Scholar and Sceptic

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Australian Aboriginal Studies
in Honour of LR Hiatt

Francesca Merlan, John Morton and Alan Rumsey
Editors

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Editors' Preface

This Festschrift has been a long time in the making. It was first mooted by one of the editors in Sydney in 1989, and we agreed to try to have it in print for Les's sixtieth birthday in late 1991 (when, as it turned out, he also retired from Sydney University). Looking back through our correspondence, we are astonished at our naivety in thinking that we could produce this volume in anything like that timeframe. We must add, however, that we are extremely grateful for the patience of all those who have contributed to the production of the book since 1990 (when we first called for papers), particularly those who have waited longest for their writing to see the light of day.

In the early stages of the project, we had some difficulty in establishing a focus for the volume. Those most closely associated with Les during his anthropological career have been involved in disparate ways and have grown in diverse directions, which, as some of the authors suggest in their contributions which follow, is a tribute to Les's intellectual pluralism. We decided it was most fitting to keep to a focus on Aboriginal Australia, particularly on those issues which had most thoroughly engaged Les in his scholarly writings. Contributors were instructed accordingly. Inevitably, some developed the latter focus more fully than others. But notwithstanding this, or the 'traditionalist' cast which that focus gives to the volume as a whole, we feel that the papers that follow represent a rounded and respectful, and at the same time challenging, response to Les's life and work.

On behalf of all those who have worked to see it through to its fruition, it is our pleasure to offer this volume to a 'scholar and sceptic' as acknowledgement of an influential life and career. We also echo Betty Meehan's sentiments in looking forward to more of that life and career to come.

November 1995

LR Hiatt: Life, Thought and Misunderstanding

Annette Hamilton

It is an overwhelmingly difficult task to provide a brief, concise and well-focussed introduction to a volume such as this. Les Hiatt has been to me a teacher, guide, supervisor, and friend. The variety of his interests, the deep connection between a certain tradition of critical thought and the construction of his research agenda, and his continuing interest in aspects of life and thought far beyond the conventional approaches of modernist anthropology, combine to make an appreciation, let alone some bio-focussed analysis of the author, especially difficult. Necessarily, any 'Introduction' will be impressionistic rather than definitive, leading into a set of readings which themselves draw on sometimes fragmentary aspects of a complex and incomplete research and writing career. Purely tributary temptations must be resisted and the many narratives and anecdotes of life in Canberra, Sydney and Darwin (and in Maningrida) in the sixties and seventies must, for the moment at least, remain largely untold.

It is also difficult to balance the demands of an Introduction with the desire to really analyse the sources, cultural and social, which made Les Hiatt's work take its particular form and patterns. What influenced Les, as a critical intellectual in those transformative decades, and what led him to follow certain paths even when they seemed lonely and dangerous? These, and other questions I suppose belong to biography rather than Festschrift, but it is difficult to lay them aside completely, particularly as a number of contributors to this volume have inevitably touched on them too.

In one way this is what makes Les, and others of his era (and later), stand out so strikingly against the rather flat and personally uninflected researchers who preceded them. While Radcliffe-Brown was certainly flamboyant and famous in Sydney for his eccentricities, little of that quality ever came into his written work. Elkin, one would have to say, lived a life of monumental dullness and his writing, although of course careful, sensible and typical of its time, was hardly fascinating, and certainly avoided any deep philosophical and moral issues. WEH Stanner turned to a kind of phenomenological philosophy to illuminate Aboriginal religion in particular. However this was redolent with a plea for comprehension and hence a 'familiarisation' of Aboriginal beliefs and practices which may not always have done justice to the very meanings he was so much at pains to illuminate.

Hiatt and Meggitt came to anthropology at a time of rethinking, not only in anthropology but in the world more generally. The war years had reshaped Australia and the Pacific; the position of indigenous and colonised peoples had been destabilised and would never return to the patterns of the pre-war era. In this context, the constantly repeated plea to recover 'our' knowledge of Aboriginal Australia before it was too late, led to yet further efforts to understand and explicate Aboriginal life in the 'less disturbed' areas. The very metaphors and images are almost unthinkable, unwriteable today, but they retained their circulation into the sixties and provided the background for anthropological research of the kind which Meggitt and Hiatt undertook for their postgraduate degrees. Meggitt, enrolled at Sydney under Elkin, went to Hooker Creek, Yuendumu and other centres of Warlpiri settlement in 1953–55. Hiatt, a student at the Australian National University under John

Barnes's supervision, went to Maningrida in 1958 and his thesis was published in 1965. The choice of both sites was heavily influenced by the belief that in the remotest corners of northern Arnhem Land, and in the central Australian deserts, the last exemplars of a 'pure' Aboriginality could be found. The task of the researchers was to recover to the fullest possible extent the patterns of life, practices, customs, and beliefs of Aboriginal people, *as if* there had been no historical disruption, no state control, and no significant influences on their essentially *Aboriginal* lives. Some aspects of this period are illustrated in Mulvaney's contribution, which irresistibly brings to our awareness the incredible powers of a body such as the then Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, the only body in the whole of Australia at that time capable of providing dedicated research funding to Aboriginal Studies. The tension set up by this almost unquestioned approach is still being worked through today and many anthropologists continue, almost incredibly, to write within this tradition, including contributors to this volume. This is not the place to further examine the issue but it is important to understand that many of the difficulties which Hiatt encountered, both intellectual and practical, could be partly attributed to the anthropological tradition in which he was trained and which he sometimes found himself defending, often uneasily.

Although from this perspective Meggitt and Hiatt continued an anthropological tradition, they also provided a powerfully innovative influence on modern Aboriginal anthropology. Their work introduced dynamic perspectives and a new concern with 'the real' and its relation to norms and customary practices. Both Meggitt and Hiatt questioned the received wisdom (and means of representation) of Aboriginal kinship systems; both paid attention to conflict and disorder, to the texture of everyday life, and to the way in which individuals could negotiate the social norms and rules which had dominated anthropological analyses up to that time. Shapiro takes up some current views of Aboriginal sociality and makes a plea for reconsidering the gaps in our knowledge. As he points out, Hiatt decisively opened up new perspectives on 'kinship' as against 'clanship'. Barnes, in his introduction to *Kinship and Conflict*, remarked that this work signalled a new phase, or a coming of age, in Australian anthropology (Hiatt 1965, xi) and there is no doubt

that something new seemed to be emerging from the analyses of the time.

Meggitt went on to work in New Guinea and although his Aboriginalist works have been, and continue to be, widely cited and consulted, it was Hiatt who consolidated his reputation as a young radical in Aboriginal anthropology. From today's perspective, it seems strange to think of such empiricist ethnographies as constituting a radical shift. Apart from the ethnographies, it was the debate which arose around Hiatt's assertions regarding 'the horde' which attracted the most attention, even outrage, in some quarters. Several of the contributors to this volume have touched on this issue and I will return to it. What is often overlooked however, is the extent to which Hiatt's work insisted that Aboriginal people had to be seen as living full lives within their own terms. Rather than reifying the abstract formalisms of conventional models of social organisation, Hiatt insisted that the passions of life, the obscure desires and demands that impel people to action, had their own legitimacy and dynamic in Aboriginal Australia, as anywhere else. That some of these were puzzling or even rather bizarre in Western terms, never led to the construction of pointless exoticisms. His interest in the *mirriri*, the 'spear-in-the-ear' for example, impelled him to examine a number of possible hypotheses to account for it (Hiatt 1966). His tendency to favour a psychoanalytically-derived account was tempered with other social structural considerations. Merlan's chapter in this volume picks up another of the recurrent questions of this kind in Australian ethnography, the mother-in-law taboo, and argues for a focus on the power of the gift in a gendered social relationship, in an argument which is directly addressed to Hiatt's psychoanalytic approach.

In spite of Hiatt's array of interests, his 1962 paper 'Local Organization among the Australian Aborigines', is without doubt the work with which the early phase of his research is most strongly identified. The debate which emerged around it had ramifications which continue today, especially in the context of current events in the Northern Territory. By bringing into focus the dynamics of Aboriginal residential and economic life Hiatt opened up a nest of new problems. Paradigms of the sixties shifted: Hiatt's work fed into the new interests in material life, and the concept of 'hunter-

gatherers'. This signalled a shift away from the technicalities of social organisation and towards a materialist and evolutionary perspective, which shaped much of international Anglophone anthropology into the 1970s and beyond. Peterson's contribution in the present volume appeals to this framework, and suggests another approach to ecology and social relations through a rethinking of the 'generosity' which so interested Hiatt in Arnhem Land. Indeed, Les could have easily continued to work and research within this framework and continued an honourable anthropological career based on questions of Aboriginal local organisation and little else.

However, he was never constrained in his thinking by his identification as an anthropologist. His earlier training as a dentist may have played a part in this, but his involvement with the Sydney Libertarians and his exposure to the philosophy of John Anderson, was undoubtedly much more decisive. Interestingly, while his first published paper concerned social control in Arnhem Land (Hiatt 1959), and the second was the 'Local Organization' paper (Hiatt 1962), his next three published papers appeared in the Libertarian magazine *The Sydney Line* in 1963. The first of these (Hiatt 1963a), concerned the role of missions among the Tiwi, and the second (Hiatt 1963b) the role of the Welfare Branch in the lives of Aborigines. These papers exemplify the abiding and continuing themes underlying much of Les's work: the conflict between sexual freedom and sexual jealousy (and the interpersonal dilemmas growing out of it); the role of authoritarian individuals, bodies, organisations, thought and practices, and the problem of how to contain them; and the way in which conflict between men can be controlled by interpersonal means without recourse to the authoritarian practices of the state. Sex, power and the problems of masculinity have provided at different times and in different contexts a continuing thread throughout Les's work and life, as Morton points out in his contribution to this volume.

In his anthropology Les turned away from arguments about social and local organisation and toward the immaterial realms of mythology and symbolism. In the collection he edited, *Australian Aboriginal Mythology*, in honour of WEH Stanner (Hiatt 1975a), he brought together a set of papers which introduced the frameworks of European structuralism and a psychoanalytic perspective which

drew on the much neglected work of Róheim, which had been virtually ignored in Australia. In this volume Morton is heir to the latter, and melds it with the former in his exploration of totemism and sentiment. Maddock, on the other hand, makes much of Les's rejection of French (and more generally European) structuralism, although it should not be forgotten that one of Les's students, Mieke Blows, brought a purely structuralist perspective to her analysis of the mythology of Eastern Australia, under Les's supervision. Blows's paper on the topic was published in the 1975 volume. Les, however hostile to structuralism, was also pluralist in his willingness to allow people the freedom to explore where they would. Sutton elaborates on the role of realism, pluralism and materialism in Hiatt's work. I think Les has naturally felt resentful that the same freedom was not always extended to him, particularly in relation to his interest in and papers on sociobiology. There is little overt discussion of this aspect of his work in the present volume — for instance, Maddock, in an otherwise complex and full discussion of intellectual trajectories, indicates only briefly some aspects of this direction, including the 'depressing' fact that Hiatt's interests in this area have brought him into conflict with colleagues. Maddock seems to connect Les's views about 'ants, sticklebacks and dogs' (see note 7, page 255) with his views about 'Aboriginal claims' although the logic of the connection is somewhat obscure. It may be that Maddock is implying that Les's conflicts with colleagues arose from his refusal to toe what would now be called 'politically correct lines', whether in respect of the deep sources of human behaviour or the validity of contemporary forms of Aboriginal knowledge. There is indeed something to be considered here: Les's commitment to an anti-ideological position has been life-long and did alienate him from many colleagues and students who saw his rejection of current socio-political thought as an example of patriarchal conservatism, rather than as Libertarian scepticism.

Hiatt's interests, from the seventies on, began to refract in interesting ways on each other. The human emotions, secret male cults, Aboriginal ceremonial life and psychoanalytic themes appeared sometimes in combination, sometimes as separate explorations. His involvement with the deeper meaning of ceremonial and ritual life increased as his experiences with Gidjingali people

continued over the years. Morphy's contribution on Yolngu mortuary rituals is reminiscent of some of Hiatt's concerns with understanding life-crisis rites generally, apparent both in his papers on initiatory rites (Hiatt 1971; Hiatt 1975b) and in his paper (with Margaret Clunies-Ross) on sand sculptures at a Gidjingali burial rite (Clunies-Ross and Hiatt 1977).

Hiatt's deep and abiding commitment to the Gidjingali people was reflected in his attempts to involve them more actively in the work of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (as it was then), particularly during his period as Chair of Council. The staging of the Rom ceremony in Canberra for example, brought together friends and relatives from Maningrida in a performance which highlighted the problems of transferring ritually-significant traditions to a willing but often incomprehending southern audience. Les's activities at the Institute are touched on by Mulvaney and while Maddock may consider this period to have been a relatively unproductive diversion, there is no doubt that Les was profoundly committed to the Institute as an organisation which could bring together academic and Aboriginal interests, to the mutual benefit of both. Whether or not this view can be sustained today, it was an ideal to which Les dedicated an important period of his life.

Hiatt's long relationship with particular Gidjingali people, however, is little discussed in his writings. But this aspect of his life receives a fascinating, if brief, refraction in the film *Waiting for Harry*, filmed by Kim McKenzie for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and released in 1980. In it, Les's complex relationships with the people, and his difficult role as a mediator between them and the demands of filmmaking are made apparent in several ways. Most poignant and powerful is the sight of Les sitting on an empty flour tin in his singlet and hat trying to explain their prolonged waiting to the film makers — a moment of pure reflexivity in ethnographic film. This film gives just a hint of the signal empathy and intelligence which he brought to his fieldwork — something which does not always shine through so clearly in his writings. His relationships with the Maningrida people brought much pleasure and also much pain: the loss of his old friends as they passed on, the changes in the younger people, and a tragic incident involving the teenage son of one of his closest friends, all marked

these relationships as ones of great personal importance and conflicting emotion.

Although Les's intellectual interests were expressed in a number of themes and contexts, he returned strongly to his interest in Aboriginal local organisation in the eighties. The astonishing resurgence in importance of this topic in the context of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* brought earlier arguments once again to the forefront. In his Presidential Address to Section 25 of the Australia and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science (ANZAAS), he addressed the question of claims and the determination of Aboriginal ownership. A revised version of this discussion appeared in his edited volume on Aboriginal landowners (Hiatt 1984), and in the introduction he goes back to the beginning, so to speak, and re-evaluates the question of the 'patriclan', with which he had no quarrel in 1966 at the Man the Hunter Conference in Chicago. The body of new research, based on doctoral theses in widely differing parts of the continent, provides what he calls 'radical deviations from the classical model' (1984, 18), leading him to conclude that the traditional accounts of Aboriginal land tenure are in some cases wrong and in others deficient. Keen, going further argues that the problems arise not from inadequate data or wrong theories, but from basic semiotic and categorical misapprehensions consequent upon dilemmas of conceptual translation. Les himself alluded to this possibility:

> A fourth difficulty has to do with semantics and the translation of concepts from one culture to another. When we describe certain Aborigines as the traditional owners of a certain locality, we invoke a concept of land ownership in the English language that may match the Aboriginal notion in some respects but not others. (Hiatt 1984, 2)

This collection of papers marked a very important bridge between the kind of 'applied' anthropology which has become dominant in Australia today, in the context of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* and subsequently the Mabo decision, and the kinds of considerations which had previously dominated Aboriginal anthropology. However Les had little directly to say on this topic, preferring to see a continuity between the debates of the 1960s and 1970s, and the realities of the 1990s.

In recent work, Les once again takes up familiar themes. A paper (with Rhys Jones) on 'Aboriginal Conceptions of the Workings of Nature' represents his continued interest in psychoanalysis and in systems of Aboriginal classification, best represented in *Australian Aboriginal Concepts* (Hiatt 1978). The threads of his interests continue to weave back and forth, marked at each phase by shifts in the surrounding intellectual landscape, yet manifesting a strength and continuity into the fourth decade of Les Hiatt's life. There is no reason to suppose that his retirement will limit or curtail the pursuit of his diverse interests. On the contrary, it is to be hoped that he will now have time to devote his considerable energies to the pursuit of writing which he has postponed to a later and more leisured phase of life.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my great personal debt to Les, for his patience, forbearance, friendship, enthusiasm, consistency and kindness to me over the years. I was far from an ideal student: headstrong, determined, unwilling to submit to criticism, reluctant to part with drafts of writing until the last moment, not sufficiently aware of the traditions moulding me and in any case impatient with constraints. Les never lost faith in me and never withdrew his support, even when what I was doing and how I was thinking seemed strongly opposed to his own views and approaches. Australian anthropology was enriched by Les's presence, even where revisions and reviews bring new perspectives on it. It is the complex intellectual legacy he embodies that so clearly distinguishes Les's contributions, and for which personally I will remain always grateful.

Irreverent Recollections of the Making of an Anthropologist

Betty Meehan

I first met Lester Richard Hiatt at the Bourke Golf Club, in far western New South Wales, in 1955. He was entertaining a group of members and guests by singing, unaccompanied, the song, 'They're Digging up Grandpa's Grave to Build a Sewer'. Les was employed at the time by the local dentist, Arthur Meadows. He said that he was doing this in order to save enough money to enable him to complete an anthropology degree, which he had started immediately after completing dentistry. He said that he did not want to spend his life peering down people's throats. I had returned to my home town after graduating from Bathurst Teachers College to teach in the local primary school and, like Les, to save some money. In my case however, I was saving so that I could marry a Methodist minister's son whom I had met whilst training to become a teacher.

Les was born in a small town called Gilgandra, which is located on the eastern edge of the western plains of New South Wales. There, his father was the manager of the local White Wings

flour mill. At an early age, Les's egalitarian characteristics began to show. His mother once told me how she had been forced by him to sew patches on his brand new grey flannel trousers before he would wear them to school. He said that if other children wore patched trousers, so would he.

Eventually, Les was enrolled at Hurlstone Agricultural High School in western Sydney, where he did surprisingly well in agriculture, taking a special interest in the piggery. It was here that he developed his fistic skills. These culminated when he fought a draw for the lightweight championship of the school. Those who know him well will have seen him shaping up on certain occasions in a most professional way.

From Hurlstone he went to the University of Sydney where, under his mother's influence, he began acquiring qualifications which would guarantee him a sound and lucrative future in dentistry. For a while he lived in Wesley College. I am not sure when he became disillusioned with his chosen career, but without setting up a practice, he moved straight into an Arts degree to study anthropology and philosophy. The combination and intertwining of these two subjects has moulded the intellect of the person we all now know.

At the end of his second year of Arts Les went to Bourke, where he lived in an old-fashioned boarding house known as The Gables. This charming old building, with its deep verandahs, continues to function as a boarding house today. In Bourke he fixed teeth skilfully for the local population using Arthur Meadows's foot driven equipment, played golf on the sand greens of the local golf club, and organised soirées with the local schoolteachers, when literature was discussed very seriously. The Bourke Les was slim, shy and enigmatic. He showed an interest in meeting my family. We were working-class with strong Irish connections. My father, Francis Owen, was an idealistic, militant shearer and a Communist. He had great confidence in the power of education, which he believed would release the working classes from drudgery and so create a better life. In our backyard, on those classic western New South Wales summer nights, roofed by clear navy blue and starlit skies, we argued with my father about the controversial book, *Animal Farm* and the dangers of totalitarian rule.

Les and I married in Bourke a few months after we met. We then returned to Sydney, where I continued to teach in primary schools and Les resumed his university studies in order to complete his Arts degree. This was a period of amazing change for me — a country girl for the first time meeting university students, Libertarians and The Push. Up until now, my contact with life outside Bourke had been only with my father's Communist relatives, shearers and union organisers.

Les and I lived in various dingy flats during our time in Sydney — in Mosman, Kingsford and Leichhardt. I taught at a small school in Crystal Street, Petersham and Les worked as a dentist during university holidays, as we had trouble making ends meet, especially since teachers' salaries were not very high then and I was not a particularly good manager of money. Putting on his middle class hat, Les often joked about how I had squandered his hard won savings; he blamed my lack of monetary prudence on my working class background.

During the next two years at the University of Sydney, Les's physical image was a combination of corduroy trousers, polo-necked sweater and black leather jacket. These went with the bright 'Red Indian' motor cycle outfit we owned at the time (see plate 1). When driving, he also wore a white crash helmet and chunky black leather gloves. Sometimes he would call at Crystal Street School to pick me up. One small boy, Lenny, of whom I was particularly fond, often stayed behind after school. He could not get into his home (a one room flat) until late afternoon, when his mother arrived home from work; he also liked having his teacher to himself. One day I found him peering through a hole in the school fence just as Les arrived. He rushed to me saying, 'Captain Marvel, your father, has arrived to take you home'. Typically, Les interpreted this incident in Freudian mode.

The significance of the leather jacket came up in other situations too. Several of Les's fellow students talked to me about seminars and tutorials they had shared with him. Apparently, they always knew when he was about to say something. For several minutes before he spoke, the old leather jacket began to creak. This characteristic style has remained with him all his life — thoughts put together very carefully, words chosen so carefully. I attribute this in
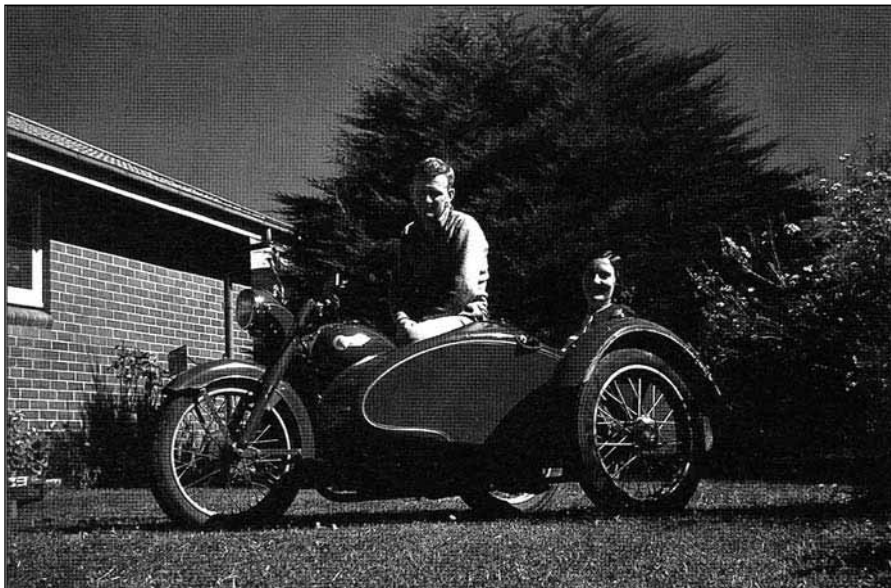
Plate 1
Les and Betty in Dubbo with the 'Red Indian'.

part to the philosophical training he received from John Anderson and others in the philosophy department. I vividly recall Les, during our last year in Sydney, sitting at his desk for days on end in our Leichhardt flat in front of a blank page. He was writing his BA Honours thesis, eventually completed in 1957 and called 'An Analysis of Conflict in Some Areas of Aboriginal Australia'. In addition to staring at the blank page, he also twisted hair on his chest and head. This combination seemed to be an integral part of his creative force. After several days, the blank pages got filled with his elegant handwriting and were only ever corrected minimally. He continues to create in this way today. Being one who makes countless copies before achieving a satisfactory text, I continue to envy his ability to be so sparse and productive. I do not think he finds writing especially easy, but the sparseness of his procedure, however tortuous internally, is impressive.

One of Les's special friends in the Libertarian movement was Lilian Roxon (now deceased) — a buxom and attractive woman with a flair for conversation and an interest in the media. Later, she moved

to North America, became involved in the New York Greenwich Village music scene and produced a very successful encyclopaedia of rock music and rock musicians. Whilst in Sydney, she occasionally worked as a journalist and it was while she was on the staff of *Weekend*, a magazine edited by Donald Horne, that she persuaded Les to participate in an amusing hoax. Les, alias Albert Helliwell, claimed to have held the title of Australia's Ugliest Man, against all opposition from Brisbane to Perth, by using a set of protruding teeth he made whilst a student of dentistry (see plate 2). I have seen these teeth used on other occasions such as dinner parties, with great impact.

I do not feel altogether competent to talk about Les's association with the Libertarians. There is no doubt that the intellectual aspect of that movement has influenced him profoundly. The social side of the movement to do with parties and apparent sexual freedom is another matter. Being young and naive, I was flung into this believing that it was the smart thing to do, and I tried hard to conform. Deep down I never felt really comfortable in that society, although I value some of the insights that contact with Push people gave me. I think Les really tried very hard to abide by the mores of the group—- really believed in them. However, I suspect that he often found the actual practice of these rather difficult to deal with personally.

Les's BA Honours thesis examined the basis of conflict in Aboriginal societies. This piece of research, for which he received First Class Honours, provided an elegant blueprint for the research he carried out later for his PhD amongst the Anbara Aboriginal community from central coastal Arnhem Land. He was awarded a PhD scholarship in 1958 in the Department of Anthropology, in the (then named) Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University, Canberra, where Professor John Barnes (formerly of the University of Sydney's Department of Anthropology) had only recently taken up the Chair. We spent a few weeks in Canberra staying at the delightful Beauchamp House (now Ian Potter House, belonging to the Academy of Science). While there, Les and I received tuition in linguistics from Dr Stephen Wurm to prepare us (especially Les) for the planned long-term fieldwork at Maningrida. Memories remain of struggling with the *ng* sound at the

false teeth won 1000 bottles of beer

"**A**LBERT HELLIWELL — by a FACE!" the horrified judges announced.

And 27-year-old Albert stepped up to receive his prize—a dozen bottles of beer.

"My face is my FOR-TUNE!" he grinned to the losing contestants in the Adelaide UGLY MAN competition.

FOR two years Albert has held the title of "Australia's Ugliest Man" against all opposition in towns and cities from Brisbane to Perth.

And he reckons that it has been worth more than a THOUSAND bottles of free beer to him!

But now the title is VACANT. For Albert has just admitted to WEEK-END that he's a FAKE!

How did Albert hoax the judges?

"Simply by getting a dentist mate to make me a new set of TEETH!" he grinned.

G-R-R-R! That face is the ugliest in Australia. But don't be fooled. Those teeth are FAKES!

LAUGHING Albert Helliwell enjoyed making people think he was ugly. Now he tells the true story of his hoax.

"HELP!" The barmaid screamed when she saw Albert's ugly mug.

Plate 2
Story from *Weekend* about Les as Albert Helliwell, 'Australia's Ugliest Man'.

beginning of Aboriginal words and of the soreness this caused to our throats.

When we returned to Canberra after the first field season at Maningrida, we lived in University House, in one of the flats available for married couples. This had a bedroom, bathroom and living room. As we were one of very few married couples living at University House at that time, our flat became a meeting place, almost a salon, where after dinner with our single colleagues we drank real coffee, played music (traditional jazz was then the favoured sound) and participated in deep and meaningful discussions. We also indulged in picnics in the Brindabella mountains, cricket against local villages such as Bungendore, singing madrigals with like-minded people from University House and elsewhere in Canberra, and attending endless parties organised in University House. We mixed with a wide range of academics, including physicists, chemists, historians, philosophers and biologists. Many of these people remain Les's friends today.

Hypochondria formed an amusing element of our life at University House, where a loosely knit group, including a medical practitioner completing a doctorate in the John Curtin School of Medical Research, was formed to discuss the topic and to award prizes every now and again to honour the Hypochondriac of the Year. I remember only some of the recipients of these coveted prizes, but I am pretty sure that Les received at least one award. Competition was always keen.

A particularly interesting aspect of life at the Australian National University then was the presence of a number of older PhD students from Melbourne, such as the late Ian Turner, who had done other things in their lives before coming to Canberra, including participating in the Second World War. A lively tension existed between the Sydney Push, seen to be tough, unsentimental, apolitical and nihilistic, and the Melburnians, who were perceived to be more cultured, caring and more definitively from the left side of politics. The juxtaposition of these two seemingly opposed groups made for some heated academic and political debates, but lead ultimately to the formation of some very close and creative friendships.

The flight to Darwin in February 1958 was quite an event. We left Sydney early in the morning aboard a DC4 and flew via Brisbane

and Mount Isa to Darwin. A short time out of Mount Isa, Les noticed oil flowing from one of the wings. Les admitted to being terrified of flying (I never did decide whether this terror was real or simply an affectation he had acquired from the social group with whom he mixed at Sydney University, many of whom were intent on being identified as cowards) and he became increasingly agitated, finally calling for the air hostess and asking her to inform the captain about the leakage. She did this and tried her best to placate Les. Several scotches-on-ice in quick succession seemed to alleviate Les's anxiety a little and we arrived safely at the old Darwin airport about 9.00 p.m. Les told me later that an airline official had admitted that a cap had actually been left off the fuel container in the wing.

Neither Les nor I had been to Darwin before. I recall stepping from the plane onto the tarmac in Darwin after a very long day. A great blast of humid heat came up and hit me in the face. For a moment I felt hesitant about our prospects, but this initial anxiety soon passed as the excitement of being in a frontier town distracted us from the physical discomfort. We had intended to stay a short time in Darwin, time only to meet the necessary bureaucrats and to purchase provisions and equipment for our fieldwork. We found accommodation in Town Mess, a hostel for public servants. This amazing place, constructed of corrugated iron, with louvres (but no fly-wire), was nestled adjacent to the sea amidst thick tropical flora (and fauna). We ate meals two blocks up the hill with the mostly male and single public servants, some of whom turned out to be great characters.

We had planned to travel to Maningrida on a small boat, the *Temora,* belonging to Captain Pete Pederson. No roads had yet been constructed to this outpost and the airstrip had not even been contemplated. Unfortunately, Captain Pederson had beached his boat during a particularly high tide and had been unable to get it back into the water. While we waited for this to happen, Les carried out research at the then Welfare Branch and on the Gidjingali language at Bagot Aboriginal Reserve. Dr Capell, a linguist from the University of Sydney, was also in Darwin at the time and gave Les some professional assistance. A colleague of Les from the University of Sydney, Michael Allen, was also in Darwin. After graduating he had joined the Welfare Branch before deciding what research he

would carry out for his PhD. Michael also lived in Town Mess and used his small blue motor bike to get around Darwin.

Every day at about 4.30 p.m. a group of people gathered in the outdoor bar at the Victoria Hotel (affectionately known as The Vic) in the main street of Darwin. This charming old building, whose stone walls contained beautiful fossils, still stands and continues to function as a pub, although in the thirty years since Les and I first drank there it has become a little more genteel. Then, its swinging doors opened onto the gravel surface of the main street. The outdoor bar was frequented regularly by well-known characters, such as Bill Harney senior, Babe Damaso and Trevor Evans. Everyone read and discussed the *Northern Territory News*, which was delivered about 4.00 p.m. every weekday. After much discussion and drinking of Swan or 'Vic' beer, mounds of delicious satay, prepared by a small Asian takeaway at the back of the pub, were consumed. My memory is that these were sixpence a stick. Several of our 'Vic' companions were hydrologists and keen jazz enthusiasts. So the end of many an evening was spent enjoying the strains of Bessy Smith with our food and drink.

By day, Les and I prepared for our trip. In 1958 Arnhem Land was still considered to be a wild and dangerous place. Kyle-Little's book, *Whispering Wind*, had just been published. Les had studied it very carefully. He bought a Boer war lever action Martini rifle and appropriate 0.32 mm round-nosed ammunition to use to hunt for food, as well as to provide protection from crocodiles and snakes. We purchased sturdy leg protectors, lots of repellant (Citronella), snake bite kits, many medicaments and plenty of protective clothing. Much of this was purchased from one of several large stores that operated then in Darwin. Haritos Brothers was the main one we patronised. The Greek family who owned this business have lived for several generations in Darwin and participated in both the crocodile and pearling industries, as well as in retail trading.

After much frustration, Les gave up waiting for the *Temora* and arranged for Curly Bell to take us to Maningrida on his converted pearling lugger, the *Kaprys*. Following a great farewell at The Vic, we boarded the *Kaprys* while it was anchored at the Darwin wharf. When we arrived at the wharf, I looked down what seemed to be a very long way and saw a small boat. I remember thinking to myself,

this must be the boat that would take us to the real (big) boat. How wrong I was. I was in fact looking at the *Kaprys* from a great height.

Fortunately, I was feeling jolly enough from our farewell to descend the long, vertical ladder with some decorum, hoping not to display the absolute fear I was feeling. Much worse was to come. The seas were rough, it rained, and Curly Bell, who navigated with a matchbox, had never been to Maningrida before. What is more, he was aided in his navigation by a remarkable Japanese cook, who had been to Maningrida once before but spoke only Japanese. It was four days before we arrived at Maningrida, whereas it normally took only two. We actually went as far as Milingimbi by mistake and had to retrace our way. I was seasick most of the way. While Les felt a little squeamish, he coped well with the trip, remaining on deck for most of the time taking notes.

The toilet on the *Kaprys* was situated in the middle of a platform jutting out over the back of the boat. I remember trying to negotiate this with modesty (I was the only woman on board), given my severe nausea and the roughness of the sea. Subsequently, we had several delightful passages on the *Kaprys*. Two days from Maningrida to Darwin, with calm oily seas, moonlit nights, Japanese food, rum, trailing porpoises and great conversations with Curly and members of his crew — but the first remains forever a frightening adventure into the unknown. The *Kaprys* sank on a subsequent trip to Maningrida, apparently she was riddled with white-ant damage.

We arrived at Maningrida late one afternoon. The seas had calmed and my nausea had abated. On the bright, white beach in front of us stood a swathe of expectant black faces (several hundred) and in their midst just three white ones — Ingrid and Dave Drysdale, the manager and his wife and Trevor Milikins, a patrol officer from the Welfare Branch. Our first evening meal at Maningrida was prepared by Ingrid Drysdale, who by then had accumulated a lot of experience living in remote locations in northern Australia, where she had become extremely adept at making do. The meal consisted of delicious roasted dugong, served with lily roots and yams, all harvested from the local area, and we finished with Rosella fruit pie. This amazing meal was served in a Sydney Williams hut, the type which had been manufactured of corrugated iron during the Second World War. The Drysdales had transformed this hut into a home in

the twelve months since they had landed on the beach at Maningrida. The floor of the hut was covered with a thick layer of crushed shell, which had been collected from the beach. The windows were adorned with brightly coloured floral curtains and the kitchen contained a large black fuel stove, which always had a jar of oozing yeast resting on its hob, ready for the bread making which took place every other day. Outside, Ingrid and Dave had planted exotic fruit trees, such as pawpaw and passionfruit, and flowers. Half-tame cockatoos lived in the overhanging trees and sometimes on the rafters inside the hut. Single iron bedsteads were located outside the hut under the overhanging eves, in order to catch the breeze, each fitted with a large white mosquito net.

Ingrid Drysdale recorded her memories of this time in a book entitled *The End of the Dreaming*, co-authored with Mary Durack (Drysdale and Durack 1974). Ellen Kettle, a senior sister at the Commonwealth Department of Health in Darwin, who visited Maningrida during its early years, also produced a book in 1967, containing a description of her experiences there and elsewhere in the Northern Territory. Both Ingrid and Ellen refer to Les and his research in their texts.

Once there 'in the field', we set up camp on the coast looking out over the beautiful Liverpool estuary (see plate 3). To my surprise, Les was very practical — he made cupboards, put up a canvas shade and looked after kerosene lights with skill. He maintains an interest in doing things with his hands today, as evidenced by the decoration he did in his house in Newtown, Sydney and in his weekender, Pine Lodge at Leura in the Blue Mountains.

We had brought a few Western luxuries with us, just in case we found the physical and cultural isolation at Maningrida a little tedious. The most successful was a small, sky-blue, mechanical record player, complete with wind up handle and steel needles which could only be used once. On this we played Delia Murphy's 'The Delightful Delia', Bizet's opera *Les Pêcheurs de Perles*, and a few other records. Most satisfying of all was the duet from Act 1 of the opera *Au Fond du Temple Saint.* The juxtaposition of that bitter-sweet harmony, our canvas and stringy bark camp, and a calm, rose-pink tropical dry season evening continues to evoke the strongest of nostalgic memories. I never hear *The Pearl Fishers* without, for a moment,

returning to the Arnhem Land coast in 1958. Les has always been interested in music of many kinds but he received no formal training. During our stay at Maningrida I taught him to read music. He learned quickly and proceeded to play the guitar and recorder throughout our stay. After a few more Europeans had arrived at Maningrida, both of us became part of an intermittent bush band.

As we progressively made our camp functional, Les worked hard at the Gidjingali language and the anthropological problems he had come to Maningrida to investigate. As his 1965 book, *Kinship and Conflict* indicates, he was interested in presenting for the first time a systematic analysis of disputes in an Aboriginal community. In 1958, representatives of several language groups had settled at Maningrida. As it turned out, Les became attached to the Gidjingali speakers, and Les Angarbarabara (now deceased) and Frank Gurrmanamana instructed him and became his friends.

Plate 3
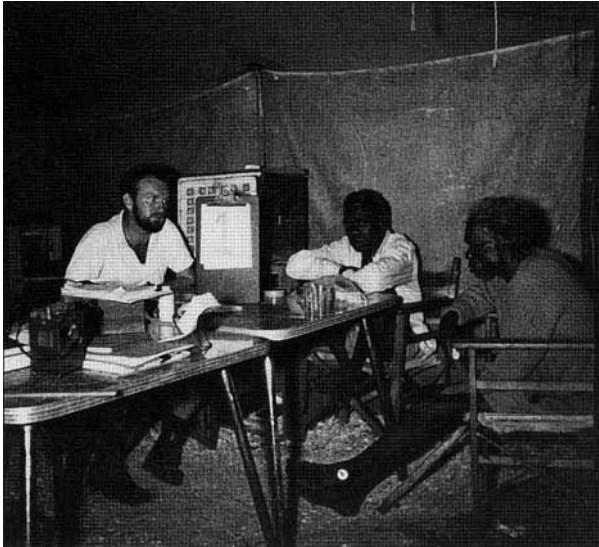Les and Betty's camp on the banks of the Liverpool River in 1958.

