples within a Western university framework, carries representations of identity that are in part based on ideologies produced and supported by colonial interests. Nonetheless, it would be arrogant to contend that the West has anticipated all the political, social, and cultural responses of colonized indigenous peoples. One might be cynical, but it would not be intellectually profitable to suppose that the West knows and controls everything just at the moment when so many things are going badly and when uncontrollable conflicts are breaking out and violence is on the rise, but above all when—despite all this dysfunction—people survive individually and collectively and never cease to create astonishing things, as Marshall Sahlins<sup>36</sup> has demonstrated.

As far as the Pacific is concerned, it is first necessary to take into account the non-Western powers disputing this strategic area. Indeed, in addition to the United States (which certainly have bases everywhere), Australia, which is acting as the policeman, and France, which is attempting to get people to forget its nuclear tests in the region, there are also Japan, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, and the Philippines. These Asian powers are competing with each other in the Pacific, and beyond their military and economic resources, they benefit from

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35 M. Nakata, "Australian Indigenous Studies: A Question of Discipline" in *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, v. 17 n° 3; and *Delimitating Indigenous Cultures: Conceptual and Spatial Boundaries*, Special Issue v.18. Canberra: Australian Anthropological Society, 2006, pp. 265-275.

36 M. Sahlins, "Two or Three Things that I Know about Culture" in *JRAI*, v. 5, n° 3. London: 1999. Essays published between 1990 and 1999, referred to by Alain Babadzan at Philippe Descola's seminar, Collège de France, March 2007, and partially translated in French (M. Sahlins, *La découverte du vrai sauvage et autres essais*, transl. by Claudie Voisenat. Paris: Gallimard, 2007. M. Sahlins, *How "Natives" Think: About Captain Cook, For Example*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

two advantages: the size of the legal and illegal workforce that lives in diasporas throughout the Pacific, and the geographical proximity that today sees piracy transformed into an institution that undoubtedly suits all of the governments of the region's major powers.

Anthropologists' observation sites are currently defined more than ever by the junction of the perceptions of the different producers of images, from the media to the sciences and the social actors concerned about the way they are presented through images. The contradictions of perspective often insist on this old paradigm: how can one claim to be different without necessarily bringing into play relationships based on dominant/dominated, elite/excluded etc...? An engaged anthropology must of necessity highlight the value of how groups express and experience their right to speak and act in order to reclaim and take control of their destinies.<sup>37</sup> An original response is precisely given by indigenous peoples who have chosen to step into the limelight of the media and national and international institutions to perform their existence in a world that lurches between spectacle and politics.<sup>38</sup>

Consider the example of the process of drawing up the UN proposal for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was voted on in June 2006 by the Universal Human Rights Commission.<sup>39</sup> Since the arrival of the New Zealand Maori delegation in Geneva in the 1980s, followed by hundreds of other representatives of indigenous people, the majority of associations and activists who self-delegate themselves within this task refuse to fix the notion of indigeneity. The rights of indigenous peoples rest on the idea that ancestral occupation of the land and genetic filiation guarantee "indigenous status," or the indigeneity of the people concerned (nearly 6% of the global population or 370 million people). Such indigeneity is supposed to grant them the legitimacy to maintain the traditional links with the land that existed before notions of state sovereignty. But the final determination that guarantees the conferral of this status relies on self-declaration and recognition of indigeneity by peer groups.<sup>40</sup>

It should be emphasized that before colonization the peoples who recognized as indigenous by UN were essentially hunter-gatherers who did not practice agriculture or sedentary farming. If the indigenous peoples' ties to the land—defined economically beyond "working" the land or a transformation of nature through buildings and structures—are presently defined in Western terms as

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37 A. Bensa, *La fin de l'exotisme, Essais d'anthropologie critique*. Toulouse: Éditions Anacharsis, 2006.

38 B. Glowczewski, and R. Henry (eds.), *The challenge of Indigenous Peoples*, op. cit.

39 33 member states voted in favor, 13 abstained, and 2 refused the charter (Canada and the Russian Federation). The UN Declaration for the Right of Indigenous Peoples was ratified in 2007: four countries refused (Canada, US, Australia and New Zealand) but signed the next year.

40 See B. Glowczewski and A. Soucaille (eds.), "Majeure Réseaux autochtones" in *Multitudes* n° 30. Paris: 2007.

land ownership, they themselves refer to this as an existential link that defines a certain ontology of the people concerned.