Plate 4
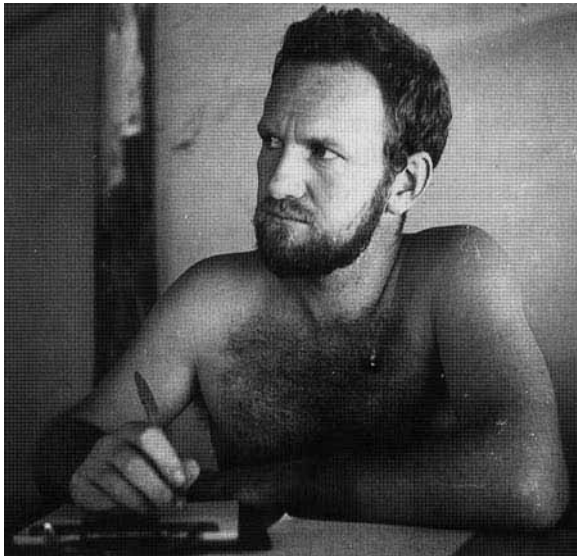Les with Frank Gurrmanamana and Les Angabarapara at Maningrida, 1958.

Plate 5
Les at work at Maningrida, 1958.

Les was a well-organised fieldworker. He kept neat, sparse, thoughtful notes, separating them as he went by starting a new page for each new topic. Ultimately, these were filed according to subject. I seem to remember that this system was suggested to him by Professor Derek Freeman, also then in the Department of Anthropology in Canberra. He worked with his Gidjingali colleagues, day and night, as often as they were willing to assist him (see plates 4 and 5). The work, carried out in our tent on a grey laminex table with director's chairs to sit on, was often aided by a series of small wooden blocks, each one of which indicated a person of a particular relationship to the informants. These kinship blocks were moved around the table, so that Les was able to check in a concrete way the complex issues that were being explained to him. I supplied copious quantities of tea and snacks for these sessions. The researching group, including Les who was then using a pipe, smoked incessantly. The method seemed to work very well. Occasionally, particularly when solutions to significant intellectual problems became bogged down, Les could become despondent and seek the stimulation of a Dexadrine in an attempt to move things along. He carried out most of his research at Maningrida itself, but twice accompanied Aboriginal men leaving the settlement to carry out ceremonies near the Blyth River, and on a third occasion he spent a month mapping totemic sites in the same area.

Les's second season at Maningrida saw us living in a large square tent adjacent to living quarters erected for single non-Aboriginal men. Somehow or other, I was persuaded to cook for these men in exchange for access to a few services which Les needed to survive. During this time, Les's supervisor, John Barnes came to visit. Les was very pleased to have John's intellectual input and his work appeared to progress following this encounter. I can still see John walking from his room in the single men's quarters to the makeshift shower late in the afternoon, dressed in his elegant maroon silk dressing gown. The orthopaedic surgeon, Dr Scougall, who had become fascinated by the Aboriginal so-called stork stand, also visited Maningrida while we were there. With him was Dorothy Bennett, now an authority of Aboriginal art from western Arnhem Land. Dr Scougall was keen to observe a Kunapipi ceremony and had arranged for us to travel south-east of Maningrida to the large

freshwater billabong called Balpildja to do just that. Dr Scougall had a classical training and appeared to be especially interested in mortuary practices and the use of urns as containers of the ashes of deceased people. Following a discussion about the disposal of the dead in Arnhem Land, in particular the use of hollow log coffins, I recall him walking into our tent very early one morning, looking at us in bed under our mosquito net, and saying, 'Consider, re-burial urn'. He then turned and walked away.

Ultimately, Les finished his PhD and it was published as a book. The completion of his PhD research however, was not the end of his association with the Anbara community. In 1975 he returned to Kopanga, on the western bank of the Blyth River, where the Anbara had set up an outstation in the early 1970s, this time with Margaret Clunies-Ross and their young son Alfred. They studied the Djambidj and Goyulan song series and associated issues. Both of these song series have now been published as tape and handbook. During this period of work, many Anbara people travelled to Sydney and Canberra to assist Les and Margaret with the translation of the songs.

In 1978 Les, together with Kim McKenzie of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, was intimately associated with the making of the film *Waiting for Harry*. This film documents an Anbara mortuary ceremony in which the bones of several deceased Anbara people are crushed and placed in a large, beautifully painted hollow log coffin. One of the people whose bones were placed in this coffin was Les's first teacher, Les Angabarabara.

Les has also been associated with both occasions when the Anbara community have brought Rom, an Aboriginal ritual of diplomacy, to Canberra to present it and associated objects to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and various members of the Institute who maintain an enduring relationship with that community. An account of the first of these, held in 1982, was published (Wild 1986). The second took place in early January 1995, with performances at the National Library of Australia, Old Parliament House and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Les's long and scholarly relationship with Frank Gurrmanamana will culminate when their collaborative work on Anbarra law (Djobor) is published. This will be the product of almost forty years of enquiry, during which
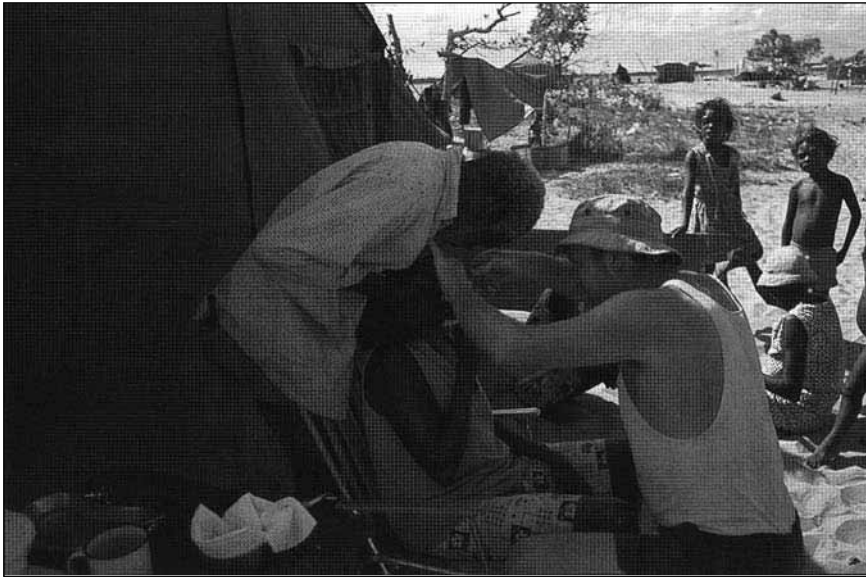
Plate 6
Les in dental practice at Maningrida, 1975.
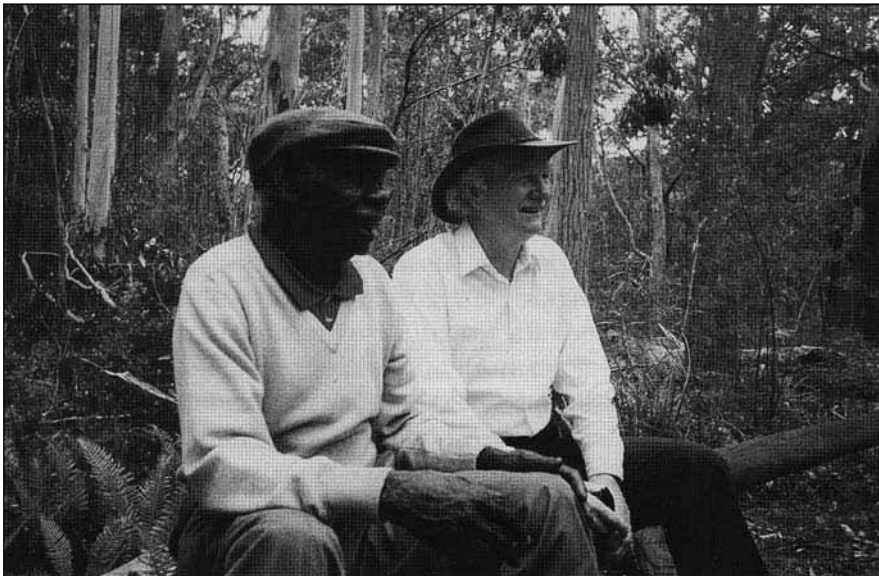
Plate 7
Les with Frank Gurrmanamana near Canberra, 1995.

time both men have grown older together, and it will symbolise their joint desire to get Anbarra law recorded accurately for future generations of Australians, both black and white.

Les has travelled a long and interesting journey since he was a school boy at Gilgandra Primary School, demanding that his new trousers be patched like those of his school mates. I am pleased to say that such egalitarian tendencies have remained with him throughout that journey. We have been separated (and later divorced) for close to thirty years, but have remained colleagues and the best of friends. This volume celebrates what Les has achieved so far. I look forward with optimism to the post-Festschrift period and what is yet to come.

Conflict and the Rituals of Diplomacy: Les Hiatt and the AIAS

John Mulvaney

LR Hiatt, then a doctoral research scholar, was acknowledged by Bill Stanner for his assistance in organising the 1961 symposium which inaugurated planning for the (then named) Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (Sheils 1963, xiv). By 1996, when more than half of the fifty-five scholars who attended that landmark meeting have died, few of the remaining venerable participants can match Les Hiatt's relative youth.

The AIAS (as it was known throughout Hiatt's association) was established as a statutory authority in 1964. Together with the other 1961 veterans, Hiatt then became a Foundation Member. His advisory and executive roles came later: election to the Council in 1970, to the Social Anthropology Advisory Committee in 1973, and as President of the Institute and Chairman of its Council a year later. He served two terms in those offices from May 1974 until May 1982, virtually spanning the Whitlam and Fraser federal administrations.

Despite Hiatt's auspicious and durable links with the Institute, his standing with its Council through the early 1960s appears less solid. It is interesting to reflect upon the fortunes of the young anthropologist, during those years when Emeritus Professor AP Elkin was convener of the Institute's Anthropology Advisory Committee. The interpretation which follows is entirely the writer's own.

With the approaching completion of his ANU doctoral dissertation, Hiatt lodged a research application with the interim Council. He sought support for an extensive literature review of indigenous forms of government among Australian Aborigines. His interest was stimulated by his doctoral fieldwork research amongst the Gidjingali and neighbouring Arnhem Land peoples. Much of his thesis concerned the systematic analysis of disputes within those communities. He found that there were no formally defined positions of authority, a conclusion at variance with earlier anthropological opinion about communal control.

Significantly for his later AIAS role, Hiatt was already interested in indigenous approaches to conciliation and the diplomacy of dispute resolution. Like his mentor and colleague, Mervyn Meggitt, Hiatt questioned the validity of certain accepted truths about social organisation. His research application (5 September 1962) hinted at interpretations of authority within Australian societies different from those held by experts like Radcliffe-Brown and Elkin.

By 1965, when he transformed his thesis into *Kinship and Conflict*, Hiatt deplored the neglect by anthropologists of the analysis of dispute resolution. He stated bluntly that 'Elkin's main contribution ... was in the field of kinship and totemism, and he said little more than that headmen settled quarrels'.

Yet Hiatt's application was supported by powerful referees — Stanner, Meggitt and Professor JA Barnes, the Institute's Acting Principal. Elkin reported to the next meeting of the Interim Council (15 September 1962) that Hiatt had agreed after discussions 'to amend his application' to include fieldwork and 'collect information on indigenous forms of government' in the Kimberley region. Elkin 'undertook to supervise the project' and was responsible for suggesting the changes to the proposal.

Early in 1963, Hiatt spent eight weeks in the Kimberley visiting seven widely separated communities. Not surprisingly, the project proved negative. He was unfamiliar with the area and its people, so such a rapid survey was inappropriate, and he had not sought to undertake it in the first place.

Council sympathised with Hiatt's failure to collect useful data, but seemed more concerned to establish the Institute's title to suitcases which he had purchased with his grant (13th meeting, 28–29 June 1963).

Elkin (1965, 14) may not have been displeased to inform the first Institute General Meeting in October 1964 that Hiatt's field work had been to 'test Dr Meggitt's view ... that Aboriginal government was not gerontocratic, and that tribes had no recognised political leaders and no formal administrative apparatus ... However, changes had been so radical ... that almost no worthwhile, relevant information could be obtained'. So, while the literature survey was not commissioned, the anthropological status quo had been maintained.

Hiatt and Meggitt submitted a research project application to the AIAS during 1966, on both their behalf and that of overseas anthropologists, Fred Rose and Aram Yengoyan. They proposed investigating four widely separated groups of Aboriginal people in relation to their social organisation. This followed Rose's 1960 lead in classifying kin, age structure and marriage. In terms of contemporary social anthropological interests and theory, it could be argued that this was innovative and objective research involving fieldwork with potential results relevant not only for Australia, but for global hunter-gatherer anthropology. It was rejected by Council however, 'in view of the high cost of the project in relation to the expected results' (Council Minutes, 30 September — 1 October 1966).

While Les Hiatt's potential seemed unappreciated at the Institute, around this time he made greater impact in the international arena. The formative Man the Hunter Conference met at the University of Chicago during April 1966. There were seven anthropologists present with expertise in Aboriginal Australia, but as Mervyn Meggitt recently had shifted base to Michigan, Hiatt was the sole Australian resident among them. Ironically, such is the web of kinship between anthropologists that Hiatt was joined in Chicago by Meggitt, Rose and Yengoyan.

Hiatt proved a conference stirrer and shaker, presenting two papers and remaining resolute, lucid and forthright in the face of criticisms from such eminent participants as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jo Birdsell and Fred Eggan (e.g. Lee and DeVore 1968, 162, 210–11, 213, 245).

'I make no quarrel with the fact that Radcliffe-Brown was a worthy pioneer in Aboriginal studies', Hiatt asserted at one juncture (Lee and De Vore 1968, 162), 'but this does not mean that one should not take issue with him on particular points'; especially so when these points invoke 'very sturdy straw men'.

Lévi-Strauss firmly defended the Australian anthropological canon, from Spencer and Gillen to Elkin, questioning the value of recently recorded data because of the contaminating influences of 'contact'. It prompted the future AIAS president to retort:

> If Lévi-Strauss is putting forward a general theory of Australian kinship ... then the fact that he has never heard of the Gidjingali until now is of as little account as the fact that Newton was never hit on the head by a falling paw-paw (Lee and DeVore 1968, 211).

Lévi-Strauss delivered the concluding conference remarks. Significantly, his final observation indicated his irritation with 'our Australian colleagues', to whom it was directed, 'we should probably be more cautious when tempted to dismiss the work of our great predecessors in the light of new outlooks or recent observations' (1968, 352).

Those conservative, establishment sentiments, I suggest, faithfully mirrored AP Elkin's approach to new research modes and re-interpretations. At least that was my personal experience around this period, when he rejected two of my articles from journals which he edited, evidently because I showed disrespect by questioning the validity, or ethics, of research by pioneer anthropologists.

It seems not unduly disagreeable to the memory of Elkin's great contribution to suggest that it was for comparable reasons that the young Hiatt's scholarship failed to impress the first convener of the Institute's Anthropology Committee. Conversely, Les Hiatt's term as Chairman at the AIAS must have been assisted

immeasurably by the Principal, Peter Ucko, who thrived in an ambi-
ence of sturdy scholarly dissent.

Hiatt's first major contribution to the AIAS was his organisa-
tion of a conference for the 1972 General Meeting, on Australian
Aboriginal mythology. He later edited the papers as an Institute
memoir, making implicit and explicit criticism of Lévi-Strauss (Hiatt
1975a, 1; 1975b, 145–6). NWG Macintosh completed two terms as
Council Chairman in May 1974 and at the Council meeting held the
day following that General Meeting Hiatt was elected to replace him.
This was a traumatic period in the Institute's history. That the AIAS
survived the subsequent deluge of criticism from Aborigines,
bureaucrats, politicians and many academics is partly attributable to
Hiatt's skills, as he tempered firmness with tact and diplomacy.

Peter Ucko took up the principalship in November 1972 with
enthusiasm and purposeful direction. Council endorsed his proposal
for a major international conference in association with the 1974
General Meeting, designed to highlight all aspects of the Institute's
research activities. That conference was attacked by Aboriginal
critics, most notably by the signatories to the 'Eaglehawk and Crow'
letter, and by various academics, as wasteful and irrelevant to
Aboriginal needs. They demanded Aboriginal participation in deci-
sion making and the right of Aboriginal people to commission
research and control spending.

A considerable mythology has accumulated over events and
opinions during this period, such that the Institute is sometimes seen
to have been dragged against its will into the mainstream of
Aboriginal studies as a result of that agitation. The reality is that,
under Ucko's inspiration and guidance, the Institute was moving
towards rectifying imbalances in its activities during 1973. Despite
official government advice and conventional wisdom until that time,
suggesting that the Institute's role lay with the record of traditionally
oriented societies, the Institute modified its policy. These changes
took place within the terms of the wisely framed Act which estab-
lished the Institute, by simply changing the accepted gloss on the
obligations which it imposed.

Because Les Hiatt set about implementing policies already for-
mulated by the time of his election, it is important to quote Peter
Ucko's advice on new policies from his review of AIAS activities in

1973. Referring first to the Social Anthropology Advisory Committee, of which Hiatt was a member, Ucko stated that the Committee 'fully accepted its responsibilities for the analysis of rural and urban "contact" studies as well as more traditional anthropological investigation' (Ucko 1973, 7).

Referring to the conference planned for May 1974, Ucko (1973, 14) succinctly and challengingly stated:

> The Institute will have failed if, over the next year, it does not manage to place Aboriginal studies in its rightful position within the world context of the study of human societies. We can only achieve this aim, a vital one for the understanding of the peaceful co-existence of different populations and social groups, if we adapt to the changing situation in Australia and if we can convince those in power that research and Aboriginal indigenous activity are not separate activities but are intimately connected, and inextricably bound together.

Despite the criticisms of the cost and objectives of the conference, it succeeded in drawing together, and later publishing, invaluable research data. I believe that in the future these Institute publications will become landmark volumes, establishing the state of knowledge within various disciplines at that time. The fact that the conference succeeded in directing overseas scholars to the significance of Australia as a research area is not a matter of shame, despite current doctrines of political correctness which seem to denigrate the importance of research by any but indigenous people. The reality is that many scholars have been attracted to Australia subsequently and have worked in mutually beneficial and positive partnerships with Aboriginal people.

The Hiatt–Ucko administration was inaugurated under propitious funding circumstances and a more concerned parliamentary agenda. The impact of the Whitlam Labor administration was a crucial factor in facilitating new policies and its funding provided the platform from which the Institute's program was launched.

During the financial years 1969/70 to 1972/73, the government had acknowledged increased Institute activities by enlarging the annual grant from $400,000 to $512,000. The first Whitlam administration grant, however, increased dramatically to $1.5 million in 1973/74, to $1.6 million in the following budget, and it was budgeted

to exceed $2 million in 1975/76. However, the advent of the Fraser Liberal–National Country Party administration reduced that amount to around $1.9 million. The level of support was largely restored later, until in Hiatt's final year in the Council chair the budget was $2.6 million, while the total operating funds of the AIAS in that year was $2,909,310.

After Ian Viner was appointed Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to the incoming Fraser cabinet, he appointed Les Hiatt on 8 April 1976, to chair a Committee of Inquiry with three Aboriginal members, the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee. That the Institute's Chairman should be required to advise government on political issues indicates the extent to which Institute concerns had changed.

This inquiry was neither the first nor the last government attempt to grapple with issues of Aboriginal needs and aspirations, but in misguided fashion working from the top down, rather than starting at grass roots level. The Hiatt Inquiry visited numerous communities and sought views over two months. The terms of reference spelled out matters which would have been unthinkable in government policy a decade earlier. Yet, unfortunately, they remain virtually unresolved and central issues today:

> The Inquiry should take account in particular of existing or developing arrangements for the involvement of Aboriginals at local, regional, State and national levels in the management of their own affairs, the setting of their own goals, the shaping of programmes and the determination of priorities for expenditure and should seek to identify ways in which a national advisory body might relate to systems of consultation and advice established at other levels and for special purposes.

This taxing appointment produced a divided report, one which satisfied few and attracted little public interest. Ten years after the Man the Hunter Conference however, Hiatt remained a scholar of integrity and determination. On this committee, as when chairing the AIAS Council, he proved an admirable conciliator, tactful but firm, facilitating exchanges of view and encouraging Aboriginal perspectives. In a thoughtful critique of Hiatt's majority report, the minority reports and government responses, Sally Weaver (1983, 94)

concluded that 'although the government adopted many of Hiatt's formal structural features ... it deviated from the spirit and intent of the ... report'.

Amongst Hiatt's many positive contributions during that period were his attempts to initiate a series of Institute pamphlets on topical issues. His exhortation, that 'at this critical juncture in Aboriginal–white relationships, the Institute has a duty to inform ... ordinary people', was heeded by Council in October 1978 (Hiatt 1979, 37). It was accepted that the pamphlet series was to be popular, informative and free. Hiatt chose to initiate the series with an account of the outstation movement, collaborating with HC Coombs and Barrie Dexter to complete a text in 1980. However, it was included within the AIAS *Newsletter*, so concealing it from most 'ordinary people'. There, unfortunately, the series ended.

Another endeavour and one which had a longer existence and greater influence, was the Uranium Impact Steering Committee, chaired by Colin Tatz. Hiatt undertook an important role in developing this Institute-supervised investigation into the social impact of mining upon Aboriginal communities in the Alligator Rivers region of the Northern Territory.

He played a different starring role in *Waiting For Harry*, the Institute film directed by Kim McKenzie. This film, relating to an Anbarra mortuary ceremony, was released in 1980 to critical acclaim, not least for Hiatt as participant and commentator.

However, 1980 was memorable for less gratifying matters. As Warwick Dix wrote as Acting Principal when reviewing AIAS activities for 1980:

> 1980 was a sad and difficult year in many ways for the Institute; Dr Peter Ucko resigned as Principal on 31 October 1980 ... That period was of great significance for the Institute, embracing an unprecedented development in research activities and growth of services ... its unique library is not only becoming known internationally ... but is known and used by increasing numbers of Aboriginal people within Australia.

This indeed proved a traumatic period for the AIAS and it tested Hiatt's diplomacy and resilience. Under his custodianship, the Institute survived until 1982, when it surmounted its next obstacle, the Walsh Review (one of several government reviews). Hiatt's last

major public service to the Institute was in 1984, when he delivered the Wentworth Lecture. Its theme was an appropriate one for him, 'Aboriginal Political Life'.

While still in office however, Hiatt had set in motion actions which reflected the trust in which the Institute was now held by some Aboriginal communities. Together with his academic and Aboriginal collaborators in the Maningrida–Blyth River area, he helped to plan a Rom ceremony for Canberra.

This Rom ceremony was acted out on the grass outside the Institute in November 1982, with Hiatt playing a prominent role, his Aboriginal friends having travelled to Canberra for this solemn occasion. They presented the Institute with ceremonial objects and paintings in what Hiatt termed a 'ritual of diplomacy'. It signified an affirmation of mutually positive relationships. Although Les Hiatt was no longer Institute Chairman on this occasion, nothing symbolises better his pivotal role in Institute affairs than this special ceremony. When he assumed office in 1974, the Institute was under fire for its failure to involve Aboriginal people. His connection ended with a unique ceremonial exchange between white academics and an Aboriginal community.

Chapter 4

The Temptation of Paris Resisted: An Intellectual Portrait of a Sydney Anthropologist

Kenneth Maddock

Lester Hiatt's anthropology has a flavour of its own. An interest in ideas, a fondness for argument and a down-to-earth, sometimes drily humorous turn of expression are characteristic of his writing. Unfortunately the theoretical outlook with which these virtues are connected has never been set out systematically by him, and much of the evidence for it can be missed by readers to whom the Sydney background is strange. I shall examine two sets of clues in this paper, one pointing to Paris, the other to Sydney. Together they enable us to form a picture of the man.

Take first the Paris connection. Though Hiatt has never shown much regard for French thought, it might be suspected from what he wrote during a particularly creative period that Claude Lévi-Strauss was on his mind more than anyone else. In 1965, with the publication of *Kinship and Conflict*, Hiatt began making a name as a relentless critic of the French anthropologist. For another decade he continued to work against the fashionable grain by resisting Lévi-Strauss.

Less obvious but more important for understanding Hiatt is 'the Sydney line'. As a student he fell under the spell of John Anderson's philosophy and of its heretical offshoot, the Libertarian Society. The experience gave his mind an enduring cast, which helps explain both his criticism of Lévi-Strauss and his way of tackling Aboriginal, academic and other questions.

These two sides to Hiatt — adherence to the Sydney line and opposition to Lévi-Strauss — are intimately related, though the first would have informed his thinking even had French structuralism never become a force in world anthropology. But if I am right in believing in certain affinities between Anderson and Lévi-Strauss the question arises of why Hiatt attacked the one while following the other.

To portray is to betray. Mine might be rejected as a partial and eccentric 'reading' of Hiatt. His entry in the *Annals of the Association of Social Anthropologists* describes his theoretical interests as sociobiology and psychoanalysis. Freud was a great man to Anderson and Lévi-Strauss, but I doubt that either would have admired the sociobiologists. Moreover Hiatt's many references to Lévi-Strauss contrast sharply with his virtual silence on Anderson and the libertarians. The short answer to a possible critic is that Anderson's philosophy has equipped Hiatt to attack other positions, and that Anderson–libertarian interests help explain his choice of problems to investigate.

My account might also be seen as unduly personal, in both its formulation and its selection of material. But it would be absurd if a contributor to a Festschrift were to ignore information gained by association with the subject or through moving in some of the same circles.

Les was in the field during the summer of 1962–63 when I made my first visit to Sydney, but I shared a house with his wife Betty, who lent me his PhD thesis, and with his friend Monty West, a linguist and musicologist. The thesis, later published as *Kinship and Conflict*, was a revelation — it showed that vigorous Aboriginal societies still existed. As a New Zealander I had vaguely supposed that the only surviving Aborigines were broken remnants living in misery. Monty, recently returned from Arnhem Land and the Gulf country, had enthralling tales to tell. A visit to a troupe of Aboriginal

dancers completed my conversion. From then remote Australia attracted me more than the New Guinea highlands.

Before going back to New Zealand I bought Anderson's *Studies in Empirical Philosophy*, published in 1962, soon after his death. I had known of him already through the Libertarian Society's *Broadsheet* and its occasional journal *Libertarian*, both of which circulated in Auckland. Indeed it was through the *Broadsheet* that Les's name first became known to me. He wrote on Aboriginal and educational questions and was listed among those who spoke at meetings of the society in the Philosophy Room at Sydney University. Opening on to the quad and adorned with murals of Greek philosophers, the room was famous as Anderson's forum from 1927 until his retirement in 1958.

Another reason for returning to Australia a year later to work for a PhD through Sydney was my interest in the debate over alliance theory which Lévi-Strauss had precipitated among Edmund Leach, Rodney Needham, Lex van der Leeden and others. In a masters thesis at Auckland I had examined the arguments in the light of New Guinea and Melanesian ethnography, but Les's research showed that Aborigines had been incomparably more successful in organising themselves. Where better then, than somewhere in the Northern Territory to test rival views on the structural implications of prescriptive marriage? I can no longer recall whether I read the section of Les's thesis in which he demolishes Lévi-Strauss, but in any case my interests switched to ritual and cosmology soon after settling in the field in 1964. *Le cru et le cuit* by Lévi-Strauss appeared that year. Like its successors in the *Mythologiques* series, the earlier books on totemism and *La pensée sauvage* and the papers collected in *Structural Anthropology*, it suggested an exciting way of tackling the classical problems of anthropology.

The next few years were a good period at Sydney University. Structuralism was putting new life into old questions, in spite of the resistance it met. The ideas that WEH Stanner had just put forward in his series of papers *On Aboriginal Religion* showed interesting resemblances with, but also differences from, the Paris approach. Ecology and ethology were making ground. These enthusiasms coincided with an upsurge of interest in hunter-gatherers, in which the natural prominence of Australia had been reinforced by the

resources of the recently established Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

Life was not limited to the seminar room and occasional conference, or even to meetings of the Libertarian Society in the Philosophy Room, but continued in pubs and at parties and in obscure periodicals which were sometimes produced in hiding from the police. Les chaired a talk I gave to the libertarians, and he and I wrote for the special Gurindji issue of *Tharunka*, then edited by Wendy Bacon. Like Anderson, Les took an interest in obscenity but I do not remember him involving himself in the libertarians' illegal activities, which included pirating a banned novel by Henry Miller. This fast-moving phase in Sydney life ended about the time Wendy went to gaol.

The social and intellectual scene I have been describing faded, until by 1975 it had virtually disappeared. Even had changes in the wider society not taken their toll, the effervescence of ideas and personalities is hard to sustain. As far as anthropology is concerned, some of the people who had contributed so much to the atmosphere of the Sydney department, Rhys Jones, Betty Hiatt (née Meehan), Nicolas Peterson, moved to Canberra, thus escaping the acrimony which enveloped it over real or imagined events in south-east Asia. Even Les thought of leaving Sydney. In addition, new demands faced anthropologists after 1976 in the form of land claims in the Northern Territory and the Law Reform Commission's inquiry into Aboriginal customary law.

Although anthropological and libertarian circles had been overlapping since the 1960s Anderson's philosophy, which lies behind libertarianism, appears to have directly influenced very few anthropologists. This in spite of Anderson's considerable place in Australian intellectual life and his leadership of a strong and aggressive philosophy department. I shall, therefore, consider the relations he had with Sydney anthropologists. I shall then look more closely at Hiatt's work in anthropology, including his rejection of Lévi-Strauss, before raising the question of the latter's compatibility with Anderson. This will lead into a concluding section in which other aspects of Hiatt's work are considered in order to round off the portrait of him as anthropologist and Sydney intellectual.

John Anderson and Social Anthropology

In 1927, when Anderson arrived to take the Challis chair of philosophy, AR Radcliffe-Brown had been a year in Sydney as Australia's first professor of anthropology. Both men were to make a mark through force of ideas and personality. They were in demand as speakers, and their influence extended beyond academic and student circles. The subjects on which they held forth included politics, art and literature. But unlike Anderson, who became 'as local as a magpie', the restless Radcliffe-Brown stayed no longer in Sydney than he did anywhere else. He left for Chicago in 1931, and in 1937 moved to Oxford.[1] Sydney's professor of anthropology for nearly all the remainder of Anderson's tenure of the chair of philosophy was AP Elkin, also influential, but very different in temperament and ideas from Anderson and Radcliffe-Brown.

Anderson and Radcliffe-Brown were original thinkers who never hesitated to attack rival positions. It is disappointing that little interest has been taken in comparing their social theories and that neither mentioned the other in his publications. As professors in the same university, which was small by today's standards, they would have met. Raymond Firth, who knew them both during his Sydney years, remembers them as friends, but he does not consider that cross-fertilisation of ideas occurred. On the one hand, the anthropologists 'had their own universe of critical discourse'; and on the other, neither Anderson nor Radcliffe-Brown was 'easily open to conviction from another person. They had four years to exchange ideas, and I doubt if four more or many more would have brought them together'.[2]

Several anthropologists or anthropology students from Radcliffe-Brown's time in Sydney knew Anderson or moved in his circle. Firth for example, addressed the Freethought Society and was a vice-president, while Phyllis Kaberry spoke on poetry at a Literary Society symposium on war literature to which Anderson contributed. Both societies were dominated by Andersonians during the 1930s. I have found no evidence that Radcliffe-Brown took part in them, though he moved among writers and artists and had in 1928 spoken to the Arts Society on the authorship of Shakespeare's plays. Sandy Anderson, John's son, remembers Firth and Kaberry from

when he was a small boy and they were visitors to the family home in Turramurra. He also recalls that Kaberry gave a party for the Andersons in London during John's 1938 sabbatical. Among other well-known names in Australian anthropology who knew both Anderson and Radcliffe-Brown were Elkin, Stanner, Ralph Piddington and Camilla Wedgwood. Any lack of cross-fertilisation cannot be explained by an absence of personal acquaintanceship between the philosopher and the anthropologists. Nor can it be accounted for by a lack of interest in anthropology on Anderson's part.

Although anthropology and anthropologists are rarely mentioned in Anderson's publications, he lectured on the theories of religion of Durkheim and Tylor, criticised the anthropological inter-pretation of ritual, and held views on the sacred and on social conflict which were incompatible with those of many anthropolo-gists then and since. The Reverend John Garrett, who was at the University of Sydney later in the 1930s than Radcliffe-Brown, recalls that, 'Old John was always rigorously severe on the underlying logical assumptions behind the functionalist anthropologists ... They were, you may say, in opposite corners of the quad'. Firth's recollec-tion is more ambiguous. On the one hand, Anderson was 'friendly' to anthropology, 'respecting its aims and methods but not I think reading much ethnography' but, on the other, he was 'rather opin-ionated, and over-simplifying towards anthropological concepts and methods'.

A point of particular interest for understanding Hiatt's anthro-pology is that Anderson saw society as an arena within which conflicts are fought out. Anderson's views owed much to Heraclitus, as did Radcliffe-Brown's, but the two put different constructions on the Ionian philosopher. Thus Radcliffe-Brown did not deny the existence of social conflicts, but his tendency was to stress those which, rather than being disruptive, belonged to the 'design' of a society. What has often been seen as his emphasis on integration and functional consistency can then be explained by the influence of the French sociological school. Durkheim, its founder, was temperamentally averse to conflict, and would have been repelled by Anderson's teaching that it was natural and necessary. But Radcliffe-Brown was also influenced by the anarchist Peter Kropotkin, who

was no stranger to struggle and disputation, and would have seen conflict as part of modern society, but would perhaps have envisaged its ultimate replacement by a state of mutual aid. Certainly he thought that some 'simpler societies' approximated to 'absence of all conflict' (Radcliffe-Brown 1957, 128).

Another point of interest for Hiatt's anthropology is Anderson's treatment of ritual and the sacred. In 1932, while Firth was still in Sydney but after Radcliffe-Brown had left, Anderson published an attack on 'obscurantism', in which he criticised anthropologists for seeing in ceremonies nothing but 'an expression of social solidarity or some sort of social bond'. He questioned their interpretation of whether this solidarity or bond existed. He condemned them also for failing to ask about the truth of the views stated in ritual or to criticise the attitudes of veneration shown by participants.

The gist of Anderson's position can be found in an article dating from 1943, in which he asserted that 'to call anything sacred is to say: "Here inquiry must stop; this is not to be examined" '. Regarding the mysteriousness in which claims about the sacred are enveloped:

> It will scarcely be denied that 'sacredness' and authority go together; but the orthodox would contend that the authority they uphold is a supernatural or superhuman one. I should argue, on the contrary, that we are invariably brought back to a human authority, that it is some set of human claims that religious teaching sustains.

Anthropologists usually do not cast doubt on the truth of what their informants tell them. As Radcliffe-Brown put it in a passage which reads like a reply to Anderson, it is not for the anthropologist 'to say "that is false," and equally no business to say, "it is true". What I have to do is investigate the belief as a phenomenal reality' (Radcliffe-Brown 1957, 118). It is not only questions of truth and falsity that anthropologists should put aside but 'all evaluations, whether ethical or logical' (loc. cit., 119).

The theoretical dissonance between Anderson and Radcliffe-Brown may have been too great for a fruitful exchange of ideas between anthropologists and philosophers, especially in the few

years before Radcliffe-Brown and Firth left Sydney and Elkin's long reign began. There would have been little pressure on anthropologists to rethink their position or on Anderson to reconsider his. Hiatt is exceptional in attempting to apply the critical insights of the one to the field of study of the other, yet even he mentions Anderson only twice in his anthropological publications. First, Hiatt's interest in Marxist theory 'stemmed largely from the teaching and writings of John Anderson' (Hiatt 1985, 45, n. 5). Second, his interest in Freud 'was first stimulated by John Anderson' (Hiatt 1987, 106).

The importance of these two thinkers for Anderson is evident from his *Studies in Empirical Philosophy*, but he reworked their teachings instead of merely receiving them. Thus Marx reinforced Anderson's pluralist theory of society, a 'doctrine of the centrality of diversity and conflict between organisations, interests and ways of life within a community', while Freud provided 'a verification of his own doctrine of mind as a structure of diverse and often conflicting motives'. Such a treatment of Marx and Freud requires that much of their thought — and even more of their followers' — be rejected. It is consistent however, with what Anderson said about anthropological studies of ritual.

Hiatt enlarged on his debt to Anderson in a speech marking his retirement from University of Sydney[3]. Recalling his beginnings as an anthropologist, Hiatt insisted that 'the critical formative influence, the major turning of the mind, took place through my association with John Anderson and the Sydney libertarians'. In particular:

> ... the enduring influence of Anderson has been through his critique of dualism and relativism, and his philosophical realism and pluralism. More importantly, he introduced me ... to a critical appreciation of Freud.

The libertarian heresy

In his farewell speech Hiatt described the libertarians as:

> ... an offshoot of Andersonianism. It has been said that the main difference was that whereas Anderson epitomized

> critical thinking, the libertarians developed the concept
> of critical drinking. No doubt this is a slander, but it
> is certainly true that the libertarians shifted Anderson's
> anti-authoritarianism and pluralism away from the
> academy into down-town pubs, where they combined it
> with Reich's sexual revolution and Max Nomad's politics
> of permanent protest ... they remain in my mind as an
> experiment in non-conformity, intellectually brittle no
> doubt and ultimately romantic, but nonetheless critical
> exemplars of the spirit of a free society. I take a certain
> pride in the fact that one of my first publications in
> anthropology appeared in the Libertarian Broadsheet in
> 1961 ...

The Libertarian Society grew out of the Freethought Society. Formed
in 1930 with Anderson as its first (and continuing) president, the
latter became defunct in 1951 because of disagreements about con-
scription, the Communist Party and other questions. The Libertarian
Society ran from 1952 to 1970, though its *Broadsheet* kept appearing
until 1979. A new group, the Anarcho-Marxists, arose in 1970 and
combined the Anderson-libertarian interest in Marx with the liber-
tarian interest in anarchism, but it collapsed after a few years. Since
then 'the Sydney line' has continued to be expressed in *Heraclitus*, a
mimeo periodical modelled on the old *Broadsheet*.

Hiatt was active in successive phases of this movement. He
spoke several times to the Libertarian Society and at least once to the
Anarcho-Marxists. He published *The Sydney Line*, a selection of
articles from the first 25 issues of the Broadsheet. Four of his were
included, two each on Aborigines and on education. He joined the
editorial panel of *The Pluralist*, a journal appearing in the 1960s,
which described itself originally as 'dissident' and later as concerned
with 'social and literary criticism'. Most of its writers were libertari-
ans or on the libertarian fringe. In 1970 Hiatt wrote for the Gurindji
issue of *Tharunka*, the student newspaper of the University of New
South Wales, which Wendy Bacon had turned into a vehicle of liber-
tarian and anti-censorship opinion.

In 1977 he organised one of the two conferences held that year
to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Anderson's arrival in Sydney.[4]
Although Anderson's empiricism, realism and pluralism were

accepted by libertarians, parts of his work interested them much more than others.[5]

'Art and morality' written in 1941 was a fiery and reasoned attack on censorship provoked by the banning of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Anderson denied that a society has a morality: 'there are different moralities ... because there are different ways of life, different "movements", each with its own rules of procedure for its members' (1982, 85). Those who speak in the name of morality tell us nothing unless they specify the movement, or way of life to which they belong. There is a 'close connection between the upholding of a hierarchical doctrine of reality and the maintenance of a social hierarchy', and therefore authoritarians, though differing in their views about the proper ordering of society, can unite in rejecting 'the necessity or naturalness of conflict' (1982, 97). Anderson argued that sexuality is the field in which 'hierarchical conceptions are most strikingly applied'. The explanation may be that 'sexual freedom ... cuts more sharply than other "transgressions" across the hierarchical system', thus leading the authorities to control 'the sexual life of the lower orders' in an attempt to 'keep them docile' (1982, 89–90).

In a second paper in 1943, named after Hilaire Belloc's 1912 book *The Servile State*, Anderson attacked the absurdity of advocating a 'planned society'. To plan is to subordinate 'social life to certain narrow interests, interests, especially, of a commercial kind' (Anderson 1962, 335). In keeping with his view that conflicts are natural and necessary, Anderson rejected the possibility that social struggle can ever be eliminated. But the false belief that all interests can be harmonised is significant, it causes 'loss of independence and vigour', that is, it brings about a servile state (Anderson 1962, 339). For Anderson, society is enlivened and freedom advanced by opposition movements which reject illusions of unity. In this paper, as in his articles on ethical theory, Anderson drew on the ideas of Georges Sorel, the unorthodox Marxist and theorist of anarcho-syndicalism, who had also denounced solidarism and insisted on the importance of conflict.

The libertarians combined Andersonian philosophy with theoretical material from other sources, most notably Wilhelm Reich, a dissident Freudian and preacher of sexual revolution, and Max Nomad, a critic of revolutionary politics. The resulting position has

been variously described as 'anarchism without ends', 'anarchism, atheism and free love' and more lightly, 'anarcho-cynicalism'. It was opposed by Anderson, in spite of the inspiration his philosophy had given to libertarianism. But there was more to the heresy than doctrinal disagreement. The psychologist John Maze pointed out, the libertarians 'were intent on acting out the personal and sexual freedoms which, they felt, had been approved only in the abstract by Anderson's Freethought' (1980).

Two themes in Hiatt's anthropology

Given his Anderson-libertarian background, it is not surprising that Hiatt has emphasised conflict and exposed religious ideology. But Anderson was no anthropologist. It is doubtful whether he comprehended the difficulty of doing ethnography. It is not just that anthropologists work in alien surroundings, isolated and physically uncomfortable. The exigencies of 'cultural translation' can leave them disinclined for 'the uncompromising critical evaluation of all that exists', as the young Marx put it in a passage that libertarians liked to quote. Anthropologists who, by a process akin to Freudian transference, come to feel admiration for the local traditional culture or affection for their leading informants are apt to be anything but critical. Hiatt however, has avoided the 'obscurantist fallacies' of which Anderson accused anthropologists in 1932, though he has always shown a warm regard for the Gidjingali with whom he worked in Arnhem Land and defended Aboriginal society against moral and political coercion (e.g. Hiatt 1963a, 1963b).

   Hiatt's interest in conflict stems from more than one source. John Barnes, who succeeded Elkin as professor of anthropology at Sydney, suggested that he make conflict the subject of his 1957 undergraduate thesis. Hiatt acknowledges that it was largely because of Anderson that he became interested in Marxism. As we have seen, Anderson's view of Marx emphasises diversity and conflict in society (just as Anderson's view of Freud emphasises diversity and conflict in the psyche). Hiatt's acceptance of the Sydney line would have made him receptive to Barnes' suggestion and helps explain why he kept the same focus in his doctoral research.

Until the mid-1950s, when books like *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (Gluckman 1956) and *The Functions of Social Conflict* (Coser 1956) began appearing, anthropologists were far more likely to study consistency and integration within a society than the opposite of these characteristics. The so-called Manchester school, to which Barnes was affiliated, played a leading part in shifting the emphasis. As Richard Werbner remarks, the early work of this group 'focussed on normative inconsistency and contradiction, on situational variation in behaviour and processes of social conflict'. It is tempting to see a Manchester influence, mediated through Barnes, in Hiatt's statement of his aims in *Kinship and Conflict.* He wanted, first, 'to correct the impression that Aborigines are automata mechanically following tribal law in everything they do'; and second, 'to present for the first time a systematic analysis of disputes in an Aboriginal community'.

Barnes and Hiatt spoke of 'the main stream of social inquiry' when praising each other. Barnes saw Hiatt as having brought Australian *ethnography* back into the mainstream, while Hiatt credited Barnes with bringing Australian *anthropology* into it. But it would be wrong to regard Hiatt as a local boy playing with an imported kit of tools. The significance of the conceptual shift facilitated by Barnes is that it gave effect, in ethnography-anthropology, to a way of thinking with which Hiatt was already familiar.

In spite of its concision *Kinship and Conflict* is a book of re-markable wealth, which repays study from a variety of perspectives, including the behavioural, jural and psychic dimensions of conflict and the interplay between them. Kinship generates quarrels as well as regulating them; it sets people at one another's throats as well as furnishing them with allies; it seems to provide clear guidelines for conduct, yet its failings leave people floundering in a 'no-man's-land' where neither safety nor certainty is assured. The multiplicity of rules and normative considerations means that a great many disputants succeed in feeling themselves justified, but because no one has a monopoly of violence and there is no third party to whose impartial wisdom people can defer, it often happens that a conflict is never really resolved, though it may die down.

The Gidjingali polity may be called anarchic in both senses of the word: it exhibits chaos; and it has no ruling body or sovereign. It

might be expected to appeal to Sydney libertarians, with their anti-authoritarian attitudes and anarchist leanings. But though Aborigines flout rules and rationalise transgression, they do not call the rules into question. They are sinners rather than rebels and some rules are never broken.

One gets the impression from Hiatt that the root of much trouble is that a man elopes with another's wife or commits adultery or marries a woman to whom some other man has a better claim. The 'chronic disproportion between the demand for wives and the supply of suitable women as defined by the marriage rule' (Hiatt 1965a, xiv) encourages rule violations. In principle, most women are forbidden partners for a man; marriages are arranged by older persons (women as well as men) who use their position to promote their own interests; and a younger man must wait for years to marry, while older men accumulate wives. Granted that what Hiatt aptly calls 'the ethic of generosity' can relieve the strain on bottled-up human nature, for example by leading a man to share his wife with his unmarried younger brother (1965a, 101, 108–9; 1985, 40–3), but even so any reduction in potential for conflict between men may be matched by an increase in conflict *within a man* as his ethical desires struggle with his feelings of jealousy.

Hiatt's interest in jealousy among the Gidjingali is unlikely to have arisen by accident. Supporters of free love are bound to face the question whether jealousy is a conventional reflex, peculiar to certain forms of society or even certain classes within a society, or a passion lying deep in human nature and therefore likely to spring up any-where. When Anderson (1982, 91) discussing *Ulysses*, spoke of 'the hell of bourgeois existence', with its 'sexual entanglements, cross-purposes, dissatisfactions, terrors', he could be taken as holding the former view of jealousy and certainly many libertarians have done so. Perhaps Hiatt was more doubtful, even before becoming inter-ested in sociobiology. His present opinion, which can be seen as the outcome of a long process of scientific inquiry and personal experi-ence, is that jealousy is 'a complex, culturally-modulated emotional state' contributed to by 'pre-cultural sources of neural and chemical energy' (Hiatt 1988, 23). By implication it belongs to the human existence.

If the tenor of Gidjingali existence is so often disturbed by emotional turmoil, violation of rules and sexual conflict, how does the system survive? As a functionalist would ask, what contributes to its maintenance? Hiatt does not raise the question in his 1965 book, except to suggest that the ethic of generosity helps relieve sexual misery. He takes the question up in later publications, however, in relation to Aboriginal society in general.

In his 1967 paper on Lévi-Strauss and alliance theory, Hiatt asks whether the polygynous marriages of older men throw light on 'our understanding of Aboriginal kinship forms'. Aboriginal models of their marriage arrangements resemble anthropological models in being characterised by 'formal beauty' and the 'apparent equality of the component parts'. But perhaps trickery is afoot. What if the point of the models is to 'distract attention from one gross inequality in Aboriginal society: that ageing males have two, three, or more wives, while men at the height of their virility have no wives and are exhorted not to commit adultery'? Anderson of 'Art and morality' lurks behind the question, though here it is merely a case of a deceptive view of marriage arrangements being propagated by the beneficiaries of social hierarchy. But Hiatt was soon to develop the connection with religion.

In papers on the ritual representation of such processes as procreation, swallowing and regurgitation (Hiatt 1971, 1975b), he tried to discover what is really achieved through initiation. Hiatt's argument draws on Freudian theory to raise the curtain of myth and symbol behind which older men monopolise women, younger men are reconciled to celibacy and males generally come to terms with doubts about sexuality. By looking up, so to speak, people fail to see the earthly sources of their discontent.

That the secretive mysticism of cult life dissipates the energy of younger men is also affirmed by Hiatt in a 1985 paper on the Marxian anthropologists Frederick Rose and Claude Meillasoux. He depicts a circle of gerontocrats who indulge in reciprocal altruism while denying and frustrating their juniors. The preoccupation with controlling and manipulating female reproductive power which underlies the ritual is a male obsession fostered, if not entirely created, by older men who benefit from it. Hiatt noted without

embarrassment that his view runs counter to native doctrine and anthropological functionalism, both of which hold that 'the purpose of religion is to maintain the integrity and well-being of the social totality'.

More recently still Hiatt (1989, xxxvi) has questioned Stanner's treatment of religion. The Aboriginal genius is expressed, not in 'ontology', but in 'applied psychology'. By seeing it the other way around, Stanner has 'cut the cable' holding us to earth and gone into 'free flight'. This absurd metaphysician among anthropologists resembles dominant Aboriginal men in becoming engrossed with entrancing but deceptive models. Let the hot air out of your balloon and return to earth, Hiatt suggests, and then you will see religion, like marriage, for what it is, an artful means for pursuing worldly ends.

Society as a scene of conflict, metaphysical hierarchy as a cloak for social hierarchy, sexual repression as a technique of political authority — these tenets of the Sydney line are central to Hiatt's anthropology. Developing an account of Aboriginal society in terms of them has led him into sharp criticism of other anthropologists. But before turning to Lévi-Strauss, who has particularly attracted Hiatt's attention, some comments on how he seems to see conflict.

The writers who helped bring the concept back into anthropology and sociology in the l950s understood it differently from Anderson. For example, Coser (1956, 8) argued that conflict was not 'only a "negative" factor which "tears apart" ... it may ... contribute to the maintenance of group boundaries and prevent the withdrawal of members from a group'. He was little interested in what he called its 'dysfunctions'. Gluckman and his followers also emphasised the socially sustaining and integrating effects, or 'functions', of conflict. Nothing in Hiatt suggests that he takes this view. Anderson did not, and he would probably have seen talk of functions and dysfunctions as indicative of solidarist fallacy. At the same time, however, nothing in Hiatt shows that he considers conflict as a source of impermanence, flux and change. He does not ask whether Gidjingali quarreling and rule-breaking belong to a process of social breakdown and transformation. The young Anderson might have raised the question, but then he was a revolutionary.

Against Lévi-Strauss

Perhaps Hiatt has criticised Lévi-Strauss out of a wish to rebuff 'trendies'. As he wrote in his introduction to *Australian Aboriginal Mythology*, 'this season's fashion in Paris is practically all there is left to wear in Australia'. The book included a humane gesture to those anthropologists who, unable to keep up with 'new thinking', 'seem destined to be left behind, picking over obsolete machinery in farm-yard scrapheaps' — two chapters from an old book by Arnold van Gennep were translated for their sake.

Elsewhere, however, Hiatt has expressed gratitude untinged with irony. The writings of Lévi-Strauss have 'rekindled interest in the central problems of Australian ethnography at a time when enthusiasm for field observations ... has seemed in danger of dimin-ishing more rapidly than the opportunities for making them' (Hiatt 1969b, 83). Not only was Lévi-Strauss using Australian material but his way of doing anthropology was unusually suggestive. Probably the last 'big name' in anthropology to have been as interested in 'the central problems of Australian ethnography' was Radcliffe-Brown, who was not prolific and never became fashionable outside the discipline.

It was almost inevitable that a young anthropologist of Hiatt's cast of mind, convinced that much remained to be done in the Australian field and that many of the old answers were wrong, would take a close look at what Lévi-Strauss offered, especially as his methods and theories were attracting worldwide attention. Hiatt's response can best be described as considered rejection. In retrospect however, it is noticeable that Lévi-Strauss appears to have been setting a trail for the Australian to follow, or perhaps we should say that Hiatt was intent on tracking the Frenchman. The lefthand column in the table shows books published by Lévi-Strauss between 1949 and 1971. The righthand column shows relevant publications by Hiatt. (The first date after a Lévi-Strauss title refers to the original French edition; the date after an oblique is the English translation.)

l. *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté*, 1947/1969	*Kinship and Conflict*, 1965; 'Authority and reciprocity in Australian Aboriginal marriage arrangements', *Mankind*, 1967; 'Gidjingali marriage arrangements', in *Man the Hunter*, 1968. (Note the acrimonious exchange, entitled 'Gidjingali marriage arrangements: comments and rejoinder', in *Man the Hunter*.)
2. *Anthropologie structurale*, 1958/1963 (contains papers on the study of myth)	edited *Australian Aboriginal Mythology*, 1975 (see the introduction).
3. *Le Totémisme aujourd'hui*, 1962/1962	'Totemism tomorrow: the future of an illusion', *Mankind*, 1969.
4. *La Pensée sauvage*, 1962/1966	'Totemism tomorrow: the future of an illusion'; 'Swallowing and regurgitation in Australian myth and rite', in *Australian Aboriginal Mythology*; edited *Australian Aboriginal* Concepts, 1978.
5. *Mythologiques* 1–4, 1964–71/1969–81	edited *Australian Aboriginal Mythology*.

Two points should be noted in comparing dates in the two columns. First, thorough discussion of Lévi-Strauss in the English-speaking countries has usually depended on translations of his books. Second, the collections edited by Hiatt originated in conferences held by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in 1972 (for *Australian Aboriginal Mythology*) and 1974 (for *Australian Aboriginal Concepts*), so the time lag in responding to Lévi-Strauss was less than it seems.

It should also be noted that Hiatt's interests during this period were not limited to topics on which Lévi-Strauss was writing. In particular, his work on local organisation was important, but with the exception of *Kinship and Conflict* it is doubtful whether he would (or could) have produced the items listed in the table had Lévi-Strauss been too obscure to be felt as a challenge.

Since *Mythologique*s the anthropology of Lévi-Strauss has not similarly caught Hiatt's attention. He may find the Frenchman's later work uninteresting because of lack of reference to Australia (though that should have disqualified the *Mythologiques*). Perhaps Hiatt feels that he has said all that is necessary on the subject. It is also possible that, as chairman of the Institute from 1974 to 1982, he became too engrossed in administration to give himself fully to serious work. By the time Hiatt returned from this sidetrack Lévi-Strauss was no longer a meteor in the skies of anthropology. Much that anthropologists were taking up in Australia was remote from the classical problems which he had restored, however briefly, to the centre of attention. There no longer was a need to combat the errors of French structuralism. It may even be that Hiatt is nostalgic for a vanished decade in which Lévi-Strauss, by rekindling interest in Australian ethnography, gave it an importance it has now lost and perhaps never deserved.

Hiatt makes three main criticisms of Lévi-Strauss. First, Lévi-Strauss does violence to the facts. One of the points Hiatt hoped to establish in *Kinship and Conflict* was that 'patrilineal groups were not units in wife-exchange systems of the kind implied by Lévi-Strauss's theory on kinship and marriage'. He uses statements by Gidjingali and information about their marriages to show that patrilineal groups do not function in this way, and that people do not conceive of wife exchange between such groups as an ideal. In making his case Hiatt assumed that Lévi-Strauss required wife-exchange units to be patrilineally constituted, and he assumed also that these units were the named patrilineal descent groups into which the Gidjingali are divided (cf. Maddock 1969).

Second, the analyses of Lévi-Strauss are logically deficient. In 'Swallowing and regurgitation in Australian myth and rite', Hiatt takes up Lévi-Strauss's discussion of the Wawilak myth recorded by Lloyd Warner. He distinguishes five 'formal steps in Lévi-Strauss's

argument' and rejects them all. On logical, as well as factual grounds, Hiatt denies that the myth makes a symbolic statement about local weather conditions, or that its symbolism generates a paradox, or that the basic social structure evinced in Murngin ritual mitigates the paradox.

Third, the underlying philosophy of Lévi-Strauss is objectionable. 'Totemism tomorrow: the future of an illusion', Hiatt's only article devoted entirely to Lévi-Strauss, develops the point. Having disputed the logical adequacy and ethnographic accuracy of *Le Totémisme aujourd'hui* and *La Pensée sauvage*, Hiatt concludes that 'I am maintaining a *realist* and *pluralist* position against a form of intellectual monism that seeks to reduce cognitive, conative, and affective complexes to modes of thought' (1969b, 93). The italicised words flag Hiatt's adherence to the Sydney line. Earlier in the paper, commenting on Lévi-Strauss's assertion that totemism 'constitutes not even a mode of classification, but an aspect or moment of it', Hiatt had stated:

> The term 'moment' is part of the vocabulary of *philosophical monism*, whose aim is to establish that reality is ultimately one and that differences are illusory. *As realists, we must insist* that Lévi-Strauss's so-called concession to the upholders of totemism is in fact an admission of a genuine qualitative difference ... ((1969b, 85) emphasis added)

Anderson and Lévi-Strauss

In his autobiographical *A World on the Wane* (originally published as *Tristes Tropiques*), Lévi-Strauss confesses to three mistresses: Marx, Freud and geology. They taught him the same lesson, that to understand is to reduce 'one type of reality to another; that true reality is never the most obvious ... and that its nature is already apparent in the care which it takes to evade our detection' (Lévi-Strauss 1961, 61). The young Anderson would have owned up to Marx and Freud, and perhaps geology too (his early interest in the sciences is indicated in that he took first-class honours in physics and mathematics as well as philosophy at Glasgow), but he would have rejected the suggestion that there are types of reality.

Anderson's position was one of 'ontological egalitarianism', according to which every existing thing 'is a spatial and temporal situation or occurrence that is on *the same level of reality* as anything else' (Baker 1986, 1, 20). Being an admirer of Heraclitus, who held that we should expect the unexpected and that things can be hard to seek out, Anderson might have sympathised with the view that 'reality' tries to evade detection. Is it possible then, that the philosophical incompatibility asserted by Hiatt is due to nothing more than careless use of words by Lévi-Strauss?

It is clear, however, that there is no mistake on Hiatt's part. Lévi-Strauss sees Marxism, geology and psychoanalysis as posing exactly the same problem:

> ... the relation, that is to say, between reason and sense-perception; and the goal we are looking for is also the same; a

> sort of *super-rationalism* in which sense-perceptions will be integrated into reasoning ... And so I stood out against the new tendencies in metaphysical thinking ... Phenomenology I found unacceptable, in so far as it postulated a continuity between experience and reality. That the one enveloped and explained the other I was quite willing to agree, but I had learnt from my three mistresses that there is no continuity in the passage between the two and that to reach reality we must first repudiate experience, even though we may later reintegrate it in an objective synthesis in which sentimentality plays no part (1961, 61–2).

For Anderson, by contrast, what we know are infinitely complex states of affairs. There are no 'higher' truths or realities which somehow transcend experience or which require a special mode of knowledge to be discovered. Compare his remarks on 'the Freudian revolution' with the lesson which Lévi-Strauss, as we have just seen, received from his psychoanalytic mistress:

> The continuity of the mental and the bodily, of thought and action, the breaking down of divisions between conscious and unconscious, between normal and abnormal — these are Freudian contributions to thought in general, and they illustrate the revolutionary character which Freudianism has in common with Darwinism ... (1962, 359–60)

If both men are indebted to Marx and Freud, it is beyond doubt that Lévi-Strauss has not only packaged but understood them in a way to which Anderson would object. But if we take Lévi-Strauss to be more anthropologist than philosopher, we may ask whether his use of them is illuminating. The libertarian view of ideology is derived from Marx who, arguing that social consciousness rises on the basis provided by the economic structure of society, suggested that an ideology is a false consciousness in which social interests are presented in disguised or distorted fashion. The latter point is illustrated by his remark that when the French bourgeoisie of 1848 spoke of 'liberty, equality and fraternity' they really meant 'infantry, cavalry and artillery'.

Lévi-Strauss (1966, 130) asserts 'the undoubted primacy of infrastructures', and he confesses to seldom tackling 'a problem in sociology or ethnology without having first set my mind in motion by reperusal of a page or two from the *18 Brumaire of Louis Napoleon or the Critique of Political Economy*' (1961, 61). The first of these two works by Marx is full of examples of the hidden and often unconscious social function of formulas pronounced by representatives of interest groups. The second is famous for its preface, in which Marx stated his theory that the relations of production determine the general character of social, political and spiritual processes.

Far from claiming to have worked out what is meant by the primacy of infrastructures, Lévi-Strauss calls it more of a job for historians than anthropologists. He sees his own contribution as lying in an area neglected by Marx, the theory of superstructures (1966, 130–31). Marx he thinks, unlike many Marxists, did not assume that 'practices followed directly from *praxis*'. The two are mediated by a conceptual scheme through which forms are embodied and material given shape. But Marx only touched on the matter, for he was preoccupied with the economic structures of industrial society. By specialising in the varieties of consciousness of tribal society, Lévi-Strauss is complementing what his predecessor began.

As Hiatt would know, the work of Lévi-Strauss is abundant with analyses in which he suggests that myths, rituals and ideal models of society constructed by its members 'hide, embellish or justify' social relations. And, given the libertarian interest in parallels between Marx and Freud, it is intriguing that Lévi-Strauss criticises

Sartre for having forgotten 'half of Marx's and Freud's combined lesson ... superstructures are *faulty acts* which have "made it" socially' (1966, 253–4).

Lévi-Strauss's observations on concept formation and social fantasy are not only in a line of descent from Marx and Freud but they lead him into an exposure of ideological 'detours and manoeuvres, conscious and unconscious', which are very suggestive and could well be adopted by those working in the Anderson-libertarian tradition. For example, Hiatt could have done so when considering the emergence and social role of marriage models, ritual symbols and mythic representations.

There is a passage in Anderson's essay on Hegel in which he remarks that a recognisable Hegelian view exists on 'any important philosophical or scientific question' (1962, 79). My feeling is that Lévi-Strauss's breadth and fertility would have appealed to Anderson, though he would also have seen him as a suitable case for critical treatment.[6] I consider Hiatt to be averse by temperament to system-building and speculative thought. They set his teeth on edge, disinclining him for constructive rather than hostile engagement with someone of Lévi-Strauss's cast of mind.

Rounding-off

The Anderson-libertarian heritage explains important themes in Hiatt's anthropology and helps account for his adverse reaction to Lévi-Strauss. The range of problems in which he has interested himself is greater than I have shown, however, and I should like to round off this portrait by considering Hiatt's work in sociobiology and his support for free and objective inquiry, untrammelled by fear, favour or affection.

It might be thought from Hiatt's publications in learned journals that his interest in sociobiology developed late and that roughly speaking, it grew as his interest in Lévi-Strauss declined. Such a conclusion would miss his contributions to journals of opinion, which show a long-standing concern with human nature, and hence with what may be learned not only from psychoanalysis but from ethology, palaeo-anthropology and the like. This interest can be traced back to Hiatt's days before anthropology, when

he studied dentistry and would have liked to pursue medical research.

In 1965, the year in which *Kinship and Conflict* appeared, Hiatt wrote for Balcony on 'universal features of human behaviour' manifested in attitudes to dirt. He proposed a theory of dirt — or 'mung', as he suggested calling it — and he argued that psychoanalytic explanations of these attitudes are more convincing than the cognitively oriented theories of such anthropologists as Mary Douglas and Edmund Leach. That same year he wrote for *The Pluralist* on 'the understanding of human evolution and behaviour'. More particularly, he discussed territoriality and hierarchy as means by which orderly relations can be established within a society. They are, he suggested, instinctual mechanisms for reducing conflict.

A few years later Hiatt asked in *Quadrant* 'whether comparisons between human and non-human societies are of any scientific value'. An answer requires us to work out how much of social life is derived from 'animality' and how much from 'humanity'. But in making his excursion into 'the natural history of morality', Hiatt was not implying that the naturalness of a form of behaviour justifies it. He acknowledged that moral and legal codes are apt to be crucial among humans, in contrast to animals, whose behaviour is impelled or inhibited by neurophysiological factors. Given the natural continuity of animals and men however, how has this differentiation come about? In Hiatt's view the conditions of life in some groups of proto-hominids favoured individuals who could exercise self control. The physiological basis for this ability is located in the neocortex, the development of which enabled it increasingly to interfere with the operation of other parts of the brain.

Although moral codes are regularly supported by external sanctions, Hiatt argued in the *Quadrant* article that moralities do not so much warn us of what is outside as appeal to something inside us. If the appeal is disregarded, feelings of shame are likely to follow. There is then, a distinctively human mix: 'a certain type of verbal instruction, an aptitude for self-discipline, and an aptitude for self-punishment'. Put more pithily, 'rules, repression, and guilt' mark off the human from the animal.

This early work in journals of opinion leads into Hiatt's later and more academic study of topics such as cuckoldry, the natural history of fatherhood, parental investment theory and the expression

of the emotions. It also connects with his interests, which I discussed earlier, in jealousy, the control of sexuality and the significance of religious ideology for maintaining social hierarchy as well as with his important studies of local organisation. On the whole however, he has not attempted to explain the cultural features of human societies by animal or proto-hominid arrangements, except in the most general sense[7.]

It is depressing that Hiatt's interest in sociobiology and his willingness to consider behavioural continuities between humans and their animal or pre-human forbears has brought him into occasional conflict with colleagues who draw a sharp distinction between the two and who seem to fear that the study of human nature and its non-human roots will produce findings that cannot be reconciled with their moral and political views. Hiatt prefers to follow an argument where it leads. Unlike some anthropologists he will not abandon openness and objectivity, even as regards Aboriginal claims.

In an early paper for the *Broadsheet*, Hiatt defined the libertarian interest in inquiry as one which opposes 'all restrictions on subject matter and which admits nothing as sacrosanct or beyond inquiry'. He drew the conclusion that pupils at school should be as free to question the social values pressed on them as to question the mathematical reasoning of their teachers. Though his arguments were concerned with schooling, their implications for initiatory ritual are obvious.

Hiatt defended a similar position in an editorial for *Mankind* on politically motivated research funding. He suggested in 1969 that in spite of their other differences anthropologists might come together to support 'the notion of disinterested inquiry, which in its institutionalised form requires that research projects should spring from the demands of the subject'. He hoped, perhaps optimistically, that anthropologists would show themselves to be 'committed to the concept of a university as a place where no subject of investigation is held to be sacrosanct and where scholars may express their views freely and fearlessly'.

The thrust of such arguments is in accord with Anderson's anti-authoritarian philosophy, which led him to criticise and reject all forms of authority, including appeals to the sacred. Hiatt applied

them to another sensitive area in 1982 when discussing the involvement of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in the preparation of land claims. Accused of academic aloofness and evasion of political responsibility, he made three points: first, objectivity is a 'good', which academics might be expected to cultivate and defend against its enemies; second, a rejection of partisan fervour and sentimentality does not, in itself, prevent political engagement; and third, revolutions are more realistically understood as processes by which one set of oppressors replaces another than as 'attempts by oppressed people to free themselves' (Hiatt 1983). It was a concise and evocative statement of adherence to the Sydney line.

Chapter 5

The Western Desert vs the Rest: Rethinking the Contrast

Ian Keen

It is probably fair to say that the recent process of rethinking Aboriginal local organisation began with Les Hiatt's critique in 1962 of Radcliffe-Brown's generalisations about Aboriginal social structure published in 1930–31 and 1956, and vigorously defended but revised by Stanner in 1965. At the core of Hiatt's revision was a substitution of the loosely bounded 'community', consisting of a number of intermarried patrilineal descent groups, for the patrilocal horde or band of Radcliffe-Brown's model. This proposal did not survive unscathed (Birdsell 1970; Peterson and Long 1986), but there was no turning back to the assumption of the existence of patrilineal/patrilocal bands right across pre-colonial Australia. The process of erosion of the orthodox model of Aboriginal land tenure continued through research in the Northern Territory and Queensland, some of it related to Aboriginal land claims. This research described a wide variety of modes of attachment to land.[1]

My focus is the contrast drawn by a number of people between, on the one hand, rather individualistic, flexible and inclusive social organisation and relations to country in Western Desert, and on the other, ownership of land by more exclusive patrilineal descent-groups in the semi-desert, Arnhem Land and Cape York Peninsula. A number of scholars have seen the flexibility of Western Desert relations as an adaptation to the uncertainties of resource availability, and descent-based organisation as an adaptation to the relatively more reliable resources of the ranges and the rich resources near the coasts of the tropical north.[2]

Attention to the varying perspectives on social reality among people who were claimants in the Warumungu and McLaren Creek land claims, and the strategies of certain individuals, reinforces doubts about prevailing models of land tenure or local organisation in that region. The position under scrutiny, following up an earlier work in 1995, is that the terminology of clan and descent group, though inappropriate for the Western Desert, is applicable to peoples of the more productive ranges in the semi-desert and along the tropical coasts. It would be foolish to suggest that there are no differences between Western Desert social forms and the rest, but my reanalysis of Yolngu patrifilial identity may bring the apparent descent-based corporations of the Warlpiri and their neighbours closer to the bases of identity of Western Desert people, and lead to alternative suggestions about the key differences.

Elsewhere in 1995 I have argued that the terms in which Yolngu identity in relation to country and ancestors have been discussed need to be changed. The kinds of tropes embedded in the framing of Yolngu groups and group relations, as well as the metaphors which Yolngu people employ to describe relations among persons and groups, are quite different from those upon which anthropological constructs depend. Concepts such as lineage, clan, descent group and corporate group depend on images of equivalent segments, external boundaries, and taxonomic hierarchy. These constructs go hand in hand with concepts of land and country which also entail spatial metaphors of enclosure and boundaries, and which imply hierarchies of small bounded places contained in larger ones of a different type. None of these tropes fit Yolngu modes of 'group' identity and relations, which involve images drawn from the

human body and plants, and beliefs about ancestral journeys and traces. Far from being constituted by enclosure within boundaries, or related in a hierarchy of group and sub-group, Yolngu identities, like concepts of place, extend outward from foci. Connections among such identities are not those of enclosing sets but open and extendable 'strings' of connectedness. Our descriptive language, I suggested, needs to reflect those tropes more closely.

If the terminology of 'patrilineal descent group', 'clan' and 'corporation' is misleading in north-east Arnhem Land ethnography, then it may well be inappropriate for the description of Warlpiri, Warumungu, or Arrernte relations to country. If so, the contrast between the flexible, individualistic relations to land in the Western Desert, and descent-based land tenure elsewhere, needs to be recast.

My aim is to discuss the question with reference to McLaren Creek in the semi-desert of the Northern Territory, where country associated with Warlpiri, Warumungu, Kaytej and Alyawarre languages comes together. I am unable to attempt the close analysis of imagery in the construction of social realities which was essayed in the paper on Yolngu identity, for this material comes from limited and directed research for a land claim, as well as published ethnographies. Rather, I rely on the notion of 'bases for claim' to hold country and identify with ancestors, which is central in land claim hearings. These are the various ways in which people say they are connected to country, and give as reasons for having rights of various kinds. The varying perspectives on social reality among people who were claimants in the Warumungu and McLaren Creek land claims, and the strategies of certain individuals reinforce doubts about prevailing models of land tenure or local organisation in that region.

An analysis of identity in relation to ancestors and country in this area shows that current differences between local organisation in the Western Desert and in the semi-desert are not best drawn on the basis of the presence or absence of patrilineal descent-groups or corporate clans. Rather, the difference lies primarily in the relative weight accorded to, or the ranking of, various grounds for articulating identity and claiming to hold country, the ways in which these relate to one another, and the relevance given to naming systems such as subsections and moieties.

After its purchase by the Central Land Council, the pastoral property of McLaren Creek, which straddles the Stuart Highway south of the goldmining town of Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory, was the subject of a successful Aboriginal land claim under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, heard in 1988–89.[3] With the exception of Warlpiri speakers, Aboriginal social structure and land tenure in this region was not the object of intensive research until the Warumungu land claim in the 1980s.[4] By contrast to claims over country near the town of Tennant Creek, knowledge of country and related religious practices were strongly reproduced among claimants to McLaren Creek station. This might be explained by the fact that Warlpiri, southern Warumungu, Kaytej and Alyawarre people had lived on settlements in the general area, or worked in the pastoral industry, including stations in the vicinity of McLaren Creek, and have more recently set up outstations nearby. Identity constructs among people of these languages are rather diverse, although those whose country lies in close proximity tend to converge, and social practices are not clearly separated by linguistic boundaries.

Earlier accounts of 'local organisation' at McLaren Creek

Earlier accounts of Warlpiri identity-constructs use schemes which include taxonomic hierarchies of levels of grouping not dissimilar to Radcliffe-Brown's 1930–31 model. According to Meggitt (1962), Warlpiri tribal territory was made up of four 'divisions', each associated not with a patrilocal horde but a 'community' or 'sub-tribe'. Within the community, land associated with sites on a particular ancestral track was held by a patrilineal cult lodge related to a subsection patri-couple and a lineage, although other individuals were linked to the patrilineal members by conception at the site. In 1972 Meggitt depicts the patri-moiety as the owner of totems and the associated sacra, with a patrilineage within the moiety, assisted by men of the opposite moiety, having the right and duty to execute rituals for a particular Dreaming being. Peterson and Munn more or less reproduce Meggitt's model, although Peterson elaborates on the role of *kurtungurlu*.[5] However, in his reading of Meggitt's ethnography Scheffler (1978, 515) strongly contests the primacy given to

patri-moieties, which exist, he argues, only in ritual contexts. The un-named Warlpiri patrilines or patrilodges are not descent groups or patrilineages, for they are not defined with reference to apical human ancestors. Rather they constitute 'patrifilial kin groups' (1978, 251–2).

On the basis of interviews with Warumungu people living in Tennant Creek in the years 1934–35, Stanner gives a picture of Warumungu local organisation that is similar in some respects to Meggitt's account of the Warlpiri. Warumungu country was divided into five or so 'big countries' (equivalent to Meggitt's division), each inhabited by a 'big mob' (equivalent to Meggitt's 'community'). In some cases each big country contained totemic sites associated with both patrimoieties, although one moiety predominated in each. The most clearly defined local group, according to Stanner, was the local patrilineal totemic clan, usually of a particular semi-moiety (subsection patri-couple) and therefore exogamous.[6]

In response to various interpretations of the requirements of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, most land claims over the country of Warlpiri people and their neighbours have represented land tenure in terms of descent groups. The 'local descent group' normally included a patri-lineage or group of lineages with common spiritual affiliations to, and spiritual responsibility for a site and land often described, as its estate. These people were *kirta* (or a cognate term) in relation to the country. But the local descent group included the children of women of this group, who were *kurtungurlu*. Some interpretations of the Act and of the evidence have extended the local descent group to include as *kurtungurlu* the children of first-generation male *kurtungurlu* and others of the appropriate moiety on the basis of ritual expertise or some other criterion.

During the Warumungu land claim hearing the Central Land Council greatly modified Stanner's patrilineal analysis. The Warumungu land-holding group, equated with the local descent group as specified by the Act, was a cognatic descent-group named after a place, dreaming, or the physical character of country, and was conceived of as comprising the descendents of the *wirnkarra* ancestors who gave form and shape to their land. The authors of the claimbook (Central Land Council 1985) divided the cognatic

descent-group into a number of categories with different descent relations to country, each having rather distinct rights and duties but not different degrees of ownership. Spiritual conception at a site strengthened a person's claim to a country held from a grandparent, or gave potential rights in another country. Long residence was another ground for recruitment into the group, as was birth and induction into the ceremonies associated with a place, and the burial of a grandparent or other ancestor at a place.