In an insightful article on Australian diasporas formed by the descendants of Indigenous Australians who were deported from their traditional lands in Northern Queensland, the anthropologist Benjamin Richard Smith<sup>41</sup> suggests a connection between contemporary selves, previous generations, and “a stable and presentable” essence of place in the sense in which Derrida<sup>42</sup> used the term. For Smith, Derrida’s “ontopological” understanding, when linked to “displacement,” can be applied to the way in which indigenous people affirm their connections to the land, that is differently from the approach adopted in classical ethnographic interpretations that describe an affective attachment to the land.<sup>43</sup>

We have seen, from the perspective of “rooted” Indigenous Australians who live on their lands, that those who live “uprooted” existences can become “re-rooted” as long as the land accepts them. In order for this to happen, negotiations have to take place as much among the living as with the land’s totemic spirits in order to reconnect what has been disconnected. Can we speak of a link to the land beyond a state and economic system of land transformation? In this essay, I have attempted to outline the dynamics of these links to places that are sacred for Indigenous Australians; constructed before colonization and regularly reconstructed since, these sites remain alive in their contemporary art as well as in their political initiatives and constitute the bedrock of what anthropology calls totemism within the Australian context. Too many anthropologists have underestimated this aspect of totemic identities, which are at once geographical, topological, and connectionist. For my part, I have been convinced since the earliest days in my work that the Indigenous Australians’ relationship with the land teaches us to think about our own deterritorialized and multiple identities. It is an aspect of the Aboriginal paradigm.

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41 Ibid.

42 J. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: the state of the debt, the world of pouncing and the new international*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

43 Such as those discussed by A. Béteille, *The Idea of Natural Inequality and Other Essays*. London: Oxford University Press/A. Kuper, 1987; and A. Kuper, “The return of the native” in *Current Anthropology*, v. 44, n° 3. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003, pp. 389-402.



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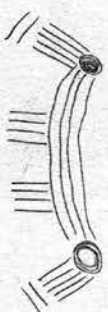
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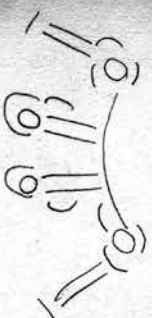
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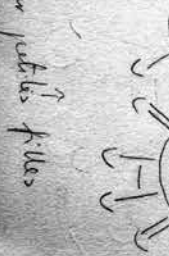
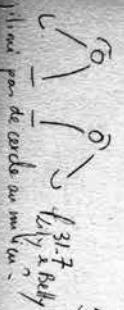
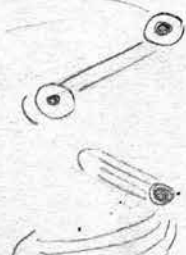
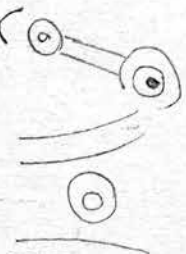
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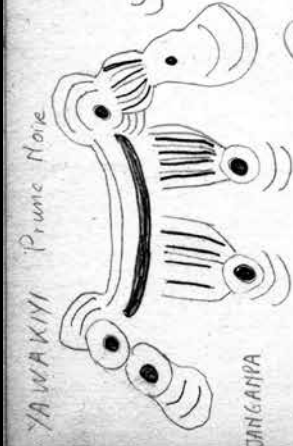
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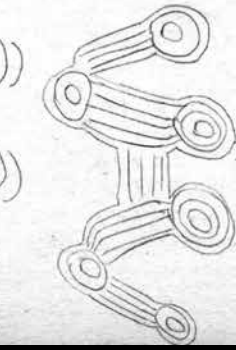
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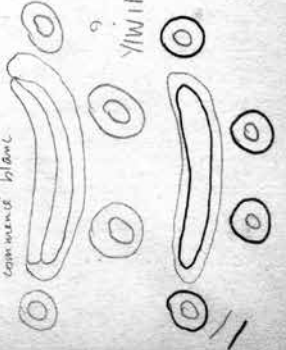
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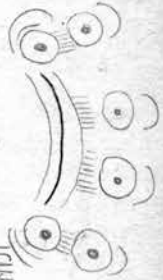
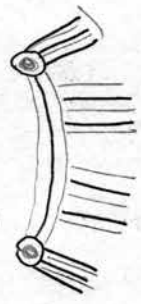
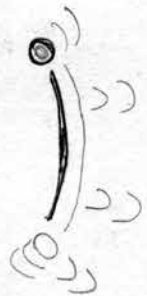
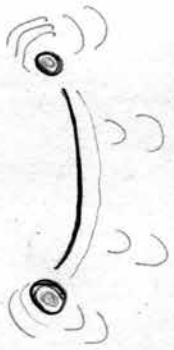
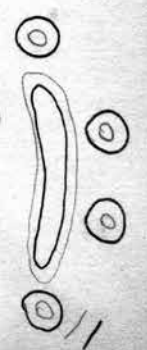
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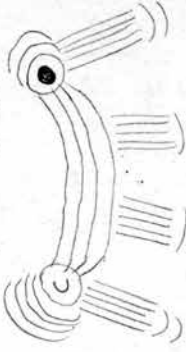
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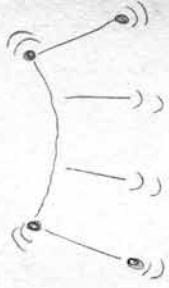
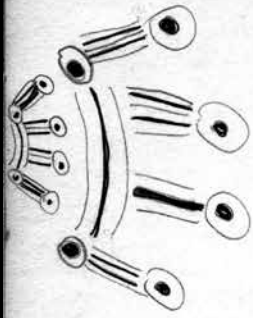
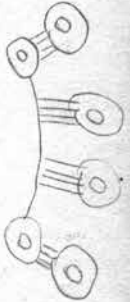
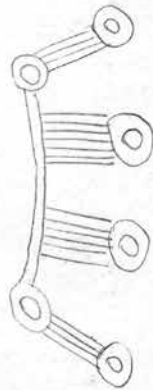
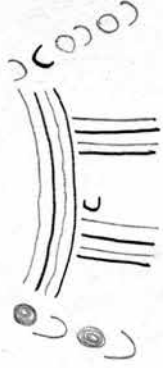
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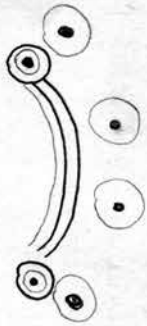
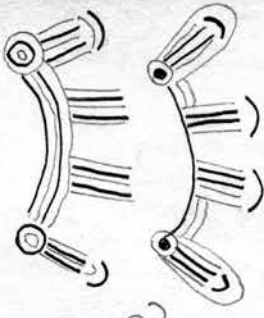
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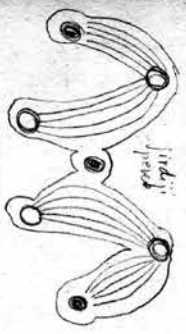