With the possible exception of Scheffler these accounts depict Warlpiri and Warumungu social organisation as a structure of embedded and overlapping groups and categories — patri-moieties, matri-moieties and generation moieties; patrilines, patrilodges or local descent-groups. They project an image of relatively discrete ancestral tracks, clusters of sites, countries or estates, owned or held by cult-lodges or land-holding groups whose 'members' are recruited by descent.

The Western Desert

Earlier analyses, such as that of the Berndts tried to fit Western Desert land tenure into a modified patrilineal model. Later ones move further away from it.

Tonkinson provides a concise outline of a Mandjildjara 'estate-group' in *The Mardudjara Aborigines* (1978, 51–3). People of the country called Giinyu (Dingo) shared a number of ancestors collectively known as Dingari, whose travels and actions defined the country. Personal totems varied according to which particular ancestor was believed to have 'left behind' a person, but the group shared the common Giinyu identity. Male heads of families associated with the estate tended to be related in the male line because of a preference for a child to be born in or near his or her father's estate, so that both father and child would have the same ancestral totem. Where a child was born elsewhere the father would try to arrange a birthplace associated with the Dingari. A person might also be of the estate by virtue of being conceived there, or just because it was his or her father's or mother's country, although the latter connection was less often stressed. The estate in which a young man was circumcised became his country, the related ancestor became

his ancestor, and he was entitled to knowledge of the sacra provided he returned periodically for ritual activities there. Initiated men of the group collectively owned and organised the related ritual and care for the sacred objects. Because of these multiple criteria for attachment to country no two Giinyu people named exactly the same set of sites when asked what their country was .

Writing about Pintupi, neighbours of Warlpiri speakers, Myers differentiates kinds of claim to country. There are many sorts of reason for referring to a place as one's own:

> a person was conceived at the place, conceived at a place with the same ancestor, or conceived at a place with a related ancestor;

> in the case of a male the person was initiated at the place;

> the person was born at the place;

> the person's father, mother or a 'grandparent' was connected to the place in one or more of these ways;

> the person lives around that place;

> or a close relative died at or near the place.

Conception is given some priority among these links (Myers 1986, 129–36). However, claims that a place is one's country and that one has the right to live there, do not necessarily imply custodianship of ritual and sacred sites. Here, Pintupi invoke the categories of *kirta* and *kurtungurlu*, and subsection identity, with the same ideal division of tasks as among the Warlpiri and Warumungu people. Myers gives an example of a man Tjungarrayi who was conceived at place Y; his kin referred to Y by the kin terms applied to him or by the subsection name. He was the 'owner' (*kirta*) and his sisters' and daughters' sons were the 'workers' (*kurtungurlu*), but these categories were extended to others through subsection identity.

Myers emphasises three aspects — the extensiveness of rights, that those said to 'own' a site do not constitute a patrilineal descent-group, and that there are no named patrilineal descent-groups. To 'hold' a place it is necessary to know it, and those who live in the area are better placed to have that knowledge, so that the place can

become a person's country (expressed through the term *walytja*) through prolonged association. Men stated as a rule that a man holds country when or because his father and father's father have died; a man's father's father's conception place is the man's 'father's father' place. However, categories are ambiguous and responsibility is widely shared: the 'group of sons' (*katjapirti*) involved in the performance of a ceremony include sons of female *kirta*; a person should look after their mother's, father's, grandmother's (*kaparli*, MM, MMZ, FM, FMZ, FFZ) and grandfather's (*tjamu*, FF, FFB, MF, MFB, MMB) countries. (It is not clear how women's views related to these.) Pintupi do not stress the rights of groups with the same subsection, in the way that the Warlpiri do, but of individuals with links to the same ancestral track or living nearby, whatever their subsection.

In an earlier article on Pintupi resource use and land owner-ship, Myers distinguishes between those with a primary claim to sites from others who identify with a place. The primary custodians who are said to hold a country, control the related rituals, decide on the status of claims, and teach people about the country, preferring to teach close kin and so grant them an interest in the place. Claims on the part of those who are genealogically remote or who are not co-residents are less persuasive. These processes 'make it likely that claims of a patrifilial core will be acceptable', for men control rights (Myers 1982, 188–9). Since at the height of his influence 'a man is likely to live in his own country, it is predictable that he will pass it on to his sons' (Myers is presumably writing here in the ethnographic present), but rights are also passed on to sisters' sons, who are frequently co-residents. Those who make claims on other bases such as conception from the ancestors or links to a more distant relative, and who take up residence in an area may, if they convince the custodians of their sincerity, become custodians as well.

It seems, then, that these Western Desert peoples did not organise themselves into patrilineal descent groups in relation to land, but made claims on a number of bases. There was however, a strong tendency for patrifilial links to country of the same ances-tral identity to be reproduced through conception sites or birth places.

Rethinking relations to country at McLaren Creek

Aboriginal land tenure in the region of Tennant Creek and McLaren Creek takes a different shape from the more orthodox accounts, in the writings of Sutton and his associates. According to these authors, it is not essentially a cell-like structure of patri-countries, but rather of 'local clustering' of shared rights and interests in patri-countries which exist within a wider set of relations. People of a patri-country are not wholly united in their exclusive relations to territory, but some may carve out associations with part of a patri-country (on the basis of control of sacred objects, and reflected in residence preferences), or claim strong identity with people of a neighbouring country. Formal group structures distill historical relations and capture and promote continuities in relationships 'performatively'. People define country in terms of a 'main place' which is its focus, but may redefine it over time by shifting this focus. An ideology of an impermeable relation between patri-group and country is qualified by permanent shifts of interests through a long-term change in residence over several generations. In these ways social categories are permeable.[7]

  People of the McLaren Creek area frame identity in relation to land in terms of several constructs: language identity, filiation and kinship, subsections, patri-moieties, dreaming ancestors, and the character of place. As a number of writers have pointed out, they make claims of connection to country on a variety of grounds including filiation, initiation, conception, birth, a parent's death, long-term residence and consociation, and knowledge. These are the same kinds of claims as those made by people of the Western Desert, but as we shall see, McLaren Creek people rank them in a particular way.

Constructs of identity

Beginning with the assumption that McLaren Creek people define discrete if not clearly bounded 'countries', and that each is held by some kind of group of people with a common identity, this assumption will be gradually modified, but it will do as a starting point. In the McLaren Creek area language is mapped onto broad tracts of country. People do not merely speak certain languages, but claim identity with a certain language. However, they do not point out

clear or unequivocal 'tribal' boundaries. Many who identify with one language speak another as their first language. In this way many Warumungu people speak Alyawarre or, among younger people, Kriol. Some people identify with only one language, but with one or more language varieties, such as Warlpiri and Warlmanpa, or Warlpiri and Kaytej (Sutton, Morel and Nash 1993).[8] People recognise varieties of a way of speaking such as the dialect categories of Warlpiri which Nash describes, but these are not the sub-tribes or communities posited by Meggitt.

Claimants in the Warumungu and McLaren Creek land claims discriminated among those identified with a particular language and those with 'mixed' languages by the use of the name of a focal place, a word denoting the topographical character of country, or a name derived from an ancestor. They added the suffix 'belonging to/resident of' to the name to denote a person in relation to place or ancestor — *wardingki* in Warlpiri, *warinyi* in Warumungu, and *arrenye* in Alyawarre and Kaytej. In land claims the first elements of these expressions became the names of 'local descent groups':

place	*Kanturrpa-wardingki*, people of Kanturrpa
	Wakurlpu-arrenye, people of Wakurlpu
	Waake-arrenye, people of Waake
	Karlanjarrangi-warinyi, people of Karlanjarrangi
	Mirtartu-arrenye, people of Mirtartu
toponym	*Partta-warinyi*, people of the hard ground
ancestral name	*Warupunju-warinyi*, people of Fire country.[9]

Each more specific identity in relation to country and ancestors is generally associated with a particular language; but this association is not always unequivocal, so that it is incorrect to depict these identities as sub-groups of 'tribes', 'sub-tribes' or 'language-groups'.

Ancestor and place

The relation of dreaming ancestors to places is part of how these identities are constituted. A variety of terms denote 'place', 'camp',

'ground', and 'country' in the various languages of the McLaren Creek area:

'camp'	*ngurra*	(Warlpiri)
	ngurraji	(Warumungu)
	apme	(Kaytej)
	apmere	(Alyawarre)
'country', 'place'	*walya*	(Warlpiri)
	manu	(Warumungu)
'ground'	*walya*	(Warlpiri)
	narra	(Warumungu)
land', 'region'	*nguru*	(Warlpiri)

People refer to a place and the surrounding area as 'country' or 'boundary' in English. However, like other Aboriginal people, McLaren Creek people do not seem to define country by enclosing areas within boundaries, but rather by extension out from a focus, a 'main place'. Southern Warumungu men refer to both the unity of a cluster of places and the exclusive relationship of a group of people to it in terms of the expression *narra* (ground or dirt); certain places form 'one *narra*', or in English, 'one block', which may be said to subsume several *manu* ('places', 'sites'), the name of one being extended out to incorporate others.[10] Sacred objects referred to as 'father's father' (*kangkuya*) represent the ancestor and signifies the relationship between a group of people and their *narra*. Warupunju men explained that if people want to come to Warupunju country from somewhere else they cannot, because of the sacred object — Warupunju people might tell them to go back. Commenting on the binding force of the object, one Warumungu man remarked to me during preparation of the McLaren Creek land claim, 'We can't throw it [the sacred object] away; what we going to do?'.[11] Some features, such as a tree, mark a 'hand-over place' (*jalkkijanta*, see Simpson 1985) at the limit of one country and the beginning of another. However, people often disagreed about just where one group's country gives way to that of another group.[12]

The words *jukurrpa* (Warlpiri), *wirnkarra* (Warumungu) and *altyerre* ('dream', Kaytej and Alyawarre) denote spirit ancestors, the creative period and the ontological domain related to the ancestors.

The travels of ancestors — some local, some longer in distance— gave country a particular character. Thus two Warumungu brothers created fire with a fire-saw at Wurrmali, and the fire spread generally west across the Murchison range, associating waterholes, soaks and springs across the area with Fire as well as with other beings. The group of people who claim to hold or own this country call themselves 'people of Fire country', Warupunju. Holding the sacred objects, referred to as 'father's father', enables Warupunju people to turn strangers away from the country. The journeys of Wind, Rain, Wild Plum, Two Quiet Snakes, Dingo and Emu, define other groups' countries.

However, country is not associated only with one primary ancestor. The landscape is constructed as a mosaic of intersecting ancestral movements and traces, so that a group of people with a common identity claim to hold country associated with more than one ancestor. This can be shown with a sketch of country held by Warupunju people associated primarily with Fire (Warlukun) (see Map 1).

Warupunju people hold country which straddles the Murchison ranges and takes in the plains to the east. To the north of Fire country are places associated with Flying Fox (Pirttangu), which connect Warupunju people with the Partta (Hard Ground) people, who also have Flying Fox places. Immediately to the west of Fire country are the creeks, floodouts and plains around which Dingo chased Emu, running from Jipalalki in the west, towards the southeast, and then north to places near the feet of the Murchison range. Further west again, the Kanturrpa people (Warlpiri and Warlmanpa languages) hold country through which Two Quiet Snakes (Milwayi) travelled and sang, finishing at Jalyirrpa near the end of Bonney Creek. Fire itself burned underground to link Warupunju with Warlpiri people further to the west. To the south-east of Fire country is land through which Emu travelled, linking Warupunju with Mirtartu people, who have Dingo as ancestor as well as Emu; and on the southern side of Warupunju country is Karlanjarrangi, the catchment of Bonney Creek, along which Wind travelled.

From parents' parents

A third construct in the discursive structure of identity is relation to parents and grandparents. The word for 'country' plus a suffix
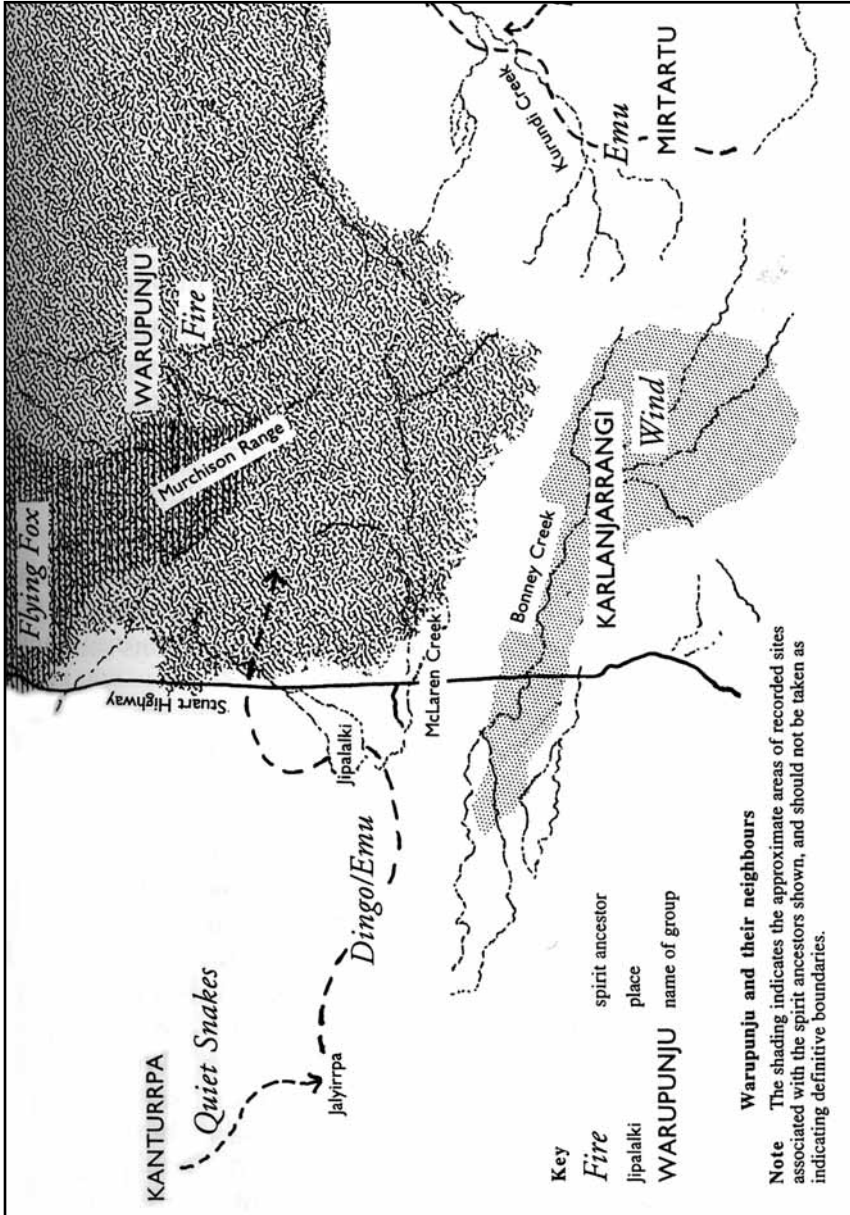
Map 1
Warupunju and their neighbours

'belonging to' or 'own' denotes 'own country' — *manu-walji* in Warumungu — and this expression can be qualified by stating the grounds for the relationship. Especially salient, at least as it emerged during preparation of the Warumungu and McLaren Creek land claims, are relations through parents (and parents' siblings) and grandparents. In Warumungu language:[13]

manu-walji kampaju-kari	'own country through F'
manu-walji karnanti-kari	'own country through M'
manu-walji ngamirni-kari	'own country through MB'
manu-walji kangkuya-kari	'own country through FF'
manu-walji jurttanti-kari	'own country through MM'
manu-walji tapurtapu-kari	'own country through FM'
	'own country through MF'

This mode of talk links people who have the same parent or parent's parent, but the terms are polysemous so that *kangkuya* refers to FFB, FFFBS, and more distant kin, rendering such attributions somewhat ambiguous, and extending links laterally.

People related to country through father's father and mother's mother are *kirta* in relation to the country and sacra; those related to country through mother's father and father's mother (or less ambiguously, FMF) are *kurtungurlu* in relation to country, sacra, and to the *kirta*. This is the fourth construct linking people to country and ancestors. The word *kirta* derives from the Warlpiri and Warlmanpa term for 'father' (*kirdana, kirdanyanu*), and *kurtungurlu* may derive from the Warlpiri/Warlmanpa words *kurdu* ('child'), *kurduna* ('my child') and *kurdunyanu* ('his/her child child').[14] Warumungu people sometimes replace *kirta* and *kurtungurlu* with kin terms from their own language, the moiety terms Kingili and Wurlurru. The Warumungu word *mangaya* seems to be more or less synonymous with *kirta* in its sense of a relation to place and sacra, but not as a kin term (Nash, personal communication).

Some of the evidence in the McLaren Creek land claim could be interpreted as showing that people think of themselves as more intrinsically related to father's father's country than to mother's

father's and other places. For example, a person's Aboriginal name commonly derives from the name of a place which is their 'father's father'. Warlpiri men explained that the *kirta* performed dances depicting their (patrifilial) ancestors whereas *kurtungurlu* decorated them and made the sacred objects. People expressed a preference for residence on father's father's country.[15] Warlpiri and Warlmanpa 'patrilects' (*apparr, jaru*) are speech qualities, such as a deep sonority or speaking with a protruding lower lip, said to be inherited from the father, and associated with the patrifilial dreaming ancestor.

One interpretation of this kind of information depicts the 'owners' as members of a patrilineal descent-group with an intrinsic connection to country. Those related to this group through women have a complementary but secondary attachment. This is how one Aboriginal Land Commissioner and his anthropological advisers interpreted the evidence in the Warumungu land claim (Maurice 1988). However, other evidence is inconsistent with this interpretation. For example, the spirits of dead *kirta* and *kurtungurlu* were said to be present at a Warlpiri sacred place, and both categories of people were interred at a burial ground. A rock which was the transformation of one of the Warupunju fire-making ancestors had fallen down out of sorrow at the death of a senior *kurtungurlu*. Rocks at a Warupunju site which were the children of female Euro ancestor (Nappangarti subsecton, Wurlurru patri-moiety) were of the opposite moiety (N/Jangala subsection, Kingili moiety). Some evidence also suggested that the rights and responsibilities could be seen to be complementary rather than ranked.[16]

This is perhaps the place to mention identity with a group which, if patrifiliation is taken as the norm, is by 'adoption'. Among Warupunju claimants for example was an elderly man whose father was English, but whose mother was a Warumungu woman. Other older Warupunju people accepted him as a claimant on the grounds that he had been 'found' at a Warupunju place. They also accepted as Warupunju a middle-aged man of Jappanangka subsection, together with his children, in spite of the fact that his paternal country was elsewhere. He was their half-brother through their mothers, but he was considered to be Warupunju on the grounds that he had lived on or near Warupunju country for many years.

Subsections and moieties

A fifth construct relevant to identity in relation to land is the subsection system, a set of sixteen personal names arranged in eight pairs as gender-specific variants (each such pair forms a single subsection). The pairs are placed in relations of quasi-filiation and in ideal marriage-relations. Alyawarre people use four section names with each name corresponding to two subsections, (see Figure 1).[17]

A subsection patri-couple or semi-moiety, a pair of subsections ideally related reciprocally as father to child, are of particular relevance to land-holding as Strehlow and Peterson among others have pointed out. There is a strong tendency for people related patrilineally to have the subsection names of one patricouple, although anomalies arise from marriages in which the partners are not in ideal subsection relations, when people may have two subsections.[18] The subsection patricouple of those who hold the same country through father's father ideally applies also to that country and its ancestors. Thus Warupunju country, of the Fire ancestors, is J/Nappanangka – J/Nappangardi. There are some anomalies, however —- several people identified (by some) as Warupunju are J/Nappaljarri – J/Nungarrayi. Since there are only four patri-couples or semi-moieties (with variant names depending on language) and many countries, more than one country and their holders are of the same patricouple (Figure 2).

Warlpiri subsections are grouped into two patri-moieties, referred to by the relational terms *kirda* and *kurdungurlu*, or the expressions 'camp across the north' (*ngurra-yatujumparra*) and 'camp across the south' (*ngurra-kulaninyarra*).[19] Warumungu people have named patri-moieties, Wurlurru and Kingili, to which the subsections are allocated, and which also apply to country, ancestors and people. Wakaya, Warlmanpa, and at least some Alyawarre speakers also name the patri-moieties (Figure 1).[20] To illustrate this with two examples, Fire country is J/Nappanangka – J/Nappangardi subsection patricouple, and Wurlurru patrimoiety; Karlanjarrangi (Wind ancestor) is J/Nampin – J/Nangala, and Kingili moiety.[21] In addition to patri-moieties, Warumungu subscribe to *ngurlu* totemic categories inherited from the mother, but the seem to have no relevance to land-holding in this region.[22]

Subsection categories, which can be re-sorted into a smaller number of categories such as moieties, or the relational categories of *kirta* and *kurtungurlu*, provide the means for extending and systematising links to a particular place across a wide region and social network, both by stretching the meaning of *kirta* and *kurtungurlu* and through links along the generations among people of the same subsection. The projection of subsections on to country and ancestors (and the related sacra) enables the extension of kin relations to a place: if one's mother's subsection is Nampijinpa, then any place identified as Nampijinpa is one's 'mother' place, and so on. As with the application of such terms to people, the significance of terms such as 'mother' varies.

The subsection and moiety identity of an ancestor is not unequivocal. Where an ancestor is believed to have travelled through several countries it may be associated with different patricouples of the same patrimoiety at different places. Very mobile ancestors who made long journeys may even be connected, in different places, with subsection couples of opposite moieties.

More on *kirta* and *kurtungurlu*

Many semi-desert land claims have represented *kirta* and *kurtungurlu* as descent categories: people are *kirta* in relation to father's and father's father's country, and *kurtungurlu* in relation to MF's and FMF's country. According to this view the terms may then be 'extended' to those of the same and opposite moiety as the country in question. This picture, which preserves a cellular descent-group structure, seems to be an artefact of the strategy in land claims from the late 1970s to include within a 'local descent group' *kurtungurlu* who have important rights in and responsibilities to country, and accommodating to a narrow reading of 'descent group'. During preparations for, and evidence during, the McLaren Creek land claim, filiation or descent did not predict very well who would be called on or put themselves forward as *kurtungurlu* in relation to particular people, places or ceremonies, for the term has a variety of senses not all based on filiation or descent. If we take people who identify with a place through father and father's father as the reference category, then witnesses in the McLaren Creek land claim

Patri-moieties

Warumungu language	WURLURRU	KINGILI
Warlpiri language	ngurra-yatujumparra 'camp across the north'	ngurra-kulninyarra 'camp across the south'

Subsections

(Warlpiri language)

Japanangka Napanangka	=	Jupurrurla Napurrurla
Jungarrayi Nungarrayi	=	Jangala Nangala
Japaljarri Napaljarri	=	Jakamarra Nakamarra
Japangardi Napangardi	=	Jampijinpa Nampijinpa

Key to subsection diagram:
The direction of a diagonal arrow is from a mother's subsection to her child's subsection. Thus the child of a Napanangka woman is Jampijinpa (male) or Nampijinpa (female). The vertical arrows show the relations between a father's and a child's subsection which is reciprocal; thus the child of a Japanangka man is Japangardi or Napangardi, while the child of a Japangardi man is Japanangka or Napanangka. The equals signs show ideal marriage relations between subsections.

Equivalent subsections and sections in four languages

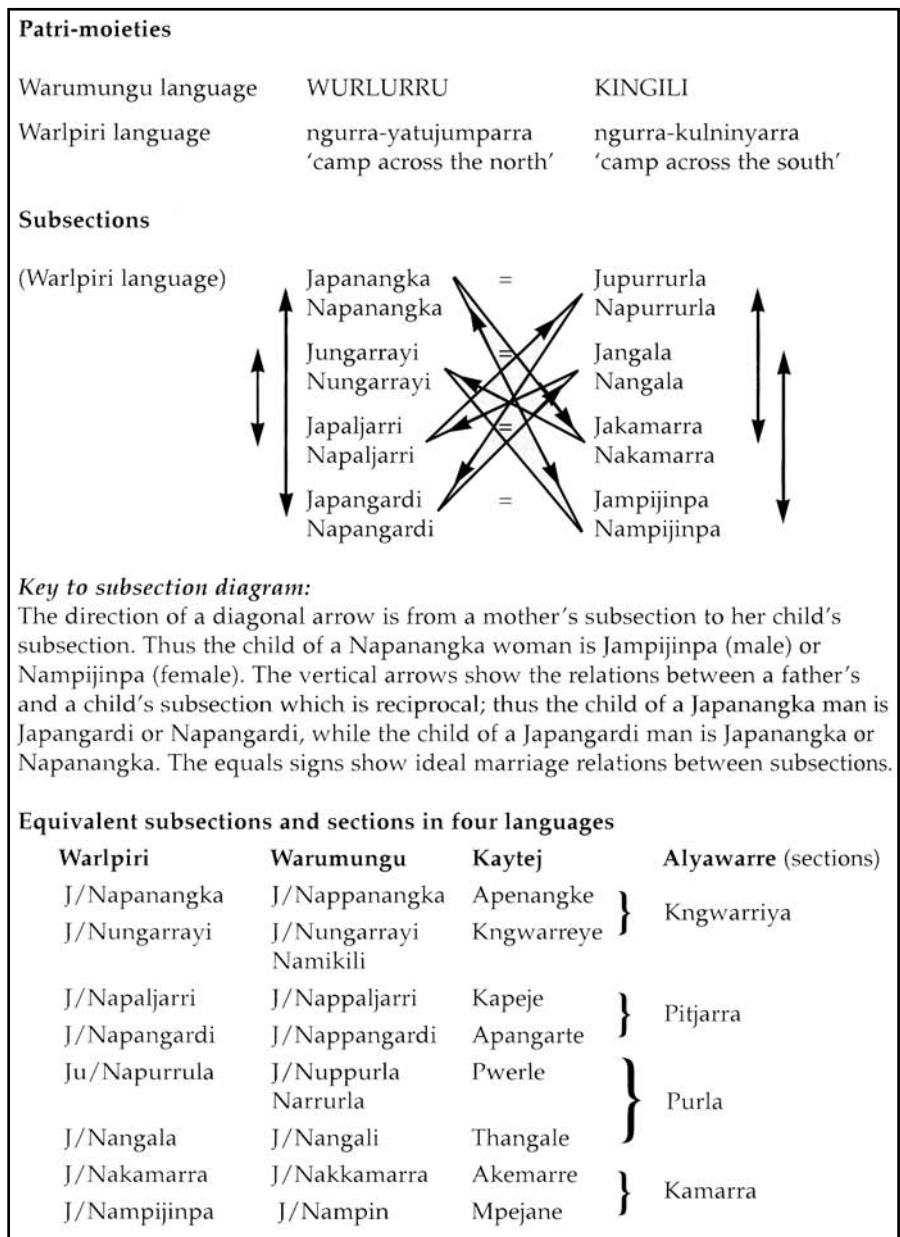| Warlpiri	Warumungu	Kaytej	Alyawarre (sections)
J/Napanangka	J/Nappanangka	Apenangke	Kngwarriya
J/Nungarrayi	J/Nungarrayi Namikili	Kngwarreye	
J/Napaljarri	J/Nappaljarri	Kapeje	Pitjarra
J/Napangardi	J/Nappangardi	Apangarte	
Ju/Napurrula	J/Nuppurla Narrurla	Pwerle	Purla
J/Nangala	J/Nangali	Thangale	
J/Nakamarra	J/Nakkamarra	Akemarre	Kamarra
J/Nampijinpa	J/Nampin	Mpejane	

Figure 1
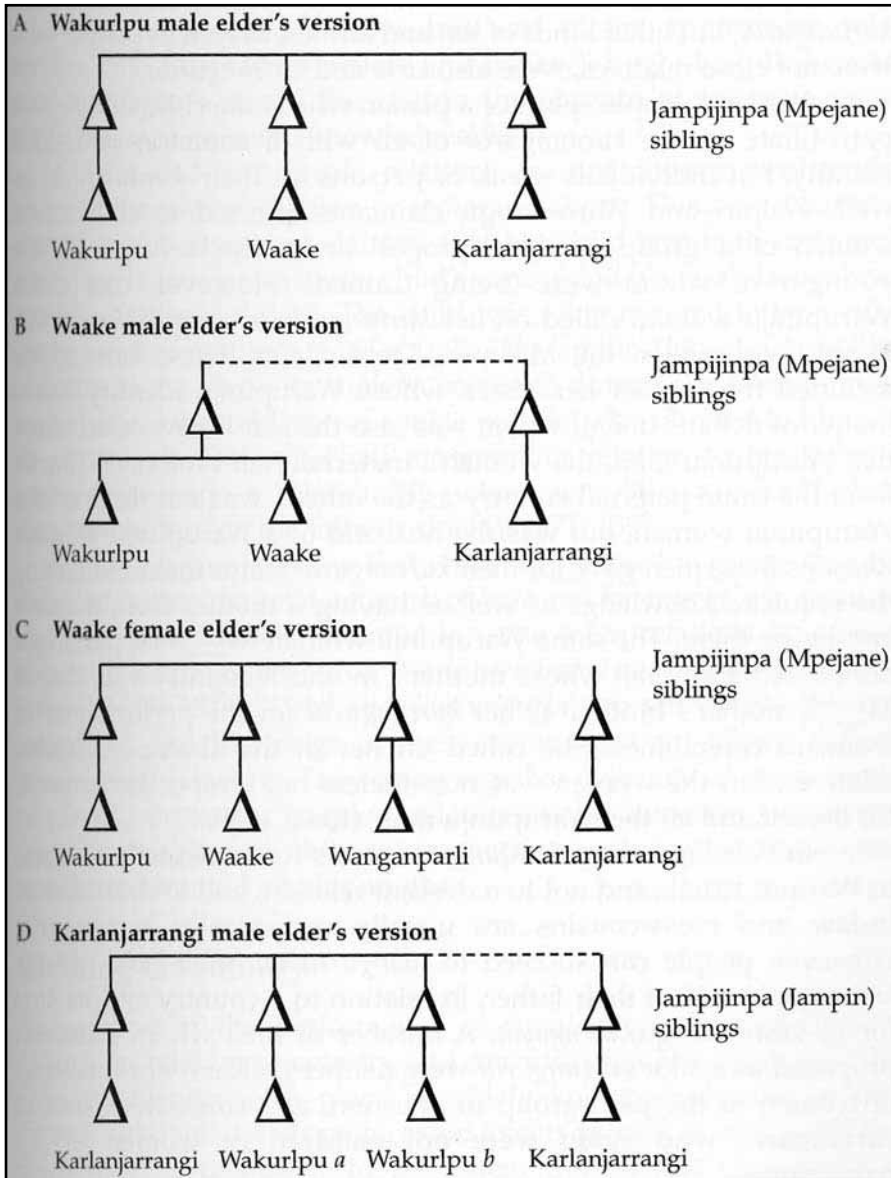Subsections, sections and patrimoieties

Figure 2
Versions of the genealogical relations between Karlanjarrangi, Wakurlpu and Waake

certainly classified women's children and women's sons' children as *kurtungurlu*, but other kinds of kin and affines, as well as people who were not close relatives, were also *kirta* and *kurtungurlu.*

Warlpiri people speak of a person who is the child of a female patri-filiate as the *kurdungurlu* of all with a common patri-filial identity, but individuals speak of persons as 'their' *kurdungurlu* as well. Walpiri and Warumungu claimants referred to children of women of a group as their 'proper' or 'really *kurtungurlu*', the younger of whom were 'being trained'. However, one older Warupunju woman called on her *kurtungurlu* to support her while giving evidence in the McLaren Creek claim. These *kurtungurlu* included the sons of her 'sister' whose Warupunju identity was a matter of debate, one of whom was also the son-in-law of an adoptive Warupunju man, the woman's maternal half-brother. A fourth, from the same paternal country as the others, was not the son of a Warupunju woman, but was the husband of a Warupunju woman. Reasons these men gave for their *kurtungurlu* status included having the requisite knowledge as well as having a mother from the area and living there. The same Warupunju woman M___ Nappanangka nominated a woman whose mother's mother's country was that of M___'s mother's brother as her *kurtungurlu* for the performance of women's ceremonies. She called on her in the absence of closer relatives, but the woman was nonetheless her 'proper *kurtungurlu*' for herself and all the 'Warupunju mob' (Keen 1989, 7).

In Peterson's view *kurdungurlu* refers fundamentally to a role in Warlpiri rituals and not to a descent relation, and Walpiri sisters-in-law and cross-cousins are usually reciprocally *kurtungurlu*. However, people can succeed to (*dangurrmani* 'grab hold of') the *kurtungurlu* role of their father, in relation to a country and its *kirta* (or in Warumungu, *mangaya*). A number of men whom claimants proposed as senior *kurtungurlu* were neither children nor husbands of women of the patri-group in question, and some were sons of *kurtungurlu* who again were not children of women of the patri-group.

At the widest extension witnesses agreed to a classification of every claimant, made by the lawyer who was going through the lists of claimants during evidence in chief, as either *kirta* or *kurtungurlu* in relation to a given country, depending on the person's subsection

and moiety. In practical matters, such as visiting country, a person who was not a close relative but was of the appropriate sub-section (and hence semi-moiety and moiety), might be called on as *kurtungurlu* to 'witness' the visit in the absence of someone more closely related, or more knowledgeable.

Kirta and *kurtungurlu* relations are not always consistently related to modes of filiation or moiety relations. Dussart recounts a case in which a woman claimed that her child was both *kirda* and *kurdungurlu* in relation to the child's conception place, a place where her own father had died. The child was often referred to by a sub-section of her mother's patri-couple. The application of a *kirta*-like concept to the opposite moiety occurred during the Warumungu land claim in the evidence of a male witness who referred to himself as *yirrnginjalki-mangaya* ('half'-*mangaya*) in relation to his father's mother's country, a relationship which was 'like a second class *kurtungurlu*' but 'on the father's side' (WLCT, 159).

All this goes to show that while a cognatic kin group may be included within the total network of *kirta* and *kurtungurlu* in relation to a particular country (counted in some interpretations as a 'local descent group' in terms of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*), '*kirta*' and '*kurtungurlu*' are not simply descent categories, and the usage of these terms does not always follow patri-moiety relations. They bring together a variety of connections to places, ancestors, people, and ceremonies into two categories, equating people with different connections, who can in some contexts be substituted one for another.

Dividing the country

Cooperation in the performance of rituals by people of distinct identity in relation to country and ancestors has the result that the ancestral identity of a place is widely known and more or less agreed, although details of ancestral events as well as who holds the place may be disputed. To the extent that people of a regional network agree about the significance of places there is an objective matrix of ancestral country. However, several aspects of identity produce conflicts over the assignment of people to places. One is the mosaic character of the ancestral significance of country

and cross-cutting ancestral journeys. Another is the tension between an individual's relations to particular places and shared identity in relation to a broader swathe of country. A third is potential divisions among a group through individual connections to other groups — through subsection identity, responsibility for places with ancestral connections to other groups, and personal links to other groups.

McLaren Creek people differed over, or were uncertain about, just who shared common identity as Warupunju. The larger of two patri-lineages consisted of people of J/Nappanangka–J/Nappangardi patri-couple — the subsections with which Fire country and Fire ancestors were identified. Another lineage, the families of two brothers, one of whom lived far away, were of J/Nappaljarri–J/Nungarrayi patri-couple, like Kanturrpa people (Warlpiri language) to the west.

A___ Jappaljarri, the oldest man of this lineage, an acknowl-edged ritual leader in the region, was put forward as part of the Kanturrpa 'local descent group' in the Kaytej, Warlpiri and Warlmanpa land claim (KWWLCT, 501), but as Warupunju in the Warumungu land claim. He was consistently ambivalent about his identity. During the preparation and hearing of the McLaren Creek land claim, he firmly aligned himself with Kanturrpa people to the west, and carved out his country with reference to a myth of Dingo chasing Emu, which overlapped the eastern part of Kanturrpa country, and the western sites of Warupunju country. Kanturrpa and Warupunju people agreed that he held the sacred objects for an important site which Kanturrpa people regarded as their own. He also controlled the important ground-sculpture designs for an important Warupunju place associated with the Rainbow Serpent on the western side of Fire country.

It seems that his realignment had to do in part with his son's conviction for the murder of the son of a senior man who was a close Warlpiri ally of Kanturrpa men. It may be that he was offering com-pensation for the killing by identifying himself and his children as Kanturrpa. Another factor was that the homestead on the station, which was the subject of the land claim, was on this interstitial country. The Warupunju people were experienced in stock work, and a senior Warupunju man was the 'manager' of the station (acquired

by the Central Land Council). The Warlpiri people however, regarded the homestead as on their land.

A___ Jappaljarri claimed to be senior *kirta* (in the strong sense of holding and having responsibility) of two other countries. One was his 'mother's mother' country, ostensibly 'looked after' by a man who claimed it by spirit conception and having been initiated into its rituals. The other was an area whose senior male kirta lived in western Queensland, and who had not been back for many years. Not only was the identity of this man and his lineage disputed, but a woman of Nappanangka subsection, belonged to the major Bonney Creek site as well, and she too was claimed both by Warupunju and Kanturrpa people.[23]

Thus the ownership of 'countries' was contested, and in the process of a dispute, divided and reconstituted, at least in the understanding of some claimants. While the attachment of particular individuals to particular places was agreed, their common identity with others, defined in terms of focal places, was hotly debated.

One body

Descent-group models imply an order of groups of an equivalent constitution, and in some such schemes groups at a lower level of inclusiveness are clustered as sub-groups of more inclusive, higher order groups. In this way a division between 'level one' and 'level two' countries and related groups was posited in the Alyawarra and Kaititja land claim (Toohey 1979, 7). In genealogies constructed in the McLaren Creek claim, patri-lineages among McLaren creek people had characteristics inconsistent with a taxonomic hierarchy placing distinct types of group at different levels of inclusion.[24] People did not always agree about descent-relations, and it was especially notable among Warlpiri claimants that the genealogies were shallow, and even where people did agree about who were the relevant fathers and fathers' fathers in relation to a given country, they were uncertain about or disputed which fathers and fathers' sisters were the offspring of which fathers' fathers. There was a question whether Wild Plum people comprised one group or two.

Assertions were made in the Warumungu and McLaren Creek claim that three groups, two associated with Warumungu, and one

primarily with Kaytej language, comprised a single local descent group in terms of the Act. The country of Wind (referred to by the focal place Karlanjarrangi) and northern Wild Plum people (whose country is Wakurlpu) comes together at Rain (Ngappa) country, the ownership of which was contested by men of the two groups. The oldest northern Wild Plum man claimed to be the ritual leader of Wind, whose oldest man was not competent as a ritual leader; the two groups used to 'meet up' for ceremonies.

The countries and people of northern and southern Wild Plum countries, were referred to by distinct focal sites (Wakurlpu and Waake respectively). People differentiated the two Wild Plum groups with reference to the 'main' people related to specific places, place of father's death, and with reference to ancestral travels — the two Plum ancestors came from different directions but met up at Wakurlpu (MCLCT, 428–40, 450–53, 472). One woman, for whom Waake was mother's mother's country, expressed the unity of Waake and Wakurlpu using the metaphor of the body. The two Wild Plum ancestors were 'one body'; one came from the east and one from the south, but both finished at Wakurlpu, 'really friendly, to come together and sit together, peace and happy' making one place for themselves. The two groups were different 'sides', but 'standing same body' as *kirta*.[25]

The three groups were not clearly separated in terms of patri-lineal descent, for they were linked by the sibling relation of 'father's father's' of the senior generation. But people differed over just what these links were (Figure 2):

A Northern Wild Plum male elder:
The three groups sprang from three Jampijinpa men, each the ancestor of one of the groups.

B Southern Wild Plum male elder:
Wakurlpu and Waake people had common father's father, but different fathers. The Waake male elder's father was born on the Waake side.

C Southern Wild Plum woman elder:
Three grandfathers were linked to three Wild Plum places, Waake, Wakurlpu and Wangarnparli, and were separate from the Karlanjarrangi grandfathers.

D Wind male elder:
The grandfathers of himself and of two northern Wild Plum men; they were rather far apart, like 'cousin brothers' (parallel cousins). He did not know their relationship to southern Wild Plum father's father.

These versions of genealogical relations, then, were relative to the individual's perspective, and reflected which group relations were especially salient in the view of that person. People did agree about the distinctions between the countries and which people had what identity, although they differed over rights in Rain country. Women tended to stress the unity of Wakurlpu and Waake more than men, one of whom related the attachment of his people to Waake on the grounds of his father's birthplace. No shared account prevailed of 'descent' relations differentiating and linking the groups, which were not sub-groups of a more inclusive group at a higher 'level'.

'Succession' to Country

I have mainly invoked formal constructs of identity such as relations to grandparents, ancestral identity and subsections. But other modes of relatedness need to be taken into account as well, especially responsibility for and holding of sacra and related country, the requisite practical and discursive knowledge, and place of father's birth. The preferential linking of patrifilial links to country means that other modes have to be invoked should these links fail through a line dying out or producing only women in one generation, or through a patrifiliate not fulfilling his or her obligations. In the McLaren Creek land-claim the salient links in such cases were conception, initiation into the relevant ceremony, subsection identity in conjunction with religious knowledge and authority. (Some such links were converted by cultural amnesia into patrifilial grounds for attachment.)

The male line for Emu and Dingo country (Mirtartu group) in the south-east corner of McLaren Creek Station having failed at the beginning of this century, the *kurtungurlu* and other men of neighbouring groups were said to have 'put in' another man, by initiating him into the relevant rituals and showing him the sacred objects. He was also 'found' there, implying that he had been conceived at that

place. Being 'put in' to Mirtartu did not extinguish his claim to his
father's country, however.[26] (Interestingly a Warumungu elder,
insisted in evidence in the Warumungu claim that this man took
Mirtartu through his father's father, perhaps because this is the
strongest basis for claim). Others who were not closely related to this
man had claims over Mirtartu as well — on the basis of conception,
and that it was their mother's mother's country. It was A___
Jappaljarri who made this claim, and he appropriated the sacred
objects during the claim hearing, provoking the anger of
Warumungu people of neighbouring groups.

Contrasting Western Desert land tenure with McLaren Creek

The variety of grounds for succeeding to country at McLaren Creek
is not dissimilar to the reasons given by Western Desert people for
owning country, a comparison between Western Desert local organi-
sation and that of Warlpiri and their neighbours follows.

Although interpretations of the Act have discerned local
descent groups among the network of people with ties to and
responsibilities for land, local organisation at McLaren Creek is not
best described as a structure of patrilineal or indeed cognatic descent
groups. Claims of identity, rights and responsibilities in relation to
country and ancestors are justified on a variety of grounds not all of
which fall under the rubric of descent. Evidence in the McLaren
Creek land claim revealed a degree of flexibility and openness in
social identity and relations not incomparable with the Western
Desert. What then, differentiates local organisation at McLaren Creek
from that Western Desert people, or at least some of them?

Several aspects of land-holding at McLaren Creek bring
eastern Warlpiri, southern Warumungu, northern Kaytej and
Alyawarre relations to country closer to the Western Desert as repre-
sented by Tonkinson, Myers and Hamilton. 'Estates' at McLaren
Creek are mosaics of ancestral significance, and can be divided and
recombined. Shared identity is not always agreed and unambiguous.
Even where people concur about their common identity, some
smaller groups or individuals have particular attachments to specific
places, so that the unity of people as 'one group' is not always

(perhaps seldom) agreed. Groups are not ordered in a taxonomic hierarchy of different degrees of inclusiveness.[27] Individual links are important, so that knowledge and holding of sacred objects gives a person rights in places and ceremony of a group different from that person's patri-filial identity. A person, particularly someone with seniority and ritual expertise, may claim to hold several countries as *kirta*, on a variety of bases; moreover, rights and responsibilities as *kurtungurlu* are not primarily defined in terms of descent links, and a person enacts the responsibilities of *kurtungurlu* in relation to several groups and countries. While some interpretations support the idea of a closer connection to father's father's country than to mother's father's, mother's mother's, the evidence is ambiguous, and certainly people claim rights and responsibilities on a wide variety of grounds.

Where people claimed country to which patrifilial connections have been interrupted, six of the bases of claim listed by Myers, Tonkinson and Hamilton were especially important at McLaren Creek:

> conception was the basis of an enduring attachment and identity of an individual who could not claim through his father;

> male initiation into the cult associated with a place, together with conception, was a ground for a man's claim to country to which no person was now related through father and father's father;

> the children of a man succeeding to country on the basis of initiation held the country;

> moreover, the southern Wild Plum male elder gave his father's birth as a reason for the differentiation between Waake and Wakurlpu people;

> connection through the tracks of the same or related ancestors remained important modes of extended identity, especially in the conduct of ceremonies;

> long residence and association with people of a given identity was a reason for a person's identity which could override identity through patrifiliation.

As others have suggested, a major difference between McLaren Creek and Western Desert land tenure lies in assigning people to more or less exclusive identities which are mapped onto country — subsections, and implicit or named moiety. But more fundamentally, a person's connection to a place and ancestor through a singular identifying event such as conception, birth, father's initiation, or acquired knowledge, takes second place to connection to the country and ancestor purely through patrifiliation, and this connection is given priority, reinforced by the subsection identity of person, ancestors and country. As Hamilton remarks:

> It seems as if the principle of patrifiliation to a real father is in opposition to the principle of filiation to a symbolic ancestor; in the former case it is the 'place' of the real father which counts; in the latter, the 'place' of the hypothetical ancestor, the country in which he left his marks. (1982, 102)

I would modify this contrast, for in both cases there is a link to an ancestor, in the one case directly by virtue of conception or birth, and in the other mediated by links through father, father's father etc. Rather, in one case the identifying event is a contingent and proximate one, in the other it is an established event in the remote past.

Evidently Mandjildjara and other men of the Western Desert, if not women, tried to establish a patrifilial chain of births at the father's country, and Pintupi stated patrifiliation as an ideal in the transmission of responsibility for ancestral places. At McLaren Creek subsection and moiety identity of persons, tracts of country (identified as subsection patricouples) and the associated ancestors, together with the extension of the *kirta–kurtungurlu* categories, provide the means for objectifying a purely patrifilial claim, giving an identifying event such as spirit conception, birth or initiation, a secondary role. The event linking a person to a place is pushed back to the foundational one of ancestral creation; and the subsection identity of ancestor and country links the person categorically to patri-filiates. Individual links to ancestors through conception — links which Western Desert men try to transmit to children and sons' children — take second place to shared identity transmitted purely by patrifiliation.

This account implies that the main difference lies in the unequivocal ranking of bases of claim and identifying events, reinforced by subsection and moiety identity. But I think that when we look at *kurtungurlu*, then subsection and moiety identity of country, which derives from patrifilial links, has its own force, which is not dependent on the continuity of specific links of filiation. If people can be *kurtungurlu* in relation to country which is not their mother's or father's, and if this relation can continue regardless of the incumbency of *kirta*, one basis for the role may be the relationship between the subsection(s) of the *kurtungurlu* and the subsection identity of the country and its ancestors. There are other bases — the inheritance of the role from the father in the case of male *kurtungurlu* at least, and kin relation to dreaming ancestors (a mode of relationship that presumably preceded the diffusion of the subsection system into the region.)

Nevertheless, the contrast between local organisation at McLaren Creek and in the Western Desert is not captured by the constrast between exclusive patrilineal descent-groups as against an individualistic, inclusive and flexible mode of local organisation. A broad variety of connections to country are important in both regions, and the differences are more subtle.

The Mother-in-law Taboo: Avoidance and Obligation in Aboriginal Australian Society

Francesca Merlan

Introduction

Over the course of his career, Les Hiatt has been concerned with questions of the underlying psycho-dynamics of several forms of practice which have recurrently figured in Australian Aboriginal ethnography. One of these is the set of social practices known as 'mother-in-law taboo', or 'mother-in-law avoidance'. His paper 'Your mother-in-law is poison', characteristically contains a scholarly and wide appraisal of the various kinds of explanation of these practices in the Australianist and general literature. These range from the 'eugenic' suggestions of Rose and Jolly in 1942, that in gerontocratic polygynous Australia the taboo prevented a man from begetting his own potential wife by his bestowed mother-in-law; to Radcliffe-Brown's famous sociological interpretation in 1952 of institutionalised avoidance as making possible a balance between

social conjunction and disjunction; to the Freudian (1918) mother-in-law taboo as a prohibition on sexual relations with a surrogate mother.

Of all of these, I think it is clear that Hiatt finds the Freudian concerns most congenial, but the interpretation not applicable in unqualified form to the Australian Aboriginal material. Here, again in typical fashion, Hiatt gives careful consideration to information and interpretations arising directly from Australian research. In particular, his modifications of the Freudian interpretation have to do with the specific character of parent–child separation in Australian Aboriginal society, and the specific features of marriage that suggest to him the need here to re-fashion Freud's 'oedipal' conflicts as ones, not between a man and his father, but a man and his father-in-law.

Hiatt (1975a, 1975b, 1989) has had a long-standing concern with the ritualised and often dramatic separation of maturing males from their mothers and other female kin, in the context of induction into secret male cults in Aboriginal Australia. He has argued that this ideologically reinforces the expected male sexual transition from love of mother to love of wife, mediated by adult male authority. But this expected transition, he suggests, can be made problematic by the specific arrangements of Australian Aboriginal marriage, and particularly by the possible re-direction of mother-love towards the mother-in-law, instead of the wife.

As part of the overturning of Radcliffe-Brown's dictum of patrilocality as the normal Australian Aboriginal residence pattern, there began to arise some alternative views of residence which, finally, paid requisite attention to marriage, its arrangement, and the consequences of its frequently long-term realisation.[1] Peterson (1970) argued that the co-residence of a man and his wife's parents was a central factor in band composition. Under this arrangement could be realised the obligations of a man, as intending or accepted son-in-law, to provide his parents-in-law with meat; and naturally, the parents-in-law would frequently find this residential arrangement to their liking. Thus, *contra* the implications of Radcliffe-Brown's model, it seemed that co-residence of in-laws was a frequent and favoured situation.

Hiatt however, also considered the possibility of disruptive association between the provision of meat, and sexuality, under these

conditions. A mother-in-law receives as her due gifts of meat from her son-in-law, who in this respect, it is suggested, acts like a husband towards her. Hiatt thus proposes an amendment to Freud:

> Whereas Freud argues that the taboo on the mother-in-law is primarily a denial of the real source of her attraction (namely the mother), I am suggesting that it is first and foremost a strategy to forestall the development of a real attraction. Inasmuch as the mother-in-law represents a substitute for the mother, she is especially susceptible to definition as sexually forbidden and a source of sexual shame — in short, as an object of incest prohibitions. The fact that she may be of a similar age to the son-in-law, not closely related to him, and (unlike his mother and sister) has not been close to him during his childhood may help to explain why the cultural curtain between them is iron-like (1984, 194).

Certain steps of the argument seem to me problematic. First, if we accept parts of the (admittedly later, but nevertheless germane) picture of 'brideservice' marriage in Collier and Rosaldo (1981), it becomes questionable that the provision of meat to the mother-in-law need be intrinsically tied to the question of sexual attraction between her and her son-in-law. Rather, the obligations of marriage ('brideservice') are such that the provision of game is a regular way in which a man may satisfy and win favour with his in-laws, and also wider renown as the products of his hunt are distributed over an encampment. Thus the primary issue which 'brideservice' raises is that of the highly structured and continuing performance of obligation as a basis of affinal connection. Certainly, adequacy in fulfilling obligations might be understood to entitle a man to reward, and possibly sexual reward, but why not — ultimately if not immediately — through the gift of the wife, rather than from the mother-in-law?[2] The Australian arrangements at least ideally suggest a larger equation between long-term service and wife-giving, rather than the more immediate equation of meat for sex.

In other words, it seems to me necessary to consider and absorb more fully into our account of Aboriginal social life the implications of 'brideservice' marriage. In these terms many, and in some cases most or all, of the legitimating arrangements and transactions of (at least the early stages of) marriage were centrally between

son-in-law and parents-in-law. The wife was clearly the promised prize from the one perspective, and the (more-or-less controlled and amenable) linking person from the other. The son-in-law's provisioning obligations were strongly directed towards parents-in-law. The most profound emotion which Aborigines have reported to be associated with this affinal bond, and its strong mutual obligation, is 'shame'. But many commentators, including Hiatt, have understood this shame as fundamentally sexual.

For me, the leap to interpretation of mother-in-law avoidance as a barrier which forestalls illicit attraction, and thus (among other things) prevents wreckage of the social relation between males, son- and father-in-law, who stand in imminent danger of sexually-motivated conflict, is too far and too fast. Positing of it appears to be associated with particular sets of questions and interests. Hiatt clearly points to the wider problems of which he never loses sight:

> An explanation of mother-in-law avoidance among the Aborigines that depends on peculiarly Australian social conditions is bound to be unsatisfactory. My own working hypothesis (which I contemplate with scepticism as well as interest) is that we are dealing with an interplay of a widely-occurring kind between certain tendencies in male ontogeny and the protection of established reproductive interests. To explain why the taboo occurs in some places but not others, or in varying degrees of intensity, we need to examine localised factors (such as residence patterns, bestowal practice, age relations) that may constitute the conditions for elaboration, attenuation, or non-occurrence (1984, 195).

One may attempt to recognise different interests and approaches to the 'same' social phenomena. Yet I have a difference or disagreement with this that seems to me fundamental, and so I feel compelled to air it. It is a disagreement I feel to some degree in relation to most of the interpretations of mother-in-law avoidance mentioned previously. The idea of any complex, highly institutionalised, and psychically charged set of social practices having a clear and determinate 'function' seems not merely unlikely, but logically part of a larger (if often incompletely specified) framework of ideas about functions that social practices fulfill, about human nature and the relation of 'individual' to constraining society, to which I cannot

subscribe. In the particular case of mother-in-law avoidance, a number of commentators have come up with a similar function — the preventing of sexual relations or attraction. In Hiatt's socio-biologically inspired formulation, this is linked to questions of reproductive success. But whatever the particular linkage, the imputation of a simple 'function' to complex social practice signals to me a projection of concerns into the interpretation in a way that prematurely cuts off exploration and understanding of interrelationships among Aboriginal social practices. It also raises questions that, *pari passu*, seem to me difficult to discuss *without* resort to, precisely, 'peculiarly Australian social conditions', a matter to which Hiatt refers. A question of this sort is why there should be such elaboration of the mother-in-law 'taboo' in Australia, when in-laws in many other societies are clearly sexually illicit to each other in the *absence* of such a degree of institutionalisation of 'avoidance'. There may indeed be very general psycho-sexual dimensions which underlie the varying manifestations of mother-in-law taboo cross-culturally. But it seems forced to posit prevention of attraction or sexual relations, which are universally disapproved if not abhorred between affines, as the 'function' of one of the most extreme elaborations of such a widespread phenomenon. The extremity of the Australian avoidance practices needs to be understood in terms which are not common to all ethnographic cases of in-law avoidance, and which take into account, but focus on more than, the possible sexual dimensions of the social relationships concerned.

My emphasis is explanatory only in the more limited sense that I focus on some aspects of ways of making social relationships in Aboriginal Australia, and will argue that a great deal of the sociological interest of Australian avoidance practices lies here, in contrasts among these ways of making relationships. My structural approach explores the 'avoidance' practices at issue, and compares and contrasts the nature of social relationships constituted in this way with other ways of making relationships in Aboriginal Australia, drawing some conclusions about why the 'avoidance' element is so highly elaborated in Australian relationships of affinity, as compared with other kinds of relationships. At the same time, there is evidence that there are other, rather different realms of relationship attested in the Aboriginalist ethnography, notably that of

trade, which have certain general commonalities with relationships of affinity, and may also be characterised by the formalised and sometimes partly negative but extremely strong, mutual orientation that is characteristic of affinal avoidance relationships. I will also adumbrate my view that there are other kinds of social relationships which, at least in parts of Australia, are characterised by extreme 'avoidance' manifestations — here I have in mind brother–sister relationships in some regions — but which probably need to be understood in terms of a dimension of social identity versus difference that seems to take precedence in those relationships, as opposed to ones of affinity, where alterity is less problematic, more given.

It seems to me that those of us who reject certain kinds of explanation, along with the social functionalism I referred to above, have an onus upon us to demonstrate what else might be considered and how issues might be differently conceived. I offer this contribution on the 'mother-in-law taboo' in that spirit. Such is my understanding of Les that I believe he will appreciate my effort, because he values most highly in academic life the spirit in which it is written.

Mother-in-law avoidance: A 'ceremonial idiom'

As Hiatt (1984) observed, the main features of in-law avoidance practices in Australia have been known for over a hundred years. These include the requirement that certain in-laws, and especially and prototypically in most places, son-in-law and mother-in-law,[3] maintain spatial distance from each other, and/or indirect orientation to each other. Direct gaze and face-to-face orientation are not acceptable. However, it is clear that the degree of contact permissible between certain in-laws varies among regions and different Aboriginal peoples.

Thomson wrote in 1935 of the Ompela that the relation between wife's mother and daughter's husband was one of absolute avoidance. While that between father-in-law and son-in-law was not, it was characterised by behavioural asymmetry:

> A father-in-law, i.e. the husband of a *yami* [mother-in-law], is
> *armpai'yi.* This man may speak to his daughter's husband

(*ngartjamongo*), but the latter may not reply directly. The son-in-law may talk "one side", that is, while he may not address his elder in ordinary speech (*koko*), he may speak in the language known as *ngornki*. Even in this language, however, he may not address his remarks in the first person directly to his *armpai'yi*, but to his child, or even to his dog, to which he speaks as to a son, and not directly to the person for whom the remark is intended (1935, 480).

There is evidence of behavioural asymmetry in avoidance relationships, often based on gender difference, with relative privilege accorded in the same way that it normally is where gender difference is involved. In some parts of northern Australia today, a man and his mother-in-law might not ride in the same truck-tray; but he might go in the cab, while she would remain in the back.

Warner (1958, 91) notes it was common for mother- and child-in-law (including son-in-law) to be at the same hearth, but with gaze averted from each other; an observer might not notice their avoidance unless aware of the custom. He also noted it was common for avoidance relatives to speak approvingly of each other, praising each other for providing well and looking after each other. Hiatt wrote that Gidjingali men could talk to their mothers-in-law from a distance, with averted gaze.

Special modes of transfer are employed between avoidance relatives, and these may allow more or less direct contact, but always constrain it. For example, in the Katherine region and western Roper River area that I know, direct transfers between in-laws are uncommon and people seek to avoid them, preferring to give things through intermediaries, or to leave them for the other to pick up. Ideally they should only be carried out in a prescribed way: by delivering items with the left, extended hand clasped in the right at the wrist, something suggestive of restraint.

In most areas there is a more or less marked linguistic component of avoidance practices. There may be avoidance 'styles' or 'registers', all of which are used in ways that impose what I will call 'conservative effects' on the interaction between avoidance relatives. In the existing literature there are some evident differences of opinion on the nature of the linguistic component of avoidance. The next section is devoted to brief characterisation of these differences,

and some aspects of the nature of communication between people in avoidance relations.

Avoidance speech

Haviland defines avoidance speech styles as 'special vocabularies that replace all or part of the normal lexicon in speech between kin who stand in certain avoidance relationships to one another' (1979, 365). Some commentators have claimed that the degree of difference between 'ordinary' and 'avoidance' speech styles is great, at least in certain respects. For example, Dixon (1971, 437) states that while ordinary and avoidance styles employ the same phonology and grammatical structure, there is little carry-over of ordinary vocabulary, into avoidance style speech.

Most accounts report a much smaller number of specifically avoidance style lexical items.[4] Often there is a distinctive particle or other element which, in any given stretch of speech, may be the only overt signal of avoidance speech style. Perhaps more importantly, there is evidence from some areas that the frequency of certain grammatical structures is not the same in everyday and avoidance styles. For example, in Mangarrayi, a language of the western Roper River area, one way of designating entities that is characteristic of avoidance style is by the use of metonymic expressions, nominals with a suffix which means 'having' that which the nominal designates. Thus *juya*, the ordinary term which can mean 'game, meat, animal' is replaced in some of its range by the metonym *durdu-yi* 'having wings', for 'bird'. In its full semantic range *juya* is replaceable with the avoidance style word *jarryar*. Also, many designating constructions which are recognised as avoidance style consist of relative clause-like structures, formed with a special 'habitual' verbal category. For example, a recognisably avoidance style way of designating 'wild turkey' is by means of such a clausal construction, *marn wa-jinyjan*, which literally means '[the one that] always eats gum' (*marn*). 'Birds' are 'those that always take off', the nail-tailed wallaby is 'the one that makes a depression in the ground', and so on. In Mangarrayi, the absolute number of distinctive avoidance vocabulary items is not great, but the different frequency of construction types made to serve a designating function, compared to ordinary

speech, is itself highly distinctive. Haviland has captured something of the resulting effect in what he wrote about BIL ('brother-in-law', the avoidance style used by Guugu Yimidhirr speakers): 'Features of BIL usage begin to blur the distinction between referential and non-referential aspects of speech' (1979, 390).

There is also some further difference in what commentators have stated about the content of avoidance style speech. Dixon (1971, 347) has stated that most anything that can be said ordinarily, can be said in avoidance speech. While this might be possible in some hypothetical sense, my own data on this point indicate that significant differences in content are correlated with formal differences, and differences in the distribution of grammatical construction types as above, between the speech styles; that is, that avoidance relatives do not typically say to each other all, or exactly the same thing as, they would say to others. From elicited information and from observation of a small number of people I know well who interact regularly with avoidance relatives, I have gained some ideas about regular differences in content, as follows.

First, a great deal of speech content has to do with domestic concerns (as one might expect, especially considering the fact that certain pairs of people I know well in such relationships are mother- and daughter-in-law). Domains of food (especially game animals), implements and many basic subsistence items are the ones in which are found the highest numbers of outright avoidance style words (i.e., which substitute vocabulary items of ordinary speech).

Speech between avoidance relatives is heavily larded with expressions of solicitude, noticeably more so than speech between other kinds of relatives. The urging of people to do things, for instance, is accompanied by assurances that the speaker will come after, will be there, will help, and so on. There is also more than ordinary cautionary talk: look out, you might fall, get bitten, etc. One can recognise this as the kind of solicitously honorific thing Aborigines may often say to friendly but non-intimate others, including outsiders. Another frequent characteristic of Aboriginal talk in regard to socially distant people is that of talking *about* them though they are present and listening, instead of directing remarks to them. This seems similar also to the way in which interaction involving avoidance relatives is conducted, which may often involve out-loud

monologic speculation about the other person's needs and wants: 'I wonder what she [or "they", the third non-singular person is frequently used in reference to a single person, the avoidance relative] is going to do?'. The effect is to dramatise the minimisation of intrusiveness while at the same time showing orientation to the relative. Note also, that here that use of third non-singular person — the same means commonly employed in European and other languages to instantiate social hierarchy — is used mutually in the production of social distance.[5]

Another aspect of solicitude is making requests as if they were not for one's own benefit, but are rather for the avoidance relative's benefit, or take into account that relative's social perspective. For instance, a woman may ask her mother-in-law for things, but will often say or imply that the things are not for herself, but are for the mother-in-law's son, the speaker's husband. Cast in this way, it is quite possible for avoidance category relatives to make requests of each other.

Related to this is a tendency in speech between and in the presence of avoidance category relatives, to give reasons for what one says and does, especially about one's intentions and requests. In ordinary interactions, requests are often made more peremptorily, without such reasons. But, as above, one may ask an avoidance category relative to get something or to share something, but for good reason. There is thus no assumption of easy familiarity or transparency of motives; and there is an underscoring of the reasonableness and other-directedness of one's stated wants.

A further, related feature of speech in an avoidance relative's presence is directing attention to the fact of the relationship and the co-presence as a reason for doing as one does: 'I can't laugh, I'm ashamed', and so on. This is part of a general tendency to ceremonialise and announce orientation towards the interpersonal relationship when avoidance category persons are present. There may be a kind of stagey announcement of proximity of the avoidance relative, of the sort 'Oh, I see "they" have come', or 'Oh, my relative and I have encountered each other'. This may be partly a mode of self-announcement, and also of showing that one has taken cognisance of the other. I believe it is sometimes also an appropriate kind of expression of surprise and disequilibration upon meeting, and

may help to 'settle' people's feelings and normalise further interaction. This kind of announcement contrasts, it seems to me, with much Aboriginal social practice among familiars, in which it is not usual to make formal announcement of one's presence, and in which talk need not be opened immediately.

Decorum is often difficult to sustain nowadays when avoidance category relatives are under the influence of alcohol. But on a few occasions I saw where one person in the relationship was sober and the other drunk, I have seen the former sustain the most incredible verbal abuse and noisy, intrusive behaviour without comment or reproach then or later, while (it appeared to me) the persistent concentration of the drunken person's attention on the sober avoidance category relative was not at all fortuitous.

Finally, it has been claimed that matters relating to sex and bodily function cannot be mentioned by avoidance category relatives in each other's presence (e.g. Haviland 1979), but my experience suggests this is not so everywhere, or to the extent that has sometimes been alleged. In the area I know, for example, there are ways of talking about bodily functions that appear to have the approximate tone of the English 'to make water', and which are regarded as polite usages acceptable in the presence of avoidance category relatives. Likewise, in Mangarrayi there is a special avoidance category vocabulary item which replaces the ordinary lexeme 'to sleep', and which is used to describe people 'sleeping together', and again is allowable in usage, for example, by an avoidance category person in another's presence. In short, such expressions are not deemed obscene. I wonder if the impression that no such references are possible may arise, in some situations or in part, from the fact that avoidance speech styles are less commonly used, and the only information available about them nowadays is usually elicited information. Certainly, however, talk regarded as indecent, and the offer in one's presence of physical violence towards one's avoidance category relative, are considered sufficient reason in the area I know for the offended hearing relative to engage in wild and berserk behaviour, usually towards the offender. Of such incidents people say that they were mightily ashamed to hear their avoidance relatives sworn at or treated in that way, and could not do otherwise but act crazily. If anyone begins to talk in a jesting or obscene manner to one in the

presence of, or within earshot of, one's avoidance relative(s), there is a conventionalised form of utterance which one may use to tell the offender to stop immediately, and which means simply, 'You are shaming me'.

Avoidance: Total orientation

'Avoidance' then, certainly is not the complete proscription of social co-presence and interaction. Rather, it is evidently to be understood as a mode of interaction which emphasises deference (not necessarily completely symmetrical, but mutual) and social distance. Paradoxically, a strong concomitant, if not condition, of the existence of avoidance practices is the likelihood and the frequency of co-presence of 'avoidance relatives'. Avoidance practices emphasise one aspect of their potentially multiplex social relations as having overriding determination of their conduct towards each other. That aspect is clearly seen by Aborigines themselves as having to do with the prescription, and the social possibility, or the realised existence, of a spouse-giving and spouse-receiving relationship as the link between them.

Notions of marriage prescription in terms of kin and social categories, along with specific existing or possible arrangements of bestowal and marriage which commonly had a territorial dimension, are certainly important in the processes of social recognition of 'avoidance relatives', that is, in establishing who may count, or try to count in each others' eyes, as potential affines.[6] In this respect it is significant that prescriptive dimensions of marriage are reported in some instances to be overridingly determinant of avoidance practice, while people who are affines *in fact*, but not of the prescribed categories, may practice limited or no avoidance. Hiatt (1965, 71–2), for example, reports that a Gidjingali man who is unable to acquire a wife through orthodox bestowal and instead marries the daughter of a father's sister, does not feel shame or act in avoidance manner towards her, his actual mother-in-law. The situation is reportedly similar elsewhere in northern Arnhem Land. What may be surmised from this?

On the basis of such critical examples of lack of fit between 'prescribed' affinity entailing avoidance practice and 'actual' affinity

not doing so, I suggest that a, perhaps *the*, essential element of avoidance is that of understood mutual obligation as constitutive of it; that is, as constitutive of any actual token of this type of the relationship, and of the type as a whole. I can only begin to unpack this idea by some broader, introductory discussion of Aboriginal ways of making social relationships.

One of the distinctive things about the Aboriginal socio-political formation is the 'universality' of kinship and social classification, the inclusion of all known persons within these flexible forms of social recognition. Some of the apparent conditions and corollaries of the actual (and potential) inclusiveness of combined kin-and-sociocentric classifications have been observed: this kind of organisation seems to be consistent with the limited scale, labile and flexible character, and potential for intensity of interaction, of the traditional polity. Regionally, seasonally and otherwise varying mobility of course was associated with limitation of that intensity, in fact. Clearly however, mobility was not an external 'requirement' placed upon people in any simple sense, but was part of the form of life, and could be the solution to social problems and conflict, as much as a factor in the gaining of a living.

At least as important as mobility in the management of personal relations in the Aboriginal polity of small scale, however, seems to be a certain degree of differentiation and specialisation of social relationships along intersecting dimensions of kin-and-social class. Thus we have the highly marked 'joking relationships' (as in the famous early paper by Thomson in 1935), in which those in certain 'kin' relations to each other (but often, not the genealogically most closely related kinspeople in these categories) dramatised the familiar and jocular nature of their relations in highly prescribed ways — by saying rude and obscene things to each other, engaging in horseplay, and so on. Kinds of relationship are very significantly conceived as social types — there is a highly developed indigenous ideology of such types — and particular instances of them are enacted and constituted interactionally. This does not in and of itself make them different from social relationships in general. However what is notable and distinctive is the significance of such interactionally-constituted boundaries in the frequent absence of any major material or spatial boundary (e.g. co-presence of

mother- and son-in-law around the same hearth), and the univocality of certain relationships so constituted. Illustrating the latter point is full enactment of the mother-in-law avoidance taboo, in which the highly prescribed and institutionalised forms — aversion of gaze, relative taciturnity, special proxemics, and so on — tend to give *one* aspect of the relationship between people overriding determination of their conduct in each other's presence. Thus, a man in his mother-in-law's presence finds it difficult to behave towards her in any way other than as her son-in-law; and further, his conduct towards everyone else on the scene is very strongly shaped by their co-presence, and the social emphasis placed on it.

Many of the kin relationships with close familiars, for instance between parents and children, are lived as ones of mutual obligation and concern, but of a kind which is very general, that is, all-encompassing and diffuse. There may be regular expectations of help and sharing, but reciprocity is not strictly reckoned. Reciprocity within such relationships, while it may regularly occur, is more of the kind that Sahlins called 'generalised', i.e. without close calculation of this for that, but rather a general expectation of help, sharing, and concern for each other. At times, one person in such a relationship may refuse to share with another, but often refusal is made by resort to a claim that he/she does not have the desired object, or it is not his/hers to give, but belongs to some other person of whom, for some reason, the request is harder to make; or is committed to some recognised social purpose from which it cannot be diverted. One finds that as one becomes well known to Aboriginal people, they may consign things to one, as a person 'in-between', neither insider nor complete outsider, with the hope that things may be thus protected from excessive demand by their own people. In other words, the extensive 'sharing' attributed to Aboriginal society is in part, perhaps better understood, using Sahlins' phrase, as arising from 'generalised demand' which can be made of a wide range of familiars. I find my substitute phrase more useful here, because while return of anything given, or any service performed, may be problematic in any given instance, a key indication of the condition of such relationships is often not in terms of positive interchanges of gift and performance, but in

terms of whether the supplicant feels confident enough to make demands — even if they may not be met; and the person asked, able to formulate an effective and acceptable refusal. To put this another way, the social testing to which familiar relationships are often subjected is the denial of demand, rather than in terms of a moral imperative to give without having been asked. If denial can be made in a way which leaves the expectation of generalised reciprocity (i.e. the possibility of future demand) intact, it is not hurtful or destructive of the relationship; but if, as people now may say in Kriol, it is seen as a strong 'knock-back', it may change the character of the relationship. Yet another way of approaching this is to try to formulate something which emerges in social inter-action both among Aboriginal people, and between them and outsiders. They are often reluctant to ask something of someone unless they think their relationship with the person is such that she or he *may* give it, or do what is asked. There is in this a kind of punctilio, a kind of reckoning of the likely fit of demand and its satisfaction.[7] It is noticeable that in relationships of this familiar kind that I am trying to characterise, reciprocity in the usual sense of back-and-forth interchange is diffusely expected but not understood to be directly constitutive of the relationship, which pre-exists and post-dates demand. The regular denial of this expectation however, may ultimately alter the character of the relationship, though it may remain nominally one of a certain kind. If this happens, people may say someone is 'mother for nothing', 'husband for nothing', and so on.

With the above general type of relationship we may compare the avoidance relationship, that of people who are linked as prescribed, would-be or actual spouse-givers and receivers. The main difference, it seems to me, is not that denial of particular demands may not occur between such people, but that the expectation of interchange is more clearly spelled out, and understood to be more clearly constitutive of the relationship type. Radcliffe-Brown's report (1952, 92) is now famous, of the response of a man to his question why he had to avoid his mother-in-law: 'because she is my best friend in the world; she has given me my wife'. Hiatt (1984, 188) says this gift 'imposes an obligation of reciprocity' on men 'to provide their mothers-in-law with regular offerings of that most prized of commodities, meat'. He also avers that the 'contractual' basis of the

relationship is vividly illustrated by a story from South Australia summarised by Hamilton (1979, 337):

> The rainbow, often seen during summer thunderstorms, represents a man sitting in his mother-in-law's camp. The faint left-hand band of colour is the man himself, the middle band is his mother-in-law, and the right-hand band is his wife. The man is unable to consummate the marriage because his mother-in-law is sitting between him and his wife. Only after the appearance of a stronger rainbow, in which the order of colour in the bands is changed, does the man realise that he must pay the mother-in-law for her daughter. The disappearance of the pale band of colour represents the departure of the man to go hunting in order to obtain meat for his mother-in-law. The gradual fading of the rainbow means that the man has made his gift and has been allowed to take his wife to his own camp.

It seems to me that this meaning, that the realisation of husband–wife relationships depends on the disposition of the mother-in-law, can be attributed to myths from many different areas and is a common theme.[8] Radcliffe-Brown's informant was giving the most favourable view of the mother-in-law as grand benefactor. It seems, however, that the negative potential of the mother-in-law, her refusal to allow the hoped-for relationship, is often portrayed or adumbrated in myth.

This leads me to conclude that, in order to understand the extreme elaboration of 'avoidance practice', we need most fundamentally to understand the societal significance of marriage and the obligations it entails and in which it is grounded, and not simply relate the avoidance to issues of sexuality. For the extreme elaboration of in-law avoidance can be seen to be intrinsically bound up with obligation, which is understood to be more clearly constitutive of these kinds of relationships in comparison with others. We need to be clear about the nature of the significance attributed to marriage (and marriage 'promise'), in order to understand why to this kind of relationship above most others in the Aboriginal social formation is attached a clear requirement of demonstrable interchange, of back-and-forth, a significant aspect of which are the avoidance 'behaviours' and speech described above.

Marriage and obligation

I find the discussion in Collier and Rosaldo (1981) useful, particularly their identification of 'brideservice' arrangement of marriage as an ideal type, dependent upon the continuing exchange of services and goods between in-laws as both promise and realisation of marriage. They distinguish 'brideservice' from 'bridewealth' organisation of marriage, and clearly regard Aboriginal societies as evincing the former kind of arrangement.

'Brideservice' refers to the establishment of marriage possibilities, and the subsequent realisation of marriage, largely through the performance of services by the intending or recognised groom. Other features which tend to be found in societies where this is the case include *gradualness* of the realisation of marriage; the continuous nature of obligation of in-laws throughout the marriage, and particularly that of the son-in-law to provide in recognition of what has been or will be given him; and hence an overall emphasis in marriage upon male achievement, partly because of the tie to production and the proof of sufficiency which is an inherent part of satisfying continuing obligation linked with marriage. Collier and Rosaldo also observe how male produce tends to be widely distributed, to in-laws but also more generally, and is thus a source of male renown at the same time that it is a continuing demonstration of affinal obligation. This compares with the narrower distribution of female produce, which tends to be to immediate kin and hearth group.

There are some matters in the general, comparative Collier and Rosaldo model that would seem in need of some modification on the basis of specifically Australianist material. Among these, in my opinion, is their emphasis on the general egalitarianism of 'brideservice' societies. They say that, in these societies, marriage is a requirement of adulthood, and that the married man needs nothing further: he has achieved equality with other adult men. They infer, I believe correctly for the Australianist material, that marriage is therefore more generally and clearly regarded as desirable by men than women, and may seem especially undesirable to young women faced with the prospect of first marriage, often to somewhat older men. Women in that position stand to lose autonomy, and it may not

be immediately obvious to them that they may gain anything over the longer term.[9] In their stress on egalitarianism — which certainly has some applicability to the Australian case — Collier and Rosaldo do not pay sufficient attention to the particularly strong Australian emphasis on marriage arrangement and bestowal as a source of *in*equivalence among people. Rather, they emphasise 'brideservice' as something which any man has the means to perform. While 'self-help' certainly is important in the realisation of Australian marriage, there is a societal emphasis on attempting to make long-term marriage arrangements, in which context brideservice is required as the overt demonstration of the relationship. In other words, Australian brideservice is not *just* a continuing proof of male suffi-ciency, voluntarily offered, but exists within a political framework which, in tendency, is not simply egalitarian. There is also, as Hiatt has been foremost in clarifying, a political tendency to try to link marriage arrangement to the ceremonial life, something that gives it an additional sanction and authority which it would not have by itself.[10]

Marriage prescription, and many other aspects of Aboriginal life such as (at least formerly) the expectation of normative widow remarriage, help to reinforce the disposition that marriage is an important condition of adult status, for both men and women. In the achievement of marriage, I believe, lies much of the autonomy and equivalence of adult status, and here 'egalitarianism' may be a fair characterisation of the condition of relative parity among adults. Avoidance practice however, helps to instill, and reinforces, the disposition and understanding that marriage is achieve-ment, and that obligation is the condition of marriage. The obligations under which one is placed may be satisfiable, but they are enduring. This is linked, as we have briefly reviewed, to the arrangement that (anything we may wish to call) traditional Aboriginal 'subsistence economics', or daily provisioning, is largely a function of marriage.

In sum, we find inclusive kin relationships in many of which mutuality is all-encompassing but relatively diffuse, and not elaborated into a code of explicit reciprocity as constitutive of the relationship type. There exists rather the continuing assumption of mutual concern and provision, and the possibility of making

demands upon each other. Of course, not all kinsmen of a particular type are equally close, e.g. not all 'brothers' or 'sisters' are 'close' ones, but are considered more or less so, depending upon a number of factors which may include genealogical relatedness, the history of social interaction with them, socio-territorial links, and others. In some ways 'affinity' is a special sub-category of kinship and not a fundamentally different kind of relation; there may be affines who on various grounds (e.g., socio-territorial affiliation, genealogical linkage) are considered 'close' and others who are not so considered, and may be regarded as more remote members of an affinal category. The gradient of relative closeness/remoteness applies within both familiar and affinal relationship categories, and this important matter, which deserves much fuller discussion, cannot be given much further consideration here.[11] Instead, here my point is to distinguish familiar *types* of kin relationship from non-familiar ones. For affinity is different in general from familiar relationships in the much clearer emphasis placed on mutual obligation as constitutive of these relationship *types*, and reciprocity and actual demonstration of it as constitutive of any token of these types.

Thus we begin to get a view of what seem to be two rather different modes of organising social relationships, largely coded in terms of 'kinship'. In the first type, there is a presumption of familiarity and relatively easy mutual access, whether actual or merely structurally possible and prescribed. This is accompanied by the feeling that it is possible to make demands in terms of or within the relationship, but not necessarily that the demands will always be satisfied. Rather, what is significant is that refusal may be accommodated without resentment. A typical way of doing this is apparently for the person asked to state, and the asker to accept, that the demand cannot be fulfilled because there is prior claim upon the object or service being requested. This, if successfully negotiated, leaves the possibility of future demand intact.

In the second type — here exemplified by 'avoidance' relations — there is a presumption of distance or lack of familiarity, in the context of an overriding sense of mutual obligation felt to be grounded on the one hand in the gift, promise or possibility of promise of a spouse, and on the other in the ideally frequent receipt

of return attentions and gifts. Thus, though it may appear paradoxical, the ethnographic material warrants the conclusion that where social relationship is constituted and reproduced in terms of inculcated and strongly experienced obligation, there exist the strongest feelings and conventionalised manifestations of 'shame', which among other things place limits on readiness to interact and to make demands. This is partly reproduced by the limitation of interpersonal access and demand, familiarity by easy access and the possibility of regular demand. This might seem commonplace, but the perhaps less expected element is that, in the Aboriginal polity of small scale, societally specific notions of social 'distance' in this sense are largely constituted in terms of, and by the inculcation of, feelings of obligation. Obligation here is felt as the need to interchange, to demonstrably confer gift or service as this is felt to be imposed upon one in terms of the relationship, and not, as in the first type of relationship, perhaps merely to acceptably not give to, or do something for, one's familiars.

I have attempted to generalise that Aboriginal people, in my experience, often seem reluctant to ask for something of anyone unless they believe that the person asked might be inclined to give it or do it (though he may or may not on any particular occasion). I described this as cultivation of fit between demand and its satisfaction. It seems to me the avoidance practices could be said to be part of a higher-level mode of the same sort of fit of demand to satisfaction, of expectation to social outcome. For where 'abiding obligation' is the felt basis of relationship, avoidance practices limit the nature and degree of mutual demand, so that notions of acceptable satisfaction of demand apparently do not become inflationary. Thus we learn from Warner that avoidance relatives often spoke highly of each other, and felt that their expectations of each other were being met. However, to note this kind of fit between expectation and social outcome is not to discover a 'social function' of avoidance practices, but rather to note an inter-relation. In fact, the very practice of avoidance 'behaviours' is one of the social indices of this kind of relationship based on obligation, and thus an aspect of satisfaction of people's expectations of the relationship. It is not merely something that 'gives notice' of an otherwise existing or independently definable relation.

In my view, fundamentally underlying the 'shame' and social distance of affinal avoidance relationships is the well-defined sense of abiding *obligation* as being at their basis, and the linked sense that one's very social worth depends upon demonstrating one's sufficiency in terms of the relationship. The social basis of this sense of obligation can be partly appreciated by recognition of the overwhelming importance of marriage in the traditional social formation: as index of adult status, as means of reproductive and sexual sufficiency, as the basis of 'economic' sufficiency, and with the frequent interlinkage of bestowal with ritual practice and authority. To reduce the basis of affinal 'shame' to issues of sexuality alone, I would argue, is to fail to recognise the specific institutional linkages within the Aboriginal polity.

I have attempted to distinguish two general 'types' of dimensions in social relationships, one characterised by the conjunction of familiarity/demand, the other by distance/obligation. Both of these are largely coded in terms of 'kin' relations. That is, in Aboriginal formulations particular dyadic relationships are often said to have a certain associated customary behavioural 'content', such as, in many Aboriginal social systems, joking and obscenity with certain (commonly, alternate generation) dyads; and distance and avoidance with certain affinal dyads. However, my suggestion has been that the types of organising dimensions I have identified are more general than any specific kin dyads, or sets of them; and rather constitute part of the ground for the delineation and differentiation of the indigenously salient 'kinship' relations themselves. If we see things this way, it seems to me that we overcome the problem in Radcliffe-Brown's 1952 paper of the reified and behaviourally determinist nature of kin categories. In addition, it seems to me that the organising dimensions I have discussed, e.g. the complex of distance and obligation, can be demonstrated to be operative across different social domains as these are usually conceived.

Can the trend of the argument be supported by pointing to such other domains of Aboriginal social relationship in which some similar notion of obligation seems to be fundamental, and where there are some similar behavioural features? Some descriptions from early records of Aboriginal trading relationships seem to me to support the posited link between social distance and 'obligation', the

feeling that one's social worth is on the line in the way that one meets expectations constitutive of such relationships. Here, interestingly, there would appear to be some consistent and more explicit correlation of social with geographical distance.

Trade relationships

Trading, the exchange of trade items over sometimes long distances and social boundaries, was of great significance in Australia. It was however, a kind of linkage which was often early and drastically affected by colonisation, and there were associated changes in social relationships and distribution of Aboriginal people. Indeed, it is a general impression of mine that indigenous 'things' and their exchange had great social significance in ways that have now been much altered, and that are consequently very difficult to adequately appreciate from our observations today. Aborigines lavished much attention on the production of trade items and/or ritual items in contrast with a much more opportunistic and even throw-away attitude to some things seen as of only immediate use or value. However, I am more interested to adduce here, evidence concerning the attitudes which apparently underlay and motivated trade.

Stanner noted in 1933 that significance was given to the fact of trade with distant people of other tribes. But interestingly, he also records how, within any given group of people, trade items also regularly followed familial paths, being handed from one member of an immediate family to another, before they were passed on further to outsiders. Such, it would seem, was the value attributed to trade items, their foreign provenance, and the fact of the conduct of trade with others. It would further seem, a dimension of alterity could be introduced into what were normally much more 'familiar' (in both senses) relationships. Stanner also made clear how much thought people on the Daly gave to the meeting of trade obligations, and those of ritual exchange. An incident in his portrait of Durmugam in 1960 brings home how much resentment could attach to perceived failure to reciprocate. Such a failure was the explanation Durmugam gave to him for having murdered a man. This was in respect of failure to make reciprocation for a ritual object Durmugam had given

him, and which Durmugam himself had gained from participation in the (at that time, rapidly spreading) Kunapipi or Karwadi cult:

> Lamutji had promised a substantial payment, a necessary condition of possession, and a condition that the donor had to enforce if, at the very least, his own safety were not to be in danger. When, after five years, Lamutji had paid nothing in spite of many reminders, Durmugam decided to kill him at the first opportunity. He ambushed the bilker in a jungle near the river and transfixed him from behind with a shovel-spear (Stanner 1960, 80).

At least in this instance where a ritual item was involved, failure to meet obligation was not shrugged off, but was deeply resented, partly because failure to make due recompense for the cult object could rebound upon Durmugam from his co-ritualists, including those men who had brought him into the cult.

Even more enlightening for present purposes is Thomson's report in 1949 of the feelings people he knew in Arnhem Land brought to trading relationships. He gives an account of the way in which relations of *kumur marnda* 'trading partners' (but literally, 'face to face' or 'breast to breast') normatively overlapped with certain types of kin relationship. His comments concerning their classificatory or actual genealogical character are limited. Clearly however, a notion of kinship gradient was significant here, i.e. that of relative remoteness (close versus distant) among kinsmen *within* a given kin category type. Trade partners were not 'full' relatives of a given type.

It is clear that there was an emphasis on geographical distance, and the giving of things to trade partners that came from remote places to which there was no direct access, but only through the trade link. More generally, Thomson's informants explained that the object of partners is 'to give in order to maintain and affirm the bond between each *kumur* pair, until they die, when their children carry it on'.[12] Like Malinowski before him and from the same western perspective, Thomson was much impressed that these relationships had a strongly 'ceremonial' character that was different from 'pure economic exchange'. Greater insight comes from his explanation of a special term *wetj* which people used of their exchange obligations, generally meaning 'to give' but different from the ordinary verb, *gurrupan*. His informant Raiwalla explained:

> If you have a good thing here, might be you give it to me. You think, "I give it to him. I like to give it to him". All right, *wetj gurrupulo narrana* (you give it to me).

Thomson points to the distinction this man made between giving something because someone asks for it, and giving it out of a sense of obligation that arises from the trading relationship. He quotes his informant further:

> If he asks, you give it to him because he asks. But if you give it yourself — that is *wetj* — that is *marr*, because you *like* to give it to him.

Thomson comments on this:

> my informant expresses the momentary hesitance, the reluctance of a man with something he prizes, and would like to possess himself, to pass it on to his partner in the *kumur marnda* relationship. He thinks about it and wavers — but finally he decides to give it. The informant explains this feeling, and contrasts the spirit in which such a gift is given, in these circumstances, with one which is given merely in response to a request. He conceives his giving within the ceremonial cycle — which is of the type called *wetj* — as due to *marr*, to the force, the ritual urge, (stronger, even, than the desire to retain and possess *gerri* [trade items]) to pass them on and either to increase thereby his own prestige in the *kumur marnda* relationship, or to acquit himself of an existing obligation in the quarter to which he sends it (1949, 78–9).

Thus we learn that a *kumur marnda* obligation is different from a request, because it comes from within, it is profoundly felt as abiding obligation. To act out of this profound sense of obligation is *marr,* power, and the informant's account seems to suggest, thereby also something which shows strength, autonomy, and sufficiency. Raiwalla speaks to us from Thomson's pages and further clarifies that the obligation of trading partners entails that of receiving as well as giving. When asked by Thomson if he did not make a certain item himself which he was also wont to receive in trade, Raiwalla said:

> I make them, but different country — he must give me *wetj* — like this (holding his hand out). If you give me, I can't say 'I

> don't want it' because this arm belong him goes this way — it points along me. *Marr* (goodwill, spiritual power) goes this way, I must take it. *Wetj* is like *marr*.

In other words, the gift is powerful, and is directed at the trade partner, and not to be refused on the grounds that one has or makes the 'same' material item, for it is not the same. Finally, Thomson makes it clear that perceived and felt failure in such a relationship is not a minor thing, it is opprobrious:

> To fail to repay these gifts quickly, even with his own half-brothers, would be to lose face, to suffer in prestige, perhaps even to be passed over next time a gift in the ceremonial exchange system was available (1949, 79).

> [there is an] incentive to work and to lavish special skill on the making of objects of material culture, in order to discharge his obligations within the scope of this system, which no mere desire for economic gain, shorn of its ritual and pageantry, could achieve, however great the material reward (1949, 81).

And so we re-encounter the Spirit of the Gift.

Finally, Berndt and Berndt (1993) report on the existence of large trade networks among the Yaraldi of the Adelaide area. Their informants stated that the trading relationship, normally linking distant peoples, was one of great importance and carried out with great formality. In fact, it was such that often, those linked as trade partners could not transact with each other directly, but had to do so through a third party. I think one can claim without stretching things that this mode of interaction is interestingly similar to the social distancing within the avoidance relationship, reported by Thomson, of talking 'one side', as if to one's dog or to someone else, rather than directly to one's avoidance relative.

Conclusions and implications

What I think is evidenced is a constitutive dimension of social relationships, which is found both in affinal avoidance and in trade practices, and which is thus more general than both. It consists in the link between profound, internalised obligation as definitional

and constitutive of social relationship, with social distance and formalised and sometimes constrained access between the parties in such a relation. The affinal and trade relations are specific sub-types which partake of this general form of organisation but each of which has its own particular additional dimensions, varying with the nature of the social linkage at issue. The sexual dimension is clearly present in the affinal avoidance relation, but not (it seems) in the trade relation, where certain other elements such as geographical distance-and-difference, are more clearly prominent. In the affinal relationship the sexual dimension arises in relation to the nature of the gift of a spouse, and the counter-gifts, with all the implications in this exchange of sexuality, reproductivity, and the means of self-realisation as spouse, parent and provider.

In an interesting way, the affinal and trade sub-types may also be *contrasted* with each other as relationships grounded in obligation. Trade partners are normally spatially distant from each other, and tend to interact infrequently and yet very significantly; while affines, as we have observed, may spend considerable amounts of time together, at the same time that they distance themselves interaction-ally through the 'avoidance' relationship. Thomson's (1949) description suggests however that trade partners in north-east Arnhem Land tend to be people who stand to each other in what we have called 'familiar' relationships, but are not the 'closest' members of such kin categories to each other. Thus, trade partners are often half- or classificatory uterine siblings.[13] Trade as a relationship of obligation is associated, it would seem, with an ideal of increased familiarity, often between members of kin categories where such familiarity is prescribed but is not easily or usually realised; while affinal relationships are ones which, most strikingly, sustain social distance despite and in the context of actual and often prolonged proximity.

In conclusion we may turn to the issue of the opposite-sex sibling avoidance relationship which has been so much written about, particularly in the Arnhem Land ethnography. Central behavioural features of this relationship are those of avoidance, aversion of gaze, lack of direct interaction, and so on, between brother and sister. But the most striking is the *mirriri* 'ear-thing', the wild behaviour in which a brother engages when he hears unseemingly or

obscene talk about his sister's conduct, or in her presence. The brother whose sensibilities are thus assaulted is conventionally expected to attack his sister, perhaps even to inflict serious injury upon her, regardless of who, at least from an outsider's point of view, might be seen to be at fault in provoking the matter at hand. Thus, erstwhile 'avoidance' is in theory transformed into the most direct, injurious, and asymmetrical violence visited by brother upon sister.

I have not a definitive answer regarding any evidence of abiding obligation as central to the opposite-sex sibling relation, in terms of which we may understand the avoidance practices. I can only say I have often been struck by the considerable Arnhem ethnographic evidence which points to the brother–sister relationship as one of combined and hence problematic, partial identity and difference. I have in mind for example, the clan myths which trace the origin of particular groups to the incestuous union of a brother–sister pair. It may not be fortuitous that in parts of Arnhem Land, there seems to be (for Australia) a fairly highly developed notion of the prescription of marriage not simply in terms of kin categories combined with some dimensions of 'different territoriality' (as is most generally the case), but more explicitly than in some other regions, in terms of the regularity of certain inter-group relations of marriage alliance. That is, there seem to me to be social conditions here for much more explicit valorisation of the sister as partly the 'same' as her brother, in terms of clan identity and issues of the distinctiveness of the clan, but at the same time 'different' from him in that her destiny is to marry elsewhere and not to reproduce members of their shared clan, but rather sister's sons who will have a significant role to play in relation to her brother, as members of another clan.[14] These, it appears to me, are some of the elements of the brother–sister relation as type in Arnhem Land which require closer scrutiny in the light of the *mirriri.*

Though I cannot spell out how and in what sense any notion of abiding obligation might apply to the brother-sister relation, there is one striking element of similarity in it to the affinal avoidance relation. Much of the thinking about the *mirriri* has taken as point of departure the seeming injustice involved in the attack on the sister. Why, it has been said, should she be the victim if she may have done nothing wrong? This offends one's sense of rationality and fairness.

But in my view it is exactly the wrong question to ask. For the *mirriri* is a significant element in the social constitution of blame, of concepts about what could conceivably be wrong in general, and in any particular case. Arnhem Land people evidently do not ask themselves our question: did she do something reprehensible, or was it someone else, or indeed anybody at all? Instead, when trouble occurs between people, and tempers flare and people begin to argue or swear obscenely, men in the presence of their 'sisters' react as 'brothers' should: 'My heart jumps and stops, jumps and stops, when I hear that mirriri'; and again, 'My ear can't hear obscenity in front of my sister' (Warner 1958, 55). And so an episode, whether or not it began that way, can be converted into one of sister-fault, and attack upon her. The gender dimension of the social constitution of blame here is unmistakable. This element becomes even more interesting when we learn from Warner (1958, 56): 'The person who swears most frequently at a man's sister is her husband, especially in a connubial quarrel'. Thus, the husband's actions may often be the cause of a brother's reactions, in which he turns on the sister — not by convention the husband, whatever the objective 'rights' and 'wrongs' — and thus she becomes defined as the significant motive and cause of social disturbance. The integral link of brother–sister *mirriri* behaviour to the social formulation of notions about good relations at large, and among men, strongly suggests itself.

It is here that a parallel with affinal avoidance emerges. For while both men and women have significant roles to play in bestowal, in the realisation of marriage, and in the enacting of avoidance relations with children-in-law, greatest prominence is clearly given to the *mother*-in-law as the ideological focus of affinal relations and of affinal avoidance. It is in this prominence that we find the equivalent to the mystical *marr* 'power' of that which motivates the gift, of which Thomson's informant Raiwalla spoke: the parallel statement that 'your mother-in-law is poison', or the affinal relation charged with power. The point here is that the spotlight is upon the senior *female* rather than any male affine as the one who most clearly embodies and represents the charged relation. As in the *mirriri*, the gender inflection of the powerful avoidance relation, and especially its indigenously most salient ideological aspects, is unmistakable.

Death, Exchange and the Reproduction of Yolngu Society
Howard Morphy

Introduction

At the time of the Man the Hunter Conference in the mid-1960s there existed two main paradigms for conceptualising hunter-gatherer social organisation. One, a formal model based on kinship and patrilineal clan organisation, associated in particular with the work of Radcliffe-Brown and Julian Steward, was increasingly under challenge. The other, based on the logic of hunter-gatherer ecology, was emerging strongly (Lee and De Vore 1968). The first model assumed that the composition of groups of hunters and gatherers on the ground was produced by an underlying structure of kin-based clan organisation. The second model held that flexible band organisation lay at the heart of the relationship between a hunter-gatherer population and their land. The second model contained an implicit critique of the first: that the exigencies of hunter-gatherer existence, in particular seasonal factors, made it unlikely that groups on the ground would be the direct product of principles of patrilineal

organisation.[1] As Hiatt (1996) among others pointed out, neither model was strongly supported by data from fieldwork. Detailed studies of the composition of groups on the ground, of the processes of group formation and the nature of rights vested in groups, had been neglected in favour of more formal descriptions of kinship terminologies and of myth and the substance of ceremonial performance. Following their research in the 1950s, Meggitt and Hiatt produced detailed data on kinship and marriage in their social context (among the Warlpiri and Gidjingali respectively,) that allowed Radcliffe-Brown's model to be challenged effectively.

Les Hiatt's main contributions to the Man the Hunter Conference were to question assumptions about group organisation, in particular with respect of marriage arrangements, and to produce data that showed that rights and practices were very different from those predicted by the formal models. In effect, he set the framework for considering the relationship between structure and action in relation to group formation and local organisation — a continuing theme in Australian Aboriginal anthropology since. Detailed studies of Australian local organisation from an ecological and economic perspective followed a decade or so later, most noticeably in the research of Peterson (1972, 198b), a student of Hiatt's.

The debate over group organisation has at times appeared to exist in the form of an opposition between structural, group-focused models on the one hand (e.g. Maddock 1969, Turner 1974) and individual and praxis-oriented models on the other (Hiatt 1965, 1967, Keen 1994). In some cases individuals have moved in their own work from one position to its polar opposite (see e.g. Shapiro 1967, 1981). My main aim is to transcend such divisions and to show how structural factors, such as an on-going system of clan organisation, can be integrated into a praxis-oriented framework in which the individual has a role in the transformation and the reproduction of the system over time. The data concerning clan organisation and the data concerning the importance of kindreds or ego-centred matrilineal and patrilineal connections have been obtained from the same individuals and from observations of the same events, and I see no reason why one perspective need be given priority over the other. Clearly ego-centred and socio-centred perspectives are sometimes in conflict. I have argued elsewhere in 1988 that this can appear as much of

a problem to the Aboriginal agent as to the analyst. In Aboriginal societies this contradiction is reflected in, and to an extent resolved by, the existence of structuring processes whereby contradictions between different levels of organisation, different ways of conceptualising a relationship, or different means of claiming a right or interest, can be concealed from or transformed into each other. By such processes the irregular can be made regular, and individual motivation and action can receive global sanction through cosmological precedent. The system of restricted knowledge, the naming system, the bilateral nature of kinship terminologies, the structure of the mythological system, all operate to create spaces or channels for re-ordering society and at the same time to enable individually motivated action. In this chapter my focus is on the mortuary rituals of the Yolngu, neighbours of the Gidjingali in eastern Arnhem Land. The structured process of mortuary rituals reflects a dialectical relationship between different levels of organisation: between ties of kindred and relations of clanship. On the one hand mortuary rituals re-create the dead person as a representative of a clan and on the other hand they almost literally deconstruct him as person and parcel him out among his kindred. Structure and action, clanship and kindred, rather than being separate levels of reality, interpenetrate. The relations between clans are the product of an historical process that involved the dead person, and the kindred is both structured by clan relations and is subsequently part of the process of reconstituting relations between clans, even affecting the constitution of the clans themselves.

Yolngu mortuary rituals

A full discussion of Yolngu mortuary rituals would need to begin with a long definitional aside, since the set of rituals that could fall into that category is large and continually changing in time and space. Indeed any typological approach to Yolngu ritual is fraught with difficulties. Almost all Yolngu rituals have a mortuary or commemorative component to them. Death is in many respects the dominant theme of Yolngu ritual both as a subject — a source of meaning and reflection — and as an object, something towards which the ritual is directed. My focus is on those rituals that have

death and the disposal of the corpse as their primary objective, and although this still covers a wide field, and on certain common structures of relations and themes in particular that all Yolngu mortuary rituals involve.

The focus is more on primary burial than on other rituals in the complex, since primary burial is the ritual with which I am most familiar. Secondary and tertiary burial, encasement in a transportable bark container and final deposition in a hollow log-coffin, are no longer practised at Yirrkala, though they still take place elsewhere in the region. Most people at Yirrkala are familiar with their performance or what they involve even if they have not participated in such rituals themselves. Indeed it is impossible to understand primary burial or any of the subsequent rituals that take place without placing them in the context of previous practice.

Contemporary Yolngu funerals are constructed out of ritual elements and ideas about existence that in the recent past also produced the excavation and breaking up of bones and the placing of them in a hollow-log coffin. I choose the form of words deliberately. My view is not that primary burial today is based on or has resulted from the collapse of some previous and more complex series of mortuary rituals. It is rather that Yolngu mortuary rituals were always dynamic and highly variable in their form, and present practice continues in this tradition. The extension of mortuary rituals achieved by secondary and tertiary mortuary rituals is now attained by such practices as the burial of the possessions of the deceased and the preservation of the body in a morgue. These represent, in part, alternative ways of elaborating the same themes and of enabling similar political outcomes. Over time the whole complex changes. The thematic structure of Yolngu mortuary rituals and their articulation with the process of the reproduction of Yolngu society change, not through a process of substitution — old clothes for old bones — but through a more structured process of symbolic and socio-cultural transformation.

Elsewhere (Morphy 1984) I have argued that Yolngu mortuary rituals can be productively analysed on the basis of a triadic relationship between event structure, ritual episode (the performative content   of   the ceremony: songs, paintings etc. and their significance) and

the themes current in the ceremony. Each particular type of mortuary ritual has a core structure of events which characterises it — the treatment of the body, the moving of the body, the burial of the body and so on. There is also an associated series of subsidiary events (the arrival of participants, the digging of a grave) and of necessary acts (the protection of the participants from pollution and the eating of food). Each of these events can be performed in a ritual way through the use of songs, dances and paintings that are appropriate for the particular event or are conventionally associated with it. The songs and dances themselves are part of the sacred law (*mardayin*) of the participating clans. For example the digging of a grave can be accompanied by the performance of songs and dances that represent an ancestral being digging a hole in the ground for some purpose or another (for example, a crocodile digging its nest). For certain events there are set forms, each particular to a clan, that can be performed whenever a particular event occurs, for example when a new group arrives at the funeral. In most cases there are a number of alternative forms available that could 'perform' the event equally well, and these are associated with different ancestral events and owned by different clans. The potential exists for creation of new performative dances, though this seems to happen rarely.

The themes of the ceremony include such things as the fear of pollution, the spirit journey of the dead person's soul (*birrimbirr*) anger towards the ghost (*mokuy*) and towards those who may be thought to be responsible for the death, the expression of kinship towards the deceased and the expression of solidarity with the bereaved. Themes articulate the concerns and objectives expressed by Yolngu at mortuary rituals, provide the motivation for their actions, and underlie their understanding of the meaning of segments of the performance. The themes are integrated within the structure of the performance in that they are evoked by particular events, such as the movement of the body, or are expressed by particular ritual episodes. For example, one theme evoked whenever the corpse is moved is the journey of the soul from the place of death to its final resting place in its own clan lands.

The dances that accompany the movement of the body involve the journeys of ancestral beings (as opposed to their embodiment in

particular places), floodwaters, the flight of bees, the paddling of a canoe and so on. Many of these events and the songs and dances that represent them are appropriate to the theme of the soul's journey not simply because, by summoning up ancestral forces in distant places, they are the means by which the journey is accomplished, but because they conjure up poetic images that convey the idea of the journey. For example floodwaters as a general image represent the powerful forces that might be summoned to help the soul on its way. Often much more specific images are created within the general theme: songs refer to logs being transported by the swirling flood-waters and to birds diving for fish that are being carried along in the swell. The log connotes the coffin and the body within it on its journey, the fish is another image of the body with connotations of reincarnation, and the diving bird connotes yet another means of transportation, and from a different perspective, the dangers encountered on the way. It is the interaction between theme and ritual episode that creates meaning in Yolngu ritual. The journey of the soul gives a significance to the power of the floodwaters that, in turn, give meaning to the moving of the body; in other contexts, the same ritual episode may have quite different focal connotations.

The themes are complex, the ritual episodes multivalent, and the events themselves have multiple connotations or evocations. As a consequence there is no single reading of a Yolngu mortuary ritual: different individuals will interpret different episodes in different ways depending on their age, gender, clan affiliation and relation-ship to the deceased.[2] However despite this multivalency each ceremony has, at least in retrospect, a level of coherence and sense of direction which is provided by certain structuring themes and the conventional significance attached to certain ritual events. The theme of a journey, for example, lasts for the duration of the ceremony (and indeed beyond into subsequent ceremonies for the same person), providing an overarching framework into which it is possible to fit many of the ritual episodes. In addition, one of the main mechanisms for bringing together the different participating groups in a ceremony is to sing the connections between their coun-tries along ancestral tracks or watercourses, creating other spatial orderings of a more limited duration within the overall framework of the journey. In ordering the course of the ritual, elders are guided

by such factors as these, as well as by more pragmatic ones such as ensuring that everyone present feels that their sacred law has been sufficiently represented.

The themes of other mortuary rituals overlap with those of primary burial, again being concerned with the journey of the soul, the pollution associated with death and the expression of kinship relations to the dead person and his or her group. However as time passes, the emphasis shifts from those themes that are associated with the immediate fate of the soul and the pollution of death, to the more transcendent themes of the transfer of spiritual power from generation to generation, the spiritual constitution of the social group and the relations among groups.

In the past, such shifts in emphasis coincided with changes in the state of the body.[3] The body after death, when the flesh is still on it, is referred to by Yolngu as 'still alive'. The treatment of the body is in the hands of specialists; it is an object of great danger, in particular to close relatives of the dead and to women, and is kept in the male realm. It is spiritually powerful but its sacred status is ambiguous: it is still alive and hence still partly human, and by definition not part of the ancestral domain. It is referred to as *mokuy* which allies it with a set of spirit beings who haunt certain places and can be dangerous to the living. After a few months the body is disinterred and the remaining flesh stripped from the bones in a ceremony called *bukubut* (literally head hit).This operation in itself is considered to be highly dangerous and remains in the male realm, but once the bones are cleaned and washed they become safe: the bones freed from the flesh are finally dead. Within a week or so of their final cleaning they are handed over to female relatives to be carried around from camp to camp before being returned to male relatives for the final ceremony, consisting of their deposition in a hollow-log coffin. In the hollow-log ceremony, the bones are deposited sometimes with those of other relatives in a tall painted hollow log which is then either buried or left upright to be destroyed by the action of wind, rain, and fire. In this ceremony the bones are being transformed into their sacred state, in which they are analogous to the sacred objects of the clan. They are referred to as the sacred core of a person's being, yet unlike the sacred objects of the clan which are referred to as 'the bones of the clan', they are spiritually inert and of no danger. In

contrast to the dead body, which is spiritually powerful but profane, the bones are a spiritually inert form of the sacred. The process of making them sacred through the mortuary rituals has drained them of their power, and directed their power (the power that the person had in life and through the decay of their body) to other sources. Indeed rather than being sacred, it may be that they are better conceived of as a sign of the sacred now that the soul has departed from the earthly remains. This exchange of power between the dead and the living is one of the processes underlying the exchange relations involved in Yolngu mortuary rituals.

The political context of Yolngu mortuary rituals

Yolngu rituals are major political events. Political action is required to ensure that they are properly organised and indeed so that they can take place at all; and the ritual itself provides a context for polical action and for achieving political ends. In mortuary rituals, the dead body is both a problem and a resource: problem in that it must be diposed of and grief managed; resource in that it provides the opportunity for exercising control over the set of people who have an interest in the body. The spiritual resource of the body will be used to support subsequent political action and to legitimise it.[4]

Clan versus kindred: the dialectics of Yolngu social organisation

In recent years, two almost diametrically opposed models of Yolngu social organisation have developed. The majority view is that Yolngu society is clan-based, the minority one is that the central component of Yolngu society is the kindred. The latter view is most explicit in the most recent writings of Shapiro, but receives some support from Keen.

The clan-based model proposes that individuals exist as members of patrilineal clans and that their rights and responsibilities are a consequence of their clan membership. Yolngu ritual is interpreted by Warner, partly along conventional Durkheim lines, as reinforcing group solidarity and establishing the relations among groups. Analyses of Yolngu kinship and marriage system in alliance terms has also often assumed a clan-based society (Lévi-Strauss 1969; Maddock 1969). However, it would be wrong to see this earlier

body of literature on Yolngu social organisation as being entirely determined by the clan-based model; a rigid clan-based model often sat uneasily with much of Warner's and Berndt's ethnography. Implicit in much of their writing was a quite different way of conceptualising Yolngu political organisation, in terms of rights deriving from both patrilineal and matrilineal connections, and the organisation of relationships on the basis of the kindred (Hiatt 1965). This aspect of Yolngu social organisation has been emphasised in the recent works of Shapiro almost to the exclusion of clan organisation. Thus Shapiro and others have argued that marriage relations, rather than being negotiated between groups, result from the exercising by individuals of rights that they gain through descent and through negotiation with matrikin. According to this model, rituals involve the exercising of rights by members of both moieties, and the organisation of ritual involves individuals who skilfully manipulate and persuade a wide body of kin, with differential rights in a particular body of ceremonial law, to join them in putting on a performance of the ritual concerned. The organisation of ritual is not based on decision-making at the level of clan; rather it is dependent on the entrepreneurship of the individual and his or her ability to activate his kindred and other personal linkages with relevant individuals.

The Yolngu system seen from this perspective bears more than a passing resemblance to the classic model of the Melanesian 'Big Man' system, in which individuals in fortunate positions (with extensive kindred and useful affinal ties) can create a position of relative power for themselves by becoming nodal points of more generalised networks of interaction, and by taking upon themselves the responsibility of organising events that others desire, such as regional religious performances. In the most extreme form of this kind of argument, the clan almost disappears as a meaningful unit of political organisation since it ends up with no rights, no corporate identity, no collective responsibility and no criteria for membership. It takes the form of a shadow in the background whose main purpose seems to be to mislead the analyst.

While the earlier Durkheim model is clearly inadequate both as a theoretical construct and as a description that accords with ethnographic fact, its complete dismissal is premature. The shadow of the clan is cast in part by the way the Yolngu talk about their

society, their affiliation as individuals, the motivations for their actions, the distribution of rights in sacred law and in land, the proper way of organising a ceremony and so on. While it is clearly wrong to equate ideology with practice, self conception is part of the process of structuration.

The consistent division of people into named sets is part of regular Yolngu practice and Yolngu can provide principles for group membership and the allocation of rights. The fact that groups change and are reconstituted over time, that relations between them which are asserted to be immutable prove not to be, the fact that the stated rules are not followed in all cases, that rules are manipulated and certain events masked, are all things that have to be taken into account and built into models of social process and action. They are not grounds for dismissing groups, thus defined, as a significant level of social organisation; groups cannot simply be reduced to the principles of their formation.[5] The resolution of the opposition between clanship and kindred is to see them as complementary components of Yolngu political organisation. It is necessary to ensure that the conceptualisation of the former allows for the operation of the latter.[6] Clans must therefore be seen as emergent, contextualised, and transforming, rather than as rigid, pre-existing components of social structure that are simultaneously the determinants and the objectives of their members. Indeed it is precisely the fuzzy nature of Yolngu clans that has persuaded Keen to simply use the word group rather than clan, which he sees as being indelibly contaminated with the connotations of a determining bounded corporate entity clearly inappropriate in the Australian case.

The clan: ideology and dynamics

Clans have a place in Yolngu ideology. The system of clan organisation derives from the ancestral past. The Dreamtime beings who created the landscape through their actions handed on their sacred law to the human groups who succeeded them in the land. The sacred law was an entitlement for the groups to occupy the lands that the beings created. Its transfer from one generation to the next provided both a spiritual resource for the group and a means of asserting its right to occupy the land. As Williams has shown, it is not so much that the clans own the land and sacred

objects; rather the clans themselves come into being through their ownership of land and sacred objects. The unspoken corollary of this is that they cease to exist when they no longer exercise control over the land and the sacra. Over time, clans rise and fall with the exigencies of the demography of a hunting and gathering society, which in turn articulates with and is subject to political process.

Political processes operate on the clan from within and without. Internally, again according to ideology, clans are governed by principles of generation and primogeniture. These principles inevitably come into conflict at times when the surviving members of the senior generation are around the same age as the junior members of the next generation. Members of the clan are frequently divided on the basis of affinal links, with one sub-lineage marrying into one set of clans while another marries into a different set. As clans grow larger, the potential for internal conflict and division increases. Because rights in marriage depend to a considerable extent on matrilineal links, different segments of the clan may grow independent of the others, and implicitly have the potential to reproduce themselves as independent units. When conflict reaches a certain level, that potential may be realised with the fission of the clan and the creation of new units (Morphy 1990). A clan or clan segment is threatened externally when other clans have grown rapidly and could take over its territory, as a result of its extinction or incorporation into another group. Extinction need not be achieved by physical violence. It may be effected by denying the clan the wives that enable it to reproduce itself.

Keen (1982) has shown how individual aspiration articulates with the system of clan organisation. An individual can use his position within a clan and his links with other clans along the matriline to gain status and power through marrying many women, and creating a network of obligation and exchange that focuses on himself. In such ways an individual may achieve dominance not only over his clan but over a regional network. At the time of first contact with Europeans there were, spread throughout north-east Arnhem Land, a number of men who married a large number of wives (upwards of twenty) and who literally gained dominant positions of reproduction within the regional network. Such men and the clans or clan segments that they dominated not only played

a leading role in the politics of clan organisation, but indeed influenced the way in which the 'Dreamtime instituted' pattern was reproduced in the generation or two following their deaths. I have shown elsewhere in 1988 and 1990 how cosmology was made to fit social order while the illusion that it had a determining role was maintained.

However, although certain individuals had a major role in the reproduction of the regional system, one must be careful not to exaggerate the control that even powerful individuals exercised over other members of their society. In most cases collective action was consensual and dependent on persuasion rather than coercion. 'Big Men' illustrate the extent to which the reproduction of the clan system involved individuals acting in their own interests, activating relations of kindred that cut across many groups, with the clan as part of the background to their actions. People were concerned with rights in sacra and land, but they did not necessarily act in the interests of the membership of the clan as a corporate group, and indeed very often they acted against the interests of other clan members. However there was a continuous process whereby people were divided into groups, and links were established or asserted between those groups, a set of ancestral beings, and a number of areas of land; and this process was part of the structuration which resulted in the reproduction of the regional system and provided the framework for individual action.

The important role that individuals play in the reproduction of clans and the establishment of relations among clans is part of the reason why Yolngu mortuary rituals are such important events. The structure of relations which has been created through an individual's life is ruptured by his or her death, especially if that death occurs in the prime of life. If the nexus of relations has been created by an individual maximally exploiting rights at the expense of others, there is often no single individual who can step directly into the position of the deceased and keep the networks intact. There is, in a very real sense, a power gap, and the filling of that gap is likely to be the object of political action.

Although succession at the individual or group level can be framed in terms of quite precise principles and procedures, in reality succession in Yolngu society is a highly complex process both

conceptually and in practice. Principles and procedures are bases for making claims, persuading others, legitimising outcomes, and creating continuities. The process of succession may involve the transformation of existing relationships and the creation of new alliances rather than the simple transfer of authority from one individual to the next, or of land from one group to another. An individual's power and position exist through such factors as affinal ties, demographic circumstance, individual ambition, and the exigencies of fortune and political process. Some of these factors, for example affinal ties, may actively work against a simple process of succession by creating a potentially divided set of claimants. A position that depends on individual skills and circumstances is not necessarily one that is ever going to be neatly filled. It may simply cease to exist as others take over positions in the regional system by the adjustment of spheres of power and influence. This may explain in part why clans which appear to have a position of pre-eminence and almost unchallenged power in one generation can apparently lose it in the next.

Nonetheless, continuities exist. Just as some factors operate to dissolve the position occupied by a powerful person, other factors operate to maintain the position through establishing continuities within the political process. The authority and influence of the leader of a particular clan is never going to be identical from one generation to the next since the position of clan leaders and other 'Big Men' with respect to one another depends at any one point in time on individual factors such as spread of influence, ritual authority, affinal ties and so on. Nevertheless, the concept of clan leader, backed up by an ideology of succession to rights in land and the transfer of authority from the ancestral past, is a powerful component of the Yolngu political process.

The death of a clan leader creates a power gap, providing an opportunity for those who aspire to achieve a similar status to make a claim. It also creates a significant absence in a network of reciprocal relations that, although focused on the individual, are predicated on broader structural linkages that do not simply cease to exist at his or her death. Indeed, it is possible for someone to succeed more or less directly to the position of the dead person and for the network of relations to continue to change rather than

rupture. A younger brother may inherit an older brother's position and maintain the affinal network through the simple mechanism of inheriting his wives; or an elder son may take over from his father, and indeed may inherit many of his widows (though not his actual mother). The existence of such principles of succession may encourage succession within the clan and the maintenance of the clan as a corporate unit, more so than in the classic model of New Guinea bigmanship, but the principles are in no sense the simple determinants of future states. The principles of primogeniture (widow inheritance, the support from sister's sons and, more abstractly, ancestral precedent) are all bases for making claims over people, and much can be adjusted retrospectively by maskings and forgetting. Therefore unless matters have been sorted out beforehand during a long period of senility before death, or through gradual loss of power through extreme old age, mortuary rituals for an important man are going to provide a major context for political action.

The logic of the political dynamics of Yolngu mortuary rituals is that there should be a correlation between the size and significance of mortuary rituals and the status of the individual who has died. This is reflected in real events. Donald Thomson wrote in his field notes on 29 July 1937: 'if a man could but follow all that takes place when a Yarrkomirri (important) man dies he would understand almost all of the culture of these people.' 'Important' men with many wives and relatives have major funerals, and women and children tend to have smaller funerals of shorter duration, held closer to their death. However the correlation is not a simple one: frequently women and older children will have major ceremonies held for them, and even a simple Yolngu funeral is quite an elaborate event.

Politics is a factor in all Yolngu funerals, not just in those of important men. Any death brings into focus a network of connections centred on the individual that are the building blocks of political power in Yolngu society. Particularly in the case of men but also in the case of women, the relations severed by death, and the rights ceded by death provide the potentials for the acquisition of power and influence, and are subject to renegotiation and reallocation. Rights of bestowal must be renegotiated, seniority in a clan or among a set of sisters' sons must be re-established and so on.

However, the significance of a death depends not only on the status of the individual, but also on relationships within the wider society, the particular circumstances of the death and the extent of the emotions invested in the individual. When relationships within clans or between clans are tense, then the death of any member of the clan may bring matters to a head, and in such circumstances the funeral will be a major event. In most cases where the death is the result of violence or thought to have been the result of sorcery, then political factors will again come to the fore. Political and emotional factors often interact and build on each other. The death of a young man in particular evokes feelings of regret at the passing of life, at the missed future and the ceremonies he will not go through. People will say that an elaborate funeral is necessary so that he can experience in death the ceremonies that he would have gone through had he lived, and so that in death he can accumulate some of the spiritual power he would have gained in life. In such a case mortuary rituals are a speeding up of life as well as the management of death. Such emotions are likely to be felt by most families on the death of a teenage child. Persuading others to participate is the problem, and in many cases a child's funeral is a relatively small affair. Yet if the child comes from a large clan, is the eldest of his siblings, or if there is tension with another group, then the emotions seem to be spread wider and it is possible to hold a major event.

Quite independently of the particular circumstances of the death, funerals provide people with the opportunity to use their ritual; that is, to use their sacred law in public contexts, thereby demonstrating their rights to it and their knowledge and control of it, and to creating obligations through its use. An apparently insignificant death can result in a major funeral through the decision of a powerful person to make an event of it. This too is conditioned by other factors, and is likely to increase the intensity of a major event rather than to transform the nature of a minor one.

Gift and Exchange: responsibility and power

Yolngu society represents an almost archetypical case of a system of generalised exchange. Most transactions involve the movement of an

object in one direction. If there is a return from the same person or group, it is very much a delayed one. More typically, exchange relations are not reciprocal and the balances among individuals are ones that work out over the whole network of exchange. In the case of material goods and ritual obligations, particular obligations depend on relationships of kinship and clanship. As I have argued elsewhere (Morphy 1978), rights in marriage and sacred law tend to be unidirectional, linking individuals and groups in a chain which may eventually turn back on itself in the case of marriage at least, but only after a minimum of six links. Yolngu exchange relations are minimally triadic, a person or group receiving from one direction and giving in another.

In mortuary rituals, and Yolngu ritual in general, gifts and exchange must be understood in relation to the concepts of responsibility and power. Gifts are framed as responsibilities and exchange involves exchange of power. Although I neither restrict the term 'gift' in this analysis to a voluntary transaction, nor simply oppose it to 'responsibility' which is obligatory in nature, a case could be made for saying that the Yolngu themselves do employ this distinction. People talk about the responsibility of certain categories of kin for organising aspects of a funeral in terms of obligation. The mother's mother's group takes over the body and is expected to use its sacred law on behalf of its daughter's child. However certain other groups will be said to give their sacred law to a person as a sign of their affection for him or her, and any obligation is denied. The objects involved in both cases, however, are the same — sacred law — and in reality the obligation is often avoided and the gift frequently expected. More than one MM group could fulfil the role, and it is possible both to compete for the role of 'taking the body', and to opt out.[7] Conversely, a more distantly related group may be persuaded to making a gift, because to do otherwise might result in a breach of relations and accusations of sorcery.

Gift and obligation are co-existing components of the dynamics of Yolngu society, and though a particular event may be seen as one or the other, the two are always complementary. In my analysis of mortuary exchanges I will not deal with gifts and obligations separately since such an exercise would be arbitrarily typological,

but it is important to bear in mind that particular actions connote both.

Gifts to the body gifts; from the body

The ideas of giving to, and receiving from, a dead body are quite consistent with the way Yolngu talk about mortuary exchanges. To the Yolngu death is an extended process, involving in the early stages both the active and passive participation of the dead person. If Yolngu exchanges are minimally triadic as I have argued, what does the triad consist of in mortuary rituals? Exchanges in mortuary rituals involve relationships between individuals and groups; those between individuals providing a basis though not an exclusive one for group participation. At the group level exchange takes place between clans or, in the case of larger or divided clans, clan segments. The key relations are structured matrilineally, from mother's mother to daughter's daughter by way of mother, (male) ego and daughter's child. In eastern Arnhem Land such structures operate at a sociocentric level, though the sociocentric relations are always emergent, to an extent context dependent, and liable to change through the politics of clanship. Such alignments are one of the products of bigmanship and consequently both a subject and an object of mortuary rituals.

Four main categories of object are involved in mortuary exchanges: *mardayin* (sacred law), body parts, weapons and food. *Mardayin* in this context refers specifically to those material manifestations of the ancestral past that are the property of clans and which form the substance of ceremonies: songs, dances, paintings and ritual objects.

Gifts of mardayin

Mortuary rituals predominantly require the performance of *mardayin* elements belonging to the dead person's moiety. The journey of the spirit, for example, involves the construction of a ritual journey from the place of death to the soul's destination. That journey conceptually involves summoning up ancestral forces from places on the way to transfer the soul from one location to the next. The MM clan will take a leading role in determining the journey and

will use its *mardayin*. The dead person's own clan will also be involved, particularly during the later stages of the ceremony as the journey moves towards its conclusion. But many other clans of the same moiety whose lands can be connected together on the same journey also have a role. Indeed the final route is a compromise between the geographical position of the respective places and the willingness and motivation of people to take part. A particular detour on the journey may be there precisely because a clan wanted to make its *mardayin* available. A possible route may not be followed because the owners were unwilling for a dance to be performed.[8]

The journey of the soul thus depends on the use of ancestral power by members of clans other than that of the deceased, an act that is sometimes a gift, sometimes an obligation. People can say they are singing for their dead relative or giving an object or a painting to help the soul on its way. The rationale for the gift can be seen from the perspective of the donor or the recipient. From the donor's perspective the gift of *mardayin* is said to show kinship with the dead, to show relationship with his or her clan, to show that no harm was wished on the person and to show the person love. As far as the person's clan is concerned, the gift emphasises the relationships between clans, focussed on a particular member.

From the perspective of the dead, it is useful to look at the gifts of *mardayin* in terms of the spiritual constitution of the person. The soul's journey is accomplished by utilising relationships of descent and ritual connections that created him or her as a social person and gave him or her spiritual identity or, in the case of young people, had the potential to do so. In organising someone's funeral, people 'look back to where the person came from', through his mother to his mother's mother. The dominant direction of the *mardayin* is from mother's mother's clan to ego's clan, with other *mardayin* being integrated as tributaries along the way. A key Yolngu metaphor is that singing is the coming together of the sacred waters that constitute a spiritual line of descent for the person. The *mardayin* belonging to clans that are connected by descent *from* the dead person, the reciprocal set associated with clans that are [Sister's] daughter's child to the deceased, are seldom utilised in mortuary rituals. These relations are central to the constitution of the [Z]DC but not to ego. The MM[B]/[Z]DC relationship is referred to by Warner,

appropriately, as the backbone of Yolngu society: the body part used by Yolngu to signify the relationship is the backbone. The metaphor is a particularly apt one since the backbone consists of a series of bones connected in a chain, a chain of MM[B]/[Z]DC relationships, in which each link is made up of two relatively independent relationships which only retrospectively form a continuous chain of connection. Looked at in temporal terms, the MM[B] is always logically prior to the [Z]DC. As Ian Keen has suggested 'put more simply *mardayin* are ancestral and MM are ancestral too'. The Yolngu alliance system, in incorporating the two relationships in a marriage exchange cycle, threatens to subvert this temporal order and make the MM[B] relationship contingent on the [Z]DC. However from the perspective of the use of *mardayin* in mortuary rituals, the focus is on the production of ego through descent rather than the relationships that flow from him (or her). These latter relationships are the subject of gifts 'from the body'.

At a funeral, the spiritual life of the deceased is presented in an authorised form. The person is placed in the context of his or her kindred. The groups that perform at the ceremony occupy structural positions that accord with their significance in that person's life as it is being interpreted at its end; they are MM[B], or [Z]DC or M or Z to each other with respect to that person. The political significance of this representation of the deceased is considerable. It involves a public statement of relationships that will subsequently be relevant to the group or subgroup identified with the deceased, and an assertion concerning which is the main MM[B] group responsible for his line.

Although the *mardayin* used is almost exclusively that of the dead person's moiety, the *mardayin* of the opposite moiety comes into play in certain contexts. Firstly, when the body is placed in the coffin, *mardayin* objects such as sacred string, pigments, or tassels from a dilly bag may be buried with it. These may be given by members of either moiety and are said to help the body on its journey. Secondly, if an old man (or perhaps woman though I am uncertain about this), is senior ZC to a particular clan, one of that clan's sacred objects can be buried with him. Such 'gifts of *mardayin*' emphasise the wider kinship system in which the person is embedded, though the explanation that I was given emphasised more the person's contribution

to his mother's clan than theirs to him: 'he looked after these objects during his life so he will look after them in his death'. Nonetheless, this fits in with the general pattern of gifts to the body in that it is a gift that reflects the constitution of ego through lines of descent. It is the *mardayin* of an ascending generation, representing waters that flow towards ego rather than away from him.

I will deal with other gifts to the body only briefly. Material gifts of cloth, food and tobacco are given to various of the participants and to the corpse. Gifts to the corpse include rolls of cloth for constructing the shade in which the body lies, for wrapping the body, or sometimes for burying with the body. Such gifts are said to make the body and the occasion beautiful, and echo strongly Indonesian mortuary practices associated with the Macassans. They are mainly provided by female clan members and affines and are frequently stored in preparation for the event. Tobacco is sometimes buried with the body and may also be left in certain places as an offering to the dead person. The *mokuy* spirit of the person is thought to haunt relatives in the months after a death, and one of the ways to placate it is by providing it with cigarettes and tobacco. These too are usually provided by close kin. Food provided by people coming to a funeral is for the immediate family as well as those who are preparing the body and unable to obtain food for themselves. The responsibility is both an individual one and also on occasions the subject of a formal presentation on behalf of a family.

Gifts 'from the body'

The main material gifts 'from the body', or rather from those who take charge of the funeral, are items of material culture — bundles of spears, pieces of broken objects and items of clothing — and things belonging to the body — bits of bone, hair, and dried flesh. Not all of these gifts are made today, but they are still relevant to understanding the symbolism of mortuary rituals. Hair was cut shortly after death and handed over to members of the mother's clan, to be made into hair-string. In the case of a man this was subsequently returned to the deceased man's clan to be given to his son for use as one of the tassels of his sacred dilly bag. The hair, though sacred and emotionally charged, is not thought to be polluting or spiritually dangerous; it is the body part that undergoes least physical

transformation after death and almost pre-exists in its final state. It is the only part of the dead person that can almost immediately be handled by close relatives. The delayed exchange between a person and his father's mother's group entailed by the transaction can be interpreted partly as a means of extending the emotional link between a person's father and his father's mother's clan down a generation, and perhaps thus encouraging continuing marriages between the same clans.

All the other gifts 'from the body' involve dangerous or potentially dangerous objects, and unlike the majority of gifts to the body they involve individuals rather than groups. In the western part of the region Thomson reported that dried flesh from the buttocks could be handed over to relatives in order to bring them success in hunting. However he did not specify which category of relatives were beneficiaries. Pieces of bone, in particular finger bones, were wrapped in bark and given to a wide category of relatives particularly those of descending lines from ego, including [sister's] sons. Certain possessions of the deceased (in the west of the area including the bark hut in which he lived) could be broken up into pieces and some of the pieces could also be distributed widely: 'The broken pieces are given most frequently to relations in the categories of MF/FMB, MMB, FZS, MBS, ZS'.[9] Certain other material culture objects, notably dugout canoes (or today outboard motor boats) that are too valuable to be destroyed, were handed over after purification, to the MM[B] clan to be used by them. Spears are the other main gift following a funeral. They are given by the dead person's clan to ZSs for their use and for wider distribution along the matriline.

Most of the gifts from the body are given as tokens of vengeance and sources of power to enable acts of aggression. The exceptions are the handing over of valuable objects to the MM[B] group and of hair to the members of the mother's group. The pieces of bone and broken possessions are frequently handed over secretly by senior clansmen of the deceased as a means of pushing the recipients into acts of vengeance. It is understood that recipients of such gifts will join in the avenging expedition against those blamed for the death, or will at some later stage seize the opportunity to kill a member of the group accused. In this way, mortuary practices allow the network of relatives focused on the dead person to act in his

absence, seeking vengeance for his death, and thereby contributing to the maintenance of the coalition of forces and regional oppositions that were effective in his life.

The giving of spears to sister's sons can also be explained in part in these terms. After one ceremony a senior man explained to me that the people you give spears to are the people whom your daughters marry. The giving of the spear was a sign that the relationship between the lines concerned would be continued: 'It is like we get food from our mothers, like drinking your mother's milk, or getting blood from your mother'. Spears are used as a sign of bestowal in other contexts in Yolngu society, and my conversation with this man revealed many of the connotations. Spears provide food, cause blood to flow, signify hunting and eating. Blood and food come from the mother, and hunting and eating signify sexual relations between men and women. However the giving of spears has another set of meanings that were acted out on the ceremonial ground during a memorial ceremony held by the same man for his deceased brother. The spears were used in a dance that represented a *makarata*, an ordeal by spearing which can follow a death. Immediately preceding the *makarata* dance were a series of dances that referred to conflict among clans and alluded to particular disputes. Other dances represented the spearing of the flesh of the victim of an avenging expedition. Sister's sons were among the main people from whom the members of an avenging expedition were drawn. They were among the people most likely to receive a wrapped token and to be pushed into avenging a death. The giving of spears to the sister's sons signifies this potential of their relationship to the dead person.

The gift is both a sign of a relationship and a reminder of an obligation. The relationship of mother's brother to sister's son is an important one in Yolngu marriage relationships, since a man marries a relative who is classified as MMD and frequently is his actual MMD. I have argued elsewhere that at the level of group relations, Yolngu marriage involves the relationship between groups classified as MM[B] and [Z]DC with respect to one another. In effect, groups of the same moiety operate agreements not to compete with each other for women. Nonetheless, any particular marriage will only occur with the agreement of the wife's father (the mother's brother) and a

debt to him is recognised. Sister's sons are the people outside the clan who are most obligated to it. They belong to a number of different clans of the opposite moiety and are a part of its collective kindred. Since much warfare revolved around rivalry between clans of the same moiety competing for wives from clans of the opposite moiety, this coalition of sister's sons, though based on individual connections to the clan, could clearly play an important role in maintaining its position within a regional system.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to systematise the overall pattern of exchanges by linking the symbolism of mortuary rituals with the process of the reproduction of Yolngu society. Gifts to the body take the form of *mardayin* (ancestral law). They are gifts of ancestral words, paintings, dances and sacred objects. They enable the (soul of the) person both to experience those ancestral events and to become incorporated within the ancestral domain. Ultimately the dead cease to be part of the living present, and become a memory in the ancestral past. The use of the *mardayin* implies the agreement of the clans involved (or acknowledges the authority of the decision-maker) since otherwise conflict would result. The gifts come primarily from clans from whom the person is descended, out of whom he is produced: his MM[B]'s clan, his M's clan and his own clan. However other clans of the same moiety, in particular those which are in structurally equivalent positions, being classificatory MM clans and Z clans, are also likely to use their *mardayin* on the dead person's behalf. The gesture is not aimed solely at the deceased individual, but at his or her clan.[10]

The purpose of gifts to the body is to show an absence of hostility and a desire for a continuation of positive relationships. Relations among clans are in a dynamic state, dependent at any point in time on individual relations and the exercise of power by individuals. However, the particular structure of relations is much wider than the network forged by any one individual, and even in the case of a 'Big Man' who has structured the network in his own interests over a period of many years, there will be many others who are interested in maintaining a similar structure of relations beyond his

death. Mortuary rituals provide the opportunity for groups to place themselves in a structure of relatedness which immediately represents their relationship to a particular dead individual, but which can also be read to represent much more than that. The initial mortuary rituals provide a context in which the interests and relationships which are represented and activated are in the dynamic state in which they existed at the time of the person's death. Groups and individuals vie with one another to establish a position in the dead person's life that will set the stage for future action. As always in Yolngu ritual, the situation is presented in terms of continuity with previous states of the system: continuing to marry as before, continuing to be related as *maari* [MM] to *gutharra* [DC], continuing to follow ancestral precedent. But the decision as to which group should take responsibility for the body, which sister's sons are present and who should receive possessions, are subject to contemporary politics.

There is an individual component in gifts to the body, and it would be wrong to over-emphasise the corporate aspect of the process. Although an individual is unlikely to be able to perform a dance without the tacit permission and cooperation of others, persuading others to include it may rest on individual motivations, political or emotional. Yolngu ritual action provides plenty of room for individual gestures, both in the content of song verses and the form of ritual action, and in the energy and skill put into performance. By demonstrating virtuosity in dancing, an individual may 'give to the body', yet at the same time affirm and legitimise the knowledge that he has acquired in the past. The performance may be enhanced by personal relationship to the deceased and by the expression of deeply felt emotion. The giving and taking from the body is not a rigid structural opposition; it is a flexible mechanism which is balanced in a particular direction — from corporate to more individual relationships —- but which can be manipulated according to circumstances.[11]

Gifts from the body, in contrast to gifts to the body, consist primarily of attributes of the person that are personal rather than corporate: his or her bones, flesh, hair, weapons, and personal possessions. Most of these objects are dangerous and of ambiguous spiritual status. They are dangerous substances halfway between life

and death, neither human nor ancestral, associated with vengeance, aggression, and killing. These objects tend to be given to a wide range of kin, but in particular to affines and members of descending generations. They are given not to clans, except in the exceptional case of the giving of a dugout canoe to the MM group, but to individuals who are tied by obligation, matrifiliation, or opportunism to the dead person's clan. They represent in many cases potentially active ties that may produce continuing alliances, and that may result in the perpetuation, as a structure, of the network of relationships within which the dead person was embedded. The gifts from the body are given to the individual members of the kindred and can be used for individual purposes associated with sorcery, magic and vengeance. In contrast, the *mardayin* are separated conceptually as matters of corporate rights and group rituals.

Some gifts from the body, notably hair, are less spiritually dangerous than others and are quickly transformed into a state of *mardayin*. They take on an identity associated with a continuing clan. In some cases (bones) it takes a lot longer, and in the case of flesh the transformation never occurs. Hair is transformed into hair string and becomes a component of the dead person's son's sacred dilly bag. The dilly bag conforms to an ancestral pattern associated with the clan and is thought of as part of the clan's *mardayin*. The dilly bag is a symbolic representation of the individual's clan identity and the incorporation of the hair string signifies the clan's continuity over time.

The rest of the body undergoes a process of transformation over time from dangerous, live, contaminated, and spiritually ambiguous, to safe, dead, inert, and sacred (but powerless). After the bones have been dug up and thoroughly washed they lose much of their danger. The cleaned bones are left for a few weeks and then they can be handed over (by sister's sons) to female relatives of the deceased — wives or mothers — to be carried around in a bark container for several years. Finally the bones are placed in a hollow log coffin, painted with designs from the person's own clan. The whole process involves the dispersal and reconstitution of the person, not as a living being but as someone who has been reincorporated into the ancestral past. The bones are placed within the body of a hollow log coffin, which in turn is covered by the skin of the

painting. The focus of the hollow log coffin ceremony is on the identity of the person's clan and the prime organisational role shifts from the MM clan to the person's own clan. The movement is from the dispersal of the bones and the body to its containment within the hollow log coffin. The soul has ended its journey and returned to its ancestral home.

It is productive to see the whole process of Yolngu mortuary rituals and the exchanges which take place in terms of a movement through time that involves the interplay of structure and process. The gifts *to* the body imply a pre-existing structure, an agreed state of affairs. They focus on the spiritual constitution of the person as the product of lines of descent represented by, and linking in with, the *mardayin* of particular clans. The reality is that such states of the system are always immanent and temporary, but ritual allows the possibility of presenting them as ancestrally pre-ordained states of affairs. The funeral is a journey across an ancestrally demarcated landscape that groups of people both come from and reproduce.

Gifts *from* the body are bestowed on individuals and involve the network or sets of networks that extend from the clan to the world beyond. This world can be represented in terms of the relationship between social groups and place, but is actually constituted through individual ties of marriage and descent that give a particular and personal construction to the more abstract ordering of things. Gifts *from* the body are a means of organising the kindreds centred around a particular set of people, including the dead person. They activate certain relationships for future action, for future marriage agreements, exchange ceremonies and so on. The activated kindred of a dead person may seem a contradiction in terms, and indeed this shows the weakness of Shapiro's model of Yolngu social organisation. Kindreds are a clan resource partly because they are always framed in terms of structures that are wider than the individual and which involve the immanent, emergent, but structuring, level of organisation represented by the clan. Ideologically the kindred is something that is produced. The Yolngu kindred is not ego-focussed but constituted out of past relations and hence it is in other people's interests that it should be maintained. The exchanges are part of the process for maintaining and reproducing these relationships but they also provide opportunities for restructuring.

The social process associated with mortuary rituals is paralleled and integrated with a symbolic process which involves an exchange of power between the human and ancestral dimension, via the medium of the decay and dispersal of the body. Analytically, it is productive to see the imagery and emotions associated with death and the decaying body as providing sources of power in both the human and the ancestral domain. In these exchanges the spiritual power associated with the person is brought under control and relocated, but not in a uniform way. The gifts of *mardayin* to the body are part of the process whereby one dimension of its spiritual power (the *birrimbirr* or soul) is returned to the ancestral domain by being reincorporated within a spiritual reservoir in the land. Later it may return as a conception spirit or be used in some other way as a mediator with the ancestral domain. The positive emotions associated with the dead person become part of the body of ancestral law associated with particular places and people. The name of the deceased again becomes that of an ancestor, a name from the ancestral past, the hair is woven into clan sacra, the bones become ancestral ones, safe because the spirit is no longer with them but has re-entered the ancestral domain. Name and bones have become signs without history incorporated as part of a continuing cosmic structure. History has meanwhile been the subject of a complementary process. Bones taken from the body in its live state, possessions contaminated by their association with the dead man, become active agents, sources of power for vengeance, mnemonics of the struggles and rivalries that were part of the dead person's life. The tokens condense the power of decay and the negative emotions associated with death. Over time as the conflicts work themselves out, and as the flesh and bone desiccate, the tokens lose their power, which disperses into nothingness.

This division of spiritual power into ancestral-eternal and earthly-temporary is by no means absolute, but it is a structuring principle. Death and decay provide images of ancestral power for the *mardayin* as well as for vengeance. For example, ancestral forces can take the form of maggots and the core of sacred objects represents the bones of the *wangarr* (ancestral beings). Moreover, categories of spirit being exist that do not fit in with this dualistic division between cosmic and earthly spiritual powers. The logic of the separation of

the power associated with the dead body implies the logic of their connection. There is an interpenetration of the spiritual and human domains, but overall mortuary rituals operate to separate out the domains as much as possible and to return the dead person to the generating neutrality of the cosmos.

The central role of mortuary rituals, the way they ramify in time and space, can be explained in part by the fact that they provide a major theatre for Yolngu social reproduction. They provide an extended arena for action, but also allow for adjustments that reflect changing political relations. They also provide a means whereby the emotions generated by death, the conflicts brought to the surface, the anxiety and the aggression, are themselves structured and processed into a variety of different forms of expression associated in turn with different aspects of social process. The dangerous contagious substances that emanate from the dead person are used to give power to individuals to exact vengeance on his behalf. These substances are employed behind the scenes, their use half sanctioned by those in authority, who are acting in the interests of others but at the same time negotiating a place in the system and persuading others to give wives. Over time the dead person becomes *mardayin*, and the objects that represent him become part of the outwardly unchanging, corporate identity of the clan.

Totemism Now and Then: A Natural Science of Society?

John Morton

The relationship between masculinity, sexuality and power has been a recurrent theme in Les Hiatt's work. Although his appreciation of this nexus was initially shaped through the influence of Sydney philosopher John Anderson, whose coterie of freethinking followers engaged it in a quite distinctive way (Docker 1974, 131–55), it became unmistakably anthropological in Hiatt's hands, emerging through ethnographic and comparative studies of Aboriginal kinship, marriage, politics and religion. Always critical, undogmatic and theoretically eclectic, Hiatt built on the British tradition (transplanted to Sydney) and informed his studies through explicit dialogues with structuralism, psychoanalysis and sociobiology. Perhaps these studies can be partially summed up by saying that they are first of all concerned with what it is to be a man — a man related to women and to other men through ties of kinship and affinity (1965); a man who is father to his children (1988, 1990); a man of competition, standing and knowledge in the larger community (1986a); and a man who bears the marks of having become a man through the painful

experiences of initiation (1971, 1975b). This last theme is my primary focus through the subject of totemism, another phenomenon which Hiatt (1969) has pondered.

Responding to Lévi-Strauss's 'attempt to inflate the cognitive aspects of totemism' (Hiatt 1969, 90), Hiatt maintains that such an attitude effectively emasculated Aborigines and their totemic systems by neglecting or rejecting Durkheim's (1915) original emphasis on sentiment. As he says: 'Sentiment, as Durkheim correctly saw, is the fuel of totemism, and not, as Lévi-Strauss believes, a waste-product that threatens to clog an alleged rationally conceived global system' (1969, 92). Furthermore, totemism's engaging of the gut level of personal reality is, he suggests, squarely linked to 'intra-specific discriminations of various kinds (sex, rank, territory, etc.)', these being 'a central feature of all vertebrate social life' (1969, 91). He concludes, we need to begin with the assumption that totemic symbols are 'charged with affectivity' (1969, 92) and to see how these symbols are employed in concrete practical situations– 'e.g., periodic affirmation of values, inter-group rivalry, internal crisis' (1969, 92).[1]

These concerns prefigured Hiatt's later embracing of sociobiology but their initial working through in relation to totemism is ironic given Sahlins' (1977, 106) influential critique of sociobiology. This ends with the charge that the discipline is 'a curious form of totemism' confusing culture and nature, and attributing capitalism's 'possessive individualism' to organic forms. Yet there are ironies in Sahlins' work too, given Durkheim's well-known claim that science is born of totemic religion and remains continuous with it. As Lukes (1973, 46) states, in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Durkheim saw in Aboriginal totemism 'a sort of mythological sociology', a genuine understanding of the human condition as a social condition. As it happens, this is a view echoed by Hiatt (although informed by a Freudian perspective) when he argues that totemic myths and rituals in Aboriginal Australia can be understood as 'proto-analytic insights' and 'a form of applied psychology', where unconscious principles 'are transposed to a conscious and collective level for the purposes of social integration and adaptation' (Hiatt 1975a, 16). If these positions were to be taken as even partially true, they would substantially reduce the force of Sahlins' rhetoric:

totemism, scientific or otherwise, would have to be seen not as an immoderate confusion of categories precluding our 'understanding of the human world as meaningfully constituted' (Sahlins 1977, 107), but as the very means by which we might naturally execute that meaningful constitution.

The position I am adopting here is a qualified defence of Hiatt's use of Durkheim's approach. Concentrating on one particular feature of the male initiation cycle of the Aranda Aborigines of Central Australia, I intend to show how making men is a process that relies on totemic symbolisms to forge sentiments that are at once sexual, social and territorial. The rites can be interpreted most readily with principles derived from psychoanalysis, but they can also be seen from alternative points of view, including Durkheim's sociology and sociobiology. The point is however, that none of these theoretical positions can be ultimately privileged. I suggest they are only useful to the extent that they allow us to translate indigenous meanings and make sense of them through metaphorical extension. Thus, to return to the question originally raised by Durkheim, we need to enquire to what extent Aborigines are Freudians, or sociobiologists. It is beside the point to say that Aborigines are none of these because of cultural difference. Understanding others requires identification: it entails our making sense of a set of meanings in terms of its degree of identity with another. I propose, in fact, that Aranda totemism, typified by the procedures of making men, is appropriately construed as a natural science of society — a discipline to which, contra Sahlins, we can look for inspiration concerning the deeper motivations of the meaningfully constituted human world. As we shall see, this natural science of society also implies a 'natural history of fatherhood' (Hiatt 1990).

Making men

Aranda initiation rites are well known in the ethnographic record, due mainly to the accounts of Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen, although there are also major accounts in Carl Strehlow and T.G.H. Strehlow.[2] Broadly speaking, the male initiation cycle moves through four sequences:

- the tossing skywards (*alkiraka iwuma*) rite, when a young novice is thrown into the air by more senior men;

- the rite of circumcision, when the novice witnesses a number of ritual dramas which culminate in the severing of his foreskin;

- the rite of subincision, when new ritual sequences eventuate in the splitting of the penis and the opening of the urethra; and,

- the *ingkura* rite (glossed by Spencer and Gillen as the 'fire ceremony'), which requires that novices over many years be made party to ascending levels of secret knowledge that will finally transform them into true men.

Taken as a whole, this sequence forms a classic cycle of movement in and out of time, with well-marked symbolisms of separation, liminality and reaggregation.[3] Here I intend to concentrate on one cluster of meanings attached to subincision and the *ingkura* rite.

Hiatt has analysed some of Spencer and Gillen's material and has identified the climax of the *ingkura* rite as centring 'around an artefact known as *ambilia-ekura* [*mbiljikara*], the significance of which eluded Spencer and Gillen in [*The Native Tribes of Central Australia*] but was apparent to Spencer by the time he published [*The Arunta*]' (Hiatt 1971, 83). According to Spencer and Gillen the word *ambilia-ekura* literally means 'baby pouch'. 'It is', they say, 'the name actually given to the bag, really the amnion, in which the unborn child lies within the mother, and is used not only in connection with human beings, but also with animals' (1927, 224–5). On this basis, Hiatt refers to the use of the *mbiljikara* in the *ingkura* ceremony as the 'amnion rite', noting that the ritual sequence involves an outright dismissal of women, an appropriation of female reproductive powers by elder men, and a flaunting of this power in front of women (Hiatt 1971, 83–4). He therefore classifies the sequence as a 'uterine rite' (as opposed to a phallic one), as 'secret pseudo-procreation' used to extend 'male mastery into areas [of reproduction] where women have natural advantages'. This expression of 'male arrogance and insecurity', he says, can only be successful if men

'delude themselves and, through secrecy, ... mystify and intimidate ... women' (1971, 88).[4]

A division of men's rituals into phallic and uterine rites is upset by the fact that phallic and uterine symbolisms are often found in the same place and this is a concern to Hiatt. He nevertheless defends the dichotomy, saying that the division 'does not depend on the exclusive presence of one type of symbolism or the other; the criterion, rather, is which form of sexuality (male or female) is being symbolically stressed' (1971, 88). Hiatt appears to require there to be reasonably clear-cut distinctions, so that men can be seen either to magnify male sexuality (in phallic rites) or appropriate female sexuality (in uterine rites). I would suggest that more tolerance of ambiguity might be in order, since the sequence which he characterises as men ' "giving birth" with an ersatz womb' (1971, 84) consists of 'the leader of the ceremony [grasping] the amnion and, with a supporter on either side, [moving] it up and down all night' (1971, 83). A wry allusion to this as a 'weight-lifting marathon' (1971, 83) perhaps deflects attention from the rite's phallic connotations, and the movement of the *mbiljikara* could easily be seen as a marathon of a rather different kind, with the ritual leaders up all night. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that the attribution of female characteristics to the *mbiljikara* is wrong: but it may require us to rework the argument and find a more accommodating environment for composite sexual symbolisms.

As is well known, in the context of Aboriginal men's secret initiation ceremonies, Hiatt states that 'rituals and their supporting myths remove the sexually-maturing male from the family of orientation', (the world of women and children) 'and, through the symbolism of parturition, place him in a situation of dependence upon men, who for the next five or ten years will guide and govern the sublimation of his raw energies' (Hiatt 1975b, 158). In the Aranda case the sequence runs broadly as follows. The tossing skywards rite symbolises youthful egoism and its negation through an image of intrauterine regression and birth: the boy is tossed 'into the belly of the sky' and falls back to the ground. Circumcision, a more elaborate rite, involves the symbolic death associated with the negation of ties to the mother through the severing of the umbilicus. Here, the boy must witness various acts based upon the activities of animals

(most notably kangaroos) symbolising castration and the violent intervention of adult males. Subincision, on the other hand, has a more affectionate tone, bonding junior and senior males through dramatic sequences which totemically symbolise fatherhood as nurturant. Finally, after many years of participation in the *ingkura* ceremony, junior men take over the mantle of authority by over-throwing paternal powers in an unmistakeable enactment of the Freudian primal horde drama. It is in this latter part of initiation that the *mbiljikara* rite has its place — a place which we are now in a position to examine more closely.

Although Hiatt accepts Spencer and Gillen's account of the *mbiljikara* as an amnion, the object's meaning has been the subject of some considerable dispute. Spencer and Gillen were told initially that *mbiljikara* meant 'newly-born child'. Carl Strehlow challenged this, saying that the word meant 'pressed together' (from the verb *mbiljikuma*, meaning 'to be close against'). For the *mbiljikara* is, in fact, a double *tjurunga* (sacred object), two *tjurunga* bound together. Strehlow noted that it is sometimes known as *kwanjatara* ('two in each other') or *mbekuarinja* ('placed together'). When Spencer looked into the matter alone in 1926, he came up with the amnion interpretation, but was then challenged again by Róheim, who in 1929 confirmed Carl Strehlow's information, saying that Spencer's misinformation was probably caused by confusion with the word *ambilja-ingkura* ('child-hole'). Róheim thought the *mbiljikara* to be a double phallus signifying homosexual libido and intergenerational male solidarity, although his evidence was patchy. We may be sure, as Hiatt also argues, that male exclusivity is a vital factor here, but the only thing that we can directly deduce about the *mbiljikara* is that novices are born from it and owe their very lives to its proper ritual manipulation. Should its steady movement diminish during the key operations of the *ingkura* rite, the novices would die. One of Róheim's informants stated that a ritual leader simply and straight-forwardly declared: 'From this tjurunga [*mbiljikara*] I obtained a son' (Róheim 1934, 141).

Aranda mythology explicitly ties the *mbiljikara* with native cat ancestors. These people are, according to one elaborate story related by Spencer and Gillen in 1927 associated with the origin of all things, but they are particularly known as the first performers of *ingkura*

rites and as the originators of subincision. In myth the *mbiljikara* functions as a container of sacred objects and spirits, both of which correspond to the personal identities of individual persons. It is therefore, quite possible that the *mbiljikara* is indeed some form of womb, even if it does have phallic characteristics. The meaning and spirit of this sexual conjunction I think can be arrived at via a zoological detour into the biology of native cats.

Double penises, multiple births and caring fathers

According to Cawte, Central Australian Aborigines (Warlpiri) explain subincision in a number of ways: it is customary, hygenic, necessary for manhood and easy to draw ceremonial blood from, and it increases sexual pleasure, prowess and fertility. However, when it comes to explaining the detailed origins of the rite, Warlpiri men tell ancestral stories which make it clear that the operation is modelled on the bifid marsupial penis — particularly that of the kangaroo. The same appears to be true of the Aranda and the native cat.

Part of the effect of subincision is to broaden the penis and give it the appearance of being doubled. According to Róheim, myth sometimes depicts native cat men as having two penises, and in 1895 Gillen was told by Aranda people that this is an accurate reflection of the native cat's anatomy.[5] In fact, native cats do have two penises, an actual penis and a long 'secondary appendage' (Lawlor 1979, 41), which, like the penis itself, becomes erect during mating. Obviously, the native cat is exceptionally 'good to think' in the context of subincision, although the fact of the double penis does not take us to the limits of its metaphorical significance.

Native cats appear to be extraordinarily fertile animals and one Warlpiri man recently remembered them as making 'big mob piccaninny' (Johnson and Ruff 1982, 223). According to Arnold (1983), the native cat once found in Central Australia (*Dasyurus geoffroii)* has six nipples on a rudimentary and primitive pouch, all of which are occupied during the breeding season. Yet these six young are but a select handful of the original foetuses which may have numbered up to eighteen in the womb, since the native cat is, unusually for Australian marsupials, an animal which superfoetates.[6] It would seem likely that this relates to Spencer and Gillen's

informant's idea of the *mbiljikara* as a baby pouch full of a limitless supply of people, and this raises afresh the question of the possible relationship between phallic/male and uterine/female symbolism in native cat imagery.

The native cat has a mottled coat, mainly dark but with a number of white patches or spots, evocative of the white body designs often carried by the bodies of ceremonial performers. In the rites performed by the native cat ancestors as they wandered across Central Australia, the leader is said to release novices from a pouch for hunting, ceremonies and play according to Strehlow. This in partial imitation of the 'vigorous play' of young native cats (Arnold 1983). From eleven weeks, young animals begin to scramble all over the mother's fur and from fifteen weeks, they leave her pouch altogether. For some time the young remain in the family group and the males begin to outstrip the females in terms of development, becoming up to fifty per cent heavier. And what Aborigines seem to find interesting about this family group is that it contains a mother and a father, since native cat males, unusually for marsupials, take an active interest in caring for their young (Hale and Laughren 1983, 1). This combined and sustained parenting is however, a costly exercise. The play of the young is so vigorous and aggressive that the mother's nipples become greatly stretched, cut and torn, while both parents have copious piles of fur pulled from their bodies. At the end of the breeding season the mature animals are left in a very poor condition (Thomson 1985, 36).

We could summarise all this zoological material by saying that the native cat is an excellent symbol for the combined ideas of reproduction, loss and the intervention of paternity. It is an animal which is prolifically fertile, yet this fertility is at every stage punctuated by difficulty and bought at the price of pain and exhaustion. Such pain and exhaustion happen to be parallel to the deformation of the penis and to paternal care. There is good reason to believe that Aranda people have seen in all this an archetypal model for the intentions of initiation.

Painful realisation

Initiation involves pain: that much is obvious. But there are many dimensions to this pain in the complete ritual cycle. In *alkiraka iwuma*

a boy experiences a fall: at circumcision he suffers a wound at the hands of operators who enact a drama of unbridled fury and aggression. Altogether, this consistent puncturing of the ego is coextensive with a boy's separation from his mother and the exclusive world of women. But subincision sees a dramatic reconciliation of elder and junior men, with discipline being 'tempered by solicitude and comradeship' (Hiatt 1987, 96) and this is the time when native cat symbolism begins to be important. If initiation is in some sense an intervention by and on behalf of the father, then pain and humiliation are only mixed with 'benevolent paternalism' (1987, 96) when the father is recognised as a subincised native cat.

Ingkura rituals are characterised by dramatic acts in which young men aggressively dance around decorated actors demanding that those actors 'give'. Giving here refers to the secret knowledge that is revealed in the acts themselves and is symbolised by the shedding of down in an explicit phallic movement called *alkngantama* (to give seed). The power of the elders, then, is the power of dissemination —- the power to control the pathways along which restricted cult knowledge will travel. Young men are keen to acquire this knowledge and to exhaust the stock that is in the minds of their seniors. This is the very process of making men. Mature males are made through the depletion of the elders, who at the climax of the *ingkura* see the symbols of their power (*tjurunga*) dramatically appropriated or destroyed in a violent display of rebellion by the young men.

The use of the *mbiljikara* (double tjurunga) occurs some time before this dramatic ending, but it is evidently related to the final outcome. The *mbiljikara* is charged with the function of creating men and is variously said to strengthen them, give birth to them, and prevent them from dying. Broadly speaking, we can simply say that the purpose of the *mbiljikara* is to *reproduce* men. It represents the control exercised by males over social reproduction and the price of this control. At the end of the marathon the ritual leaders appear tired and haggard, like spent native cats.

The *mbiljikara* episode of the *ingkura* is prefaced by a scene of indescribable confusion when the young men run towards the women's camp in a mock raid. They suddenly return to the ceremonial ground to remain quiet and still: they are said to have been 'tamed' at the moment that the *mbiljikara* is set in place for its

night-long movement. At the end of this movement the bearers of the *mbiljikara* position themselves at the front of the novices who have come together as a pack. All move towards the women with the *mbiljikara* held in full view, but as the women beckon, the men fall on the sacred object and obscure it in a collective action said to represent death. Finally they get up, turn their backs on the women and return to the ceremonial ground. Thus, as Hiatt says, they both flaunt and retain exclusive reproductive powers in a display of homosociality, although this explains nothing about the symbolism of communal death.

Following Róheim, Hiatt has said that Aboriginal initiation has to be understood as 'in some degree homoerotic', and drawing inspiration from Freud's 1925 case study of Daniel Schreber's paranoia, he refers specifically to 'the libidinisation of submission' (Hiatt 1987, 98). Schreber, in the face of senior males, demonstrated a specific combination of fear (of castration) and desire (to adopt feminine attributes) and there is overwhelming evidence suggesting that a similar theme is central to Aboriginal initiation. At the same time however, fear and desire are not simply a matter of masculine elders orchestrating the submission of feminine juniors, since ritual femininity is the means by which young men acquire their pronounced masculinity. The cycle of initiation only begins with the submission of juniors: it ends with the submission of elders to juniors, and in each case submission is marked by symbolic castration and death. Circumcision is actually referred to as 'killing', just as the final staged defeat of the old men on the ceremonial ground is preliminary to the recognition of their deaths and complete conversion into ancestral beings. Thus, to engage the classical terms of Freudian anthropology, a sequence which leads to the murder of the father begins with the murder of the son. Indeed, love, masculine association, mutual recognition and reciprocal designation between fathers and sons (in short, the resolution of the oedipus complex and the institution of patrilineal descent) is based on an 'identification ... which is literally mortal' (Ricoeur 1974, 471).

It is commonly thought that the subincision wound is in some sense analogous to a vagina, paradoxically a mark of masculinity and femininity. As a castration, it is a mark of both life and death. Simultaneously a gain and a loss, it is a price men pay for becoming

men. Initiation involves juniors beginning in weakness and ending in strength, just as it involves elders beginning in strength and ending in weakness. Thus the movement between elders and juniors entails a circular organisation of aggression: the aggressive drive is turned around via an identification necessary for the recognition of paternity, the institution of filial piety and reproduction. Róheim noted long ago that the solidarity of elders and juniors is a 'libido identification' premised on a mutually inscribed penis (1932, 72). He might equally have said that mutual recognition between fathers and sons is to become as native cats, creatures whose reproductive capacity is most conspicuously evidenced in symbolic castration and a play of death in life.

All this, I think makes sense of the idea that elders and juniors alike die in company with the *mbiljikara*. The *mbiljikara*, as a doubled *tjurunga*, is a metaphorical extension of subincision and in every sense encapsulates the reproductive powers of native cats: it is both phallus and womb and is, by itself, an image of generation and vital flow. It is as well, the mark of mortal identification to which each generation must in turn submit, an ambiguous image of strength and vulnerability. It is also an instrument which tames by quietening the warring impulses of young men in search of women and signifying a libidinal tie which is exclusive to males. Yet it is also implicated in the control of heterosexual relations. I am referring here to the fact that making men is also a process of making husbands, since initiation is an integral part of alliance formation and the control of marriage. Indeed, a wife is explicitly seen as compensation for the death one suffers at circumcision. As the totemic native cats would suggest, initiation is in no small measure concerned with the reproduction of family life.

From archetypes to social reproduction

In *Totem and Taboo* Freud thought that he had discovered the literal origins of totemism and exogamy. However, as Lévi-Strauss pointed out (1969, 491), the theory of the primal horde is actually most valuable as a symbolic expression of 'an ancient and lasting dream'. In other words, the theme of the murder of the father can usefully be seen as having its place among a stock of mythic archetypes. Freud's

use of the theme was partial, in particular neglecting the fact that the oedipal drama is partly established through the father's initial aggression towards his son, so giving rise to 'a reciprocal exchange of murderous gestures' (Girard 1977, 48). Aranda initiation clearly evidences this archetypal double articulation of death between fathers and sons, and the *mbiljikara* rite suggests the manner in which totemic mortality might profitably be linked to exogamy.

The situation of the Freudian primal horde is actually contrary to key psychoanalytic findings about infantile sexuality. Threatening images of the primal scene, turning away from the mother, abandonment of primary narcissistic omnipotence, and repression of the idea of genital commerce during latency are hardly the stuff that would give rise to a band of would-be incestuous, parricidal adolescent males! Apart from this, there is according to Hiatt (1994, 173), every reason to suppose that 'caring fathers have been in existence for a long time in the human species', so that there is insufficient justification for regarding the primal sire's 'bad temper' as singularly primordial. However, if we follow the logic through, we might surmise that this nexus would see adolescent males leaving their hordes in search of females in other hordes; it is here that one would surely expect a 'reciprocal exchange of murderous gestures'. Perhaps, then, the murder of the father is, in a strict sense, the murder of the father-in-law, the patriarchal controller of females in an alien rather than familiar domain. Such relatively idle speculation is worth pursuing I think, given that ideally, an Aranda youth's circumcisor is his prospective wife's father, the man who, with the youth's own father, has entered into negotiation and an agreement of prospective mutual benefit. It is doubly worth pursuing when one considers too, the degree to which initiation sets in train fully institutionalised avoidance between a man and his mother-in-law.

Lacan (1977, 199) has said of *Totem and Taboo* that the murder of the father 'is the fruitful moment of debt through which the subject binds himself for life to the Law'. This is a perfect description of the spirit of Aranda initiation, where binding is symbolised by the Freudian theme of remorse, serving to give sentimental impetus to alliances and exchanges based on the induction of men into cult lodges. One may see in the Law an idealised social contract, formed

in accordance with the famous dictum of Tylor (cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969, 43) that people have constantly faced the choice 'between marrying-out and being killed out'. It is evident I think, that one of the pay-offs of this contract is the continuing affirmation, in the symbolic realm of tragedy, of recognisably genuine agnatic ties. As Hiatt points out (1987, 106): 'Freud found it easy to identify with the predicament of the son' and virtually ignored the 'dilemma of the father — how to gain a share of filial love while retaining marital and patriarchal prerogatives'. But the myth of the primal horde most certainly contains the seeds of understanding. For it is there, in the genesis of both alliance and descent, that both father and son continue and receive recognition.

The *mbiljikara* rite, I suggest, relates to one moment of the archetypal alliance. The ritual sequence begins with a mock raid on the women's camp, an event of negative value, wild and disorderly. One could envisage it as ancient, primal violence, whose only function is to create the atmosphere in which a clear demonstration of discipline can be achieved through the *mbiljikara*. Men are found in this discipline, just as they are found in (or born from) the *mbiljikara* itself. To be effective, the *mbiljikara* embodies value in the form of life itself — the life which can only come from identity, recognition and heritage. And the terms of inheritance are achieved through masculine exchanges establishing an identification 'where difference is compatible with similarity' (Ricoeur 1974, 471): where father and son are sufficiently alike to recognise kinship, yet dissimilar enough to establish unique prerogatives. Such prerogatives are clearly bound to exogamy: libidinally based male solidarity in initiation, signified by the *mbiljikara*, is exclusive only to the extent that it is transitional, with elders and juniors serving to reproduce the regulation of marriage. Any man's marriage is a condition of initiation: 'a perverted desire for women who are forbidden to him is one of the greatest bars in his struggle and search for further knowledge and the power that comes with wisdom' (Strehlow 1947, 112).

At this point we encounter a problem characteristic of psychoanalytic investigation; namely the potential confusion of archetypes with empirical circumstances. We know well enough that the pattern of initiation follows a classic Freudian cycle of oedipal resolution,

but can we deduce from this that the purpose of initiation is simply to achieve resolution in its purely abstract form? The straight-forward answer is that we cannot, because the rites evidently only build on such resolution to different (though related) ends. Hiatt states that

> Aboriginal initiatory rituals were [not] programmes in preventive medicine. Obviously such rituals are not necessary for normal male sexual development, otherwise we would expect to find them everywhere. Nor is there ... any evidence to suggest that, after European colonisation and the decline of traditional religion, Aboriginal males in increasing numbers began to suffer from unresolved oedipus complexes and attendant abnormalities in sexual behaviour. If initiation was an institutionalised castration threat on behalf of loving fathers, it would seem to have been redundant (1987, 97).

On the other hand, from the point of view of the unconscious, any such threat at all is redundant, because archetypal castration will appear quite spontaneously and irrespective of conditions external to mental symbolism. What is done in response to archetypal poten-tial is critical, which is why formal symbolisms appear to be both universal and particular, both given as part of our species life and contextually constructed. And so we are brought directly to Hiatt's (and Durkheim's) conclusion that Australian totemism is a system of applied intuitions about the human predicament. I translate this as a socially reproductive organisation of archetypal sentiments. We need to move between the general and the particular without abandoning either.

The political economy of reproduction

Aborigines have their own version of Freud's theories depending on what we choose to call it and feel compelled to emphasise. As much can be said about applying Durkheim's theories to the practice of Aboriginal religion. Certainly, Aborigines stress the integrative and harmonious functions of ceremonial life, just as they insist that this life is a matter of archetypal precedent. But social and transcenden-tal reproduction are never achieved without competition. People

strive for their reproduction, not that from which they may feel alienated, and ceremonial strategies seem to owe much to Hobbes as well as Rousseau. Commenting specifically on the ritual pre-eminence of native cat mythology in Central Australia, Hiatt puts the matter as follows:

> Although [Spencer and Gillen] give the mythological ratification for [native cat] supremacy, they are unable to provide any sociological clues as to how this may have come about historically. No doubt any such clues are lost forever in the case of the Aranda. But the trend of recent research suggests that, whatever integrative function Aboriginal religion may have, it also constitutes a major domain in which men compete for prestige. It is a reasonable speculation that, within this arena, the pre-eminence of particular rituals and supernatural conceptions may represent the success of particular mortal aspirations and energies (1986a, 14).

Though I think that Hiatt is right to say that we may never be able to reconstruct the dynamics of native cat supremacy in Central Australia, the analysis here suggests that mortal aspirations and energies are inextricably tied to the most abstract transcendental principles. I think there is not a case to be made for divorcing the pragmatics of 'applied psychology' from a less prosaic 'ontology', any more than there is for entering into 'free flight' and, like Stanner referring to Aboriginal religion in purely mystagogical terms. What we do know is that native cat mythology is central to the *ingkura* ritual and that the general form of this ritual has been the same throughout a large part of Arandic territory. In each case the *mbiljikara* rite is critical to the final stages, always to be held by the ceremonial leader. Leadership however, changes according to the location of the ceremony, as do many of the accompanying revelatory ritual sequences.

Ingkura rituals are large, communal events held at major sacred sites, only a few of which are directly associated with native cats. The leader of any ceremony is always a recognised boss of the host site, and the totemic mythology of that site is vitally important in the revelations experienced by novices. The character of other totemic revelations depends on the presence of allies — people from

other ritual estates who have a stake in perpetuating the assembled group as a reproductive, intermarrying unit. Thus the *ingkura* is what Carl Strehlow calls an 'exhibition', a show of mutual totemic allegiances serving to create a systematic integration of people and places.

The *ingkura* is, in fact, a true gathering of the clans, the closest there is in Aranda society to a complete collective event. It is remarkable that Durkheim, in spite of noting in passing (1915, 284) the 'generality', 'harmony' and 'unity' of native cat mythology, paid the ritual no attention whatsoever. Yet within the ambit of generality, harmony and unity, there is clear scope for the realisation of personal ambitions. People are cagey about revealing mythical knowledge outside of the context of a home event, and revelation itself, in drama and in song, has a strong competitive edge. A ritual leader, the man in charge of the reproductive capacities of native cats, is in a definite position of ascendancy. As Gillen discovered, when he arranged the Imanda *ingkura* in Alice Springs in 1896, stage-managing a major ritual of this kind entails all the generosity which anthropologists, following Mauss and Lévi-Strauss, usually see as typical of power bids in political economy. Although delighted to bring together groups from a widespread area for an anthropological event, Gillen remarked: 'the only thing that is troubling me is how I am to feed the beggars' (Mulvaney and Calaby 1985, 173).

Gillen probably did not know it, but this was a quite traditional concern. The privilege of hosting an *ingkura* can only emerge from perceived territorial management. It is well known that Aranda territories are idealised in terms of reproductive capacities whose operation is guaranteed by the exchanges inherent in increase ritual. In times of seasonal abundance, these exchanges yielded local surpluses that could be converted into support for major *ingkura* cycles. By all accounts, a local territory, usually focussing on a single major sacred site, would become virtually exhausted economically by being home to a protracted cycle. Induction into male cult lodges then, whereby men are fully identified with the lands which they come to possess, gives the symbolic theme of sacrifice a kind of eco-logic. The ability to stage-manage and lead an *ingkura* is proof of the success of regional management in the past, but it is also a precondition of such management in the future. The elders not only

induct juniors into a freshly rationalised system of localised life-spaces they also pass on to become primordial, ancestral figures, identified with country and forever responsible for its renewal. Transcendence, contingency and intention then merge, with *ingkura* leaders proving their worth and achieving status by simultaneously dealing with the present, guaranteeing the future, and grounding the past.

Making men is genuinely transformative: identity is created there. Identity comes through identification and a Durkheim analysis would suggest that men identify with *tjurunga* (sacred objects) as symbols of clanship and social dependency. Lévi-Strauss suggested in 1966 that these same *tjurunga* are like archives embodying the contingent events of history and mythically reconciling those events with contemporary sentiments. Both perspectives can I think, throw light on the fact that the *mbiljikara* is said to be a kind of primordial container of *tjurunga*, *tjurunga* which represent the durable, ancestral bodies of novices. *Tjurunga* are in fact, regarded as a kind of reproductive potential, and, as Bern has indicated in 1979, they are capable of being appropriated and accumulated. Native cat mythology, in its totalising aspect, embodies such appropriation and we may fairly assume that each and every ceremonial leader does so as well. *Ingkura* leadership, with its privilege of bearing the *mbiljikara*, is therefore a way in which particular men seek to encapsulate for themselves, a total social fact transparently symbolised as reproduction, as the complete generative conjunction of male and female.

Ingkura leaders do not attain more than momentary ascendancy, since they bear the *mbiljikara* only on their home territories. When attending *ingkura* in other territories, they take a less prominent role, although they remain influential. Gillen's stage-managed *ingkura*, for example, was presided over by a council of seven elders.

> On this occasion everything was under the immediate control of one special old man, who was a perfect repository of tribal lore. Without apparently any trouble ... he governed the whole camp, comprising more than a hundred full-grown natives, who were taking part in the ceremony. Whilst the final decision on all points lay in his hands, there was what we used to call the 'cabinet', consisting of this old man and six elders, who often met to ... gravely discuss matters concerned with

> the ceremonies... The effect on the younger men was naturally to heighten their respect and to bring them under ... control (Spencer and Gillen 1927, 233).

This is then a perfect example of the gerontocratic control exercised throughout Aboriginal Australia. What is specifically noteworthy about it is that the seven bosses were heads of a number of regional groups, who for the time being were in alliance. I think we can assume that, within the approximate terms of marriage rules, they were the most prominent members of families in the business of forming a reproductive unit through bestowal arrangements. I take this to be typical of the total social fact embodied in any one *ingkura* event. If the *ingkura* exhibition displays the *tjurunga* of an alliance group, I consider that we may take it for granted that this symbolises a moment in the political efforts of men to reproduce, with *tjurunga* reconciling precedent and historical specificity by becoming mythical records of the fortunes of living men.

Conclusion

Hiatt has consistently qualified Durkheim's premises concerning social reproduction. For him, it seems, there is no society over and above the individuals who constitute it, so it is little wonder that in his earlier works he should persistently question orthodoxies entering into anthropology via Radcliffe-Brown and Lévi-Strauss. Freud, Darwin and (to a lesser extent) Marx seem to have been the major influences in his creation of an image of society in competition, where what is at stake in human history is not production but reproduction, the re-creation not of symbolic or material forms, but of biological being.[7]

I think there is more than superficial evidence to suggest that the Central Australian male cult betrays similar concerns. Whether or not a fully-fledged sociobiological perspective would shed light on the interpersonal dynamics of this cult must for the time being remain in the realm of conjecture, since no analysis along those lines has materialised.[8] On the whole, of course, Darwin is not a popular ancestor in social or cultural anthropology, and in Aboriginal anthropology his name has been unduly sullied by association with the worst excesses of nineteenth century evolutionism, so there seems

little prospect of any such analysis on the horizon. Even Hiatt's own work on Aborigines is thin when measured in sociobiological terms (1985, 1986b, 1990), although many, inspired by Sahlins and others, would in any case reject these terms on the grounds that they are misleading ideological extensions of capitalist logic. Such rejection seems singularly narrow-minded in view of recent moves towards theoretical pluralism and the acceptance of productive bias in anthropological research.

Hiatt's interest in sociobiology extended his outlook and he has been singularly productive in the understanding of particular aspects of Aboriginal societies. If this understanding has come about through projection, I think we can be sure that any accompanying ventriloquism is a time-honoured anthropological technique. When for example, Hiatt (1988, 24) finds a Yolngu man to give verbal support to the idea that male sexual jealousy is a critical aspect of human nature, he thereby finds a genuine soul-mate in Aboriginal society — a good instance of productive bias, where projection is inextricably tied to recognition and the partial discovery of mutual human potential. There is every reason to believe that such strategies could eventually prove Aborigines to be more comprehensively sociobiological.

One thing we can be sure of is that Aranda people have intu- ited their own analogy between humans and non-humans in areas where 'selective advantages accrue to increased male parental invest- ment' (Hiatt 1987, 105). However, we know little about the manner in which such analogies are constitutive of experience. As an avowed realist, Hiatt has always favoured theories that do not reduce human life to modes of thought. For example, he rejects Geertz's model of culture, as a system which actualises human nature, in favour of a model positing an interplay between precultural drives and cultural modulation. He has recently affirmed this position in 1990 in relation to the natural history of paternity. However, there are other lessons to be learned from Freud apart from 'a habit of according promi- nence to the control of sexuality'.

As Hiatt (1987, 103) confesses the notion of the unconscious is usually absent from his work. It appears to be an idea from which he withdraws in order to give symbolism an outward reference in reality. Yet the unconscious, according to Freud or Jung (if not

Lévi-Strauss), is nothing if not the interface between, and the blending of, representations and instincts. From this point of view, the universality of archetypes is coextensive with human drives, such that 'cultural modulation' cannot be conceived purely as the work of an externally derived semiotic framework. An archetype is, in itself, a natural tendency. If an Australian version of sociobiology can begin to trace the dynamic mergers of the muted messages of genetic programs and the clamorous communications of the mind, it may yet prove its worth in the comprehensive study of sentiment in Aboriginal society and religion. I suggest that such a natural science of society, totemic or otherwise, should take us beyond nature and culture to a place more revealing of 'the human world as meaningfully constituted.'

Chapter 9

Demand Sharing: Sociobiology and the Pressure for Generosity among Foragers?
Nicolas Peterson

> Probably everywhere in Aboriginal Australia the highest
> secular value is generosity. Readiness to share with others is
> the main measure of a man's goodness, and hospitality an
> essential source of his self-esteem. As Aboriginal children
> seem as demanding and self-centred as children anywhere,
> the altruism of adults is most plausibly explained, not as a
> natural propensity, but as the outcome of a programme of
> moral education in which greed is condemned and magna-
> nimity extolled. It is likely that this pervasive and
> highly-developed ethic of generosity emerged as a cultural
> adaptation to the exigencies of hunting and gathering, and
> conceivably conferred improved fitness on those who
> adopted it (Hiatt 1982, 14-15).

With characteristic succinctness, Les Hiatt integrates the main factors
that are commonly used to account for the widely reported ethic of
generosity found among hunter-gatherers. The altruism implied by

the term generosity is, Hiatt suggests, a product of socialisation domesticating self-interest, and a practice which has probably conferred an adaptive advantage by evening out income to individuals living under the uncertainties of a hunting and gathering provisioning regime.

Les Hiatt goes on to comment in his meticulous ethnographic style, however, that below the melody line in praise of generosity among the Anbarra, a grumbling was evident, with continuous complaints of stinginess, neglect and ingratitude. Although public pressure on individual Anbarra to share was virtually irresistible, various counter-strategies were adopted by the diligent to prevent exploitation by the lazy or manipulative. The most effective of these, in his view, was eating during food collection, so that the greater part of a person's produce was in an advanced state of digestion by the time he or she returned to camp. A less generous attitude was present in times of scarcity and especially with reference to valued trade items of some durability, such as stone axes or pituri (pitcheri). Thus an economic and evolutionary rationality underlies the generosity of sharing.

Although this view of little or no giving being truly altruistic is widely held, it is curious that the way in which foodstuffs, in particular, move between households is so frequently obscured. Ethnographers tend to emphasise the positive moral imperative as the principal dynamic, even when they describe the grumbling and pressure. This in turn tends to obscure the fact that much giving and sharing is in response to direct verbal or non-verbal demands. If, as current views have it, scarcity is uncommon under normal circumstances in hunting and gathering societies, why is the practice of generosity often expressed in what might be construed as a contradictory meanness? Why do recipients often have to demand generosity?

Les Hiatt clearly equates demanding with selfishness, seeing it as rooted in human nature and thus to be understood in sociobiological terms. His position on generosity is not so clear. He writes that it is not a 'natural propensity, but ... the outcome of a programme of moral education' (1982), but then goes on to say that generosity is likely to have been adaptive and even, possibly, to have conferred improved fitness, reasserting a particular kind of biological

emphasis. The tension between natural drives and their cultural modulation evident in this quotation reflects the Freudian influence on his work. Elsewhere he argues that social practices often obscure basic social and sociobiological inequalities, which raises the question of how it is possible to recognise when a social practice is obscuring fundamental inequalites and when it is acting to promote inclusive fitness. Is demand sharing an undisguised aspect of the 'selfish gene', or a failure of cultural modulation? Or can it be approached from another perspective?

Demand sharing or mutual taking is widespread in Australia (see below), but also among hunter-gatherers more generally.[1] It could be understood simply in terms of the common discrepancy between what people say and what people do, but if so, why is there a positive enjoining to share? Given that demand sharing is apparently widespread among hunter-gatherers, why has it not received more attention? And how does this practice relate to the notion of generalised reciprocity?

From an evolutionary biological perspective, as commonly understood, generosity appears, at least at first glance to be problematic. Demand sharing, on the other hand, with its shedding of the altruistic overtones of unsolicited giving and its individual actor orientation, can be argued to be highly compatible with most of the cost-benefit theories used by biologists to explain sharing, such as benefits to kin, cooperative acquisition, conservation and tit-for-tat reciprocity. In particular, demand sharing has an apparent resemblance to what Nicholas Blurton Jones called in 1987 tolerated theft. While this may be correct, I contend that there is a greater social significance to demand sharing.

The evolutionary biological explanations with which demand sharing appears compatible are independent of social context and of the meanings attributed by people to the practices surrounding sharing. By contrast, other possible explanations, such as that it is an aspect of generalised reciprocity, have a much greater social significance. Generalised reciprocity is characterised by Marshall Sahlins as being marked by a weak obligation to reciprocate and an indifference to the time, quality or quantity of the return. It is typically the behaviour found between such closely related people as parents and children or siblings, where asking for things is widely acceptable,

although in Sahlins' view hunter-gatherer sharing practices generally are a pure example of generalised reciprocity. However, demand sharing extends well beyond exchanges between closely related people and encompasses an accounting mentality.

The purpose here is, in part, to make an ethnographic point, as well as to challenge the dichotomies on which sociobiology is based: commonplace behaviour is neglected ethnographically despite the great attention paid to sharing, to giving and to exchanging, raising a question about the mental set anthropologists bring to the ethnography of sharing. But it is also to make a more general point about relatedness and about how we construct and represent social relations in small-scale societies.

Using mainly Australian evidence, I can show that demand sharing can only be fully understood in its broadest social context, and that it has been neglected because of the particular ethical construction which Westerners place on generosity — that of outwardly unsolicited and altruistic giving. This is not only inappropriate to the construction of generosity in many societies, but also suggests that more emphasis should be placed on the constitution of social relations through social action than has tended to be the case in the past.

Beginning by briefly examining ethnographic evidence for demand sharing as a practice in Australia, then looking at demand sharing in the context of how people are taught to share and how sharing relates to scarcity, to risk, to the pattern of game distribution and to non-food exchanges, I will conclude by considering implications for the representation of hunter-gatherer social relations.

Ethnographic evidence for demand sharing in Australia

While there is no systematic account of sharing practices in any Australian Aboriginal society, nor any measure of the frequency of demand sharing as opposed to unsolicited giving, there is fragmentary evidence of the kind of behaviour under consideration. Although the practice is found throughout Australia, I will illustrate it with examples from two areas of north Australia, in situations where it is particularly marked.

Among the Yolngu ('Murngin') people of Arnhem Land with whom I lived in the mid-1960s, largely off the bush, demanding food

or other items was common, although it did not always take spoken form. Simply presenting oneself when food was being prepared and eaten meant one had to be included. This was rarely done by adults, unless large quantities of food had been brought into camp by one household, but for children it was common practice. If children over-heard anybody talking about food, they often went across to have a look, giving rise to the rebuke: 'Your ears have fingers' (*buthurru gungmirri*).

Among adult men demands for spears and other items of material culture were frequent and two interesting strategies were used to avoid having to meet them. Valued spears or guns could be given to elderly women by their sons or other male relatives, or pur-chased by such women with their pension cheques, although they never used them to hunt with. The purpose was twofold: the owners of weapons had a right in the distribution of whatever was killed with them, which thus ensured they received an adequate amount and desirable portion; but it also allowed people who were using guns or spears, and who normally had them in their possession all the time, to refuse demands for them, because they could say the weapons were not theirs to give. The other strategy relates most fre-quently to pipes and tobacco, but can be extended to almost anything. Old men, by carving sacred designs on their pipes and then covering them with strips of cloth or paperbark, render them taboo to all women and any males who have not had the design revealed to them in a religious context. Since demands for tobacco were common, this strategy was highly effective. The general princi-ple is extended to all sorts of things which old men may reserve to themselves by placing them under a taboo.

Asking, such as asking for permission to use something, is *ngang'thun* and is distinguished from demanding in the sense of scrounging something off somebody, which is *barl'yun*. Except in limited circumstances, such as during funeral distributions, very little spontaneous giving takes place outside the household. One reason for this is that it is seen as rude to offer something unasked, as it puts people in a position where it is difficult to refuse, since refusing is even ruder. A particularly interesting practice is known by the term *wamarrkane*. Yolngu do not express appreciation lightly, but a person may occasionally do so at a public event, such as by

complimenting people on their dancing. The person who has paid the compliment then has the right to make substantial demands on the people they have complimented. Exactly what stops people making many complimentary statements is not clear, but even a casual remark, like 'Oh what a beautiful baby', allows the speaker to demand something from the mother.[2]

Among the Wik-Mungkana of Cape York, demand sharing is commonplace. An indication of this is that there are formal ways to stop excessive demanding. David McKnight reported in 1975 that, if one's kinsmen fail to fulfil their kinship duties, one can swear their hands on somebody else's head or other part of the body, thus preventing the person whose hands are sworn from giving anything to the person whose head has been invoked. Thus a woman may swear her daughter's hands on her own husband's head if she feels her husband (i.e. the girl's father) is taking too many things, particularly food. A likely consequence of this is to divert food to the swearer (i.e. the girl's mother in this case). A man may also be stopped from taking something by saying his mother-in-law's name or by claiming it belongs to either his father or mother-in-law.

Von Sturmer, writing generally about how to interact with Aboriginal people, takes demanding for granted, but this could be seen as a special case, as he is dealing with Aboriginal–European interactions. I do not believe it is however, although the intensity of demands made of Europeans may be greater, especially as many of them do not know how to say no appropriately (see below).

Although this brief illustration of demand sharing does not justify the assertion that it takes place throughout Australia combined with the other examples I give, the personal experience of many colleagues and graduate students doing field research, and my own experience across the breadth of north Australia, it leaves me in no doubt that demand sharing is a widespread phenomenon.[3]

Sharing and socialisation

It is widely reported that the socialisation of Aboriginal children is highly indulgent. This indulgence is characterised by a great tolerance of children's demands, interruptions, tantrums and physical

attacks, particularly by boys in relation to their mothers and older siblings. From the very beginning, feeding is demand initiated by the baby seeking the breast or crying, or when older, by the throwing of tantrums, especially in the case of boys.[4] Crying babies are assumed to be demanding food in most circumstances and their needs are always met as soon as possible. While infant children always get what they demand, it seems they are often deliberately shown that they in turn have to give on demand. Thus when a child cries out for food from someone nearby, he or she will be given it, but then others nearby will start asking for some of it from the child in turn, often taking it from the child's hand, explaining at the same time their relationship: 'Oh, I'm your big sister/big brother, you've got to give food to me'. After five or so a child has to give priority to the demands of its baby siblings and thus learn the social value placed on sharing more intensely.

Girls are socialised into serving old people's and men's needs and demands, fetching water and wood for them, cooking food and helping their mothers to ensure that the provisioning of rituals, especially circumcision rituals, is successful. In western Cape York girls are taught to serve older siblings who are not allowed to ask for anything from younger siblings. For boys it is only with the approach of initiation rituals that the wilful demanding from their mothers and sisters stops.

Grayson Gerrard suggests that in Arnhem Land there are differences in demand sharing between men and women. Men, she says:

> were likely to ask other men for much larger services than women asked from women or than men asked from women and they did not make these large demands abruptly. A woman might thus ask a relative to mind a child or to give her meat or lend her money without any ceremony at all, but a man asking another man for help in a business venture, for example, might spend an hour making his request clear. (1989, 111)

If giving is the natural expression of good will, the positive valuing of the demand sharing of food is established at, and reinforced from, the moment of birth. From there, its potential as an index of the state of social relations is powerfully inculcated.

Sharing and scarcity

Demand sharing makes sense when there is scarcity, as Helm suggested in 1972 as the case among the Dogrib, but today it is almost received wisdom that, normally, hunter-gatherers are free from market obsessions with scarcity. Sahlins, following Polanyi, has persuasively developed the substantivist case that scarcity is not necessarily present in all societies and has suggested that hunter