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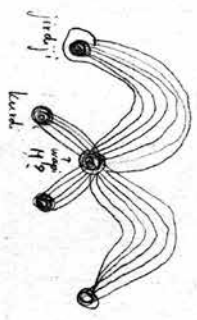


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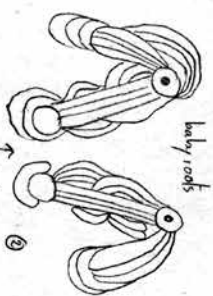
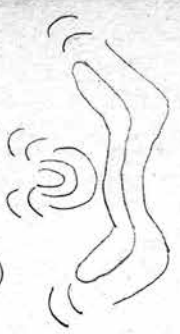
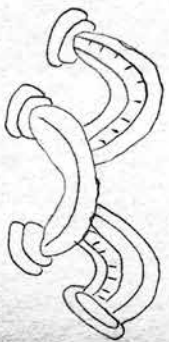
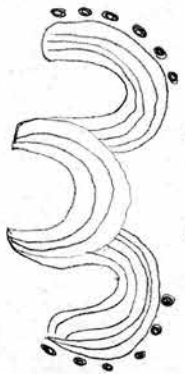
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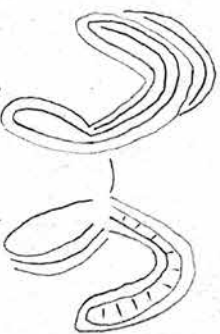
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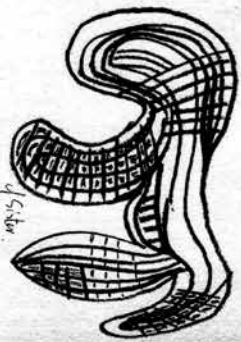
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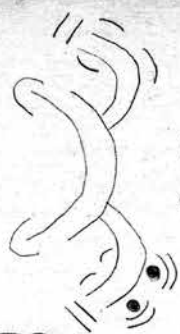
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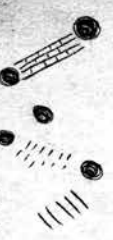
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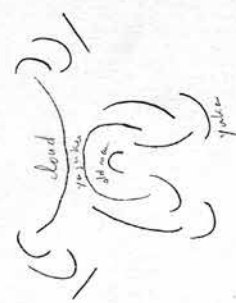
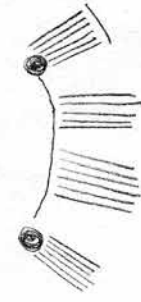
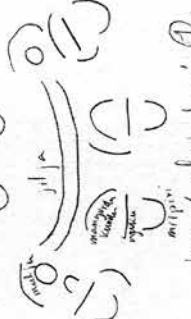
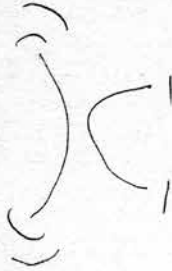
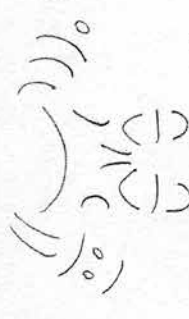
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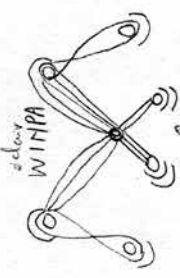


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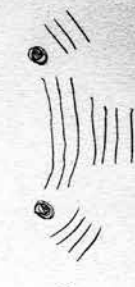
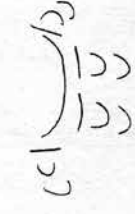


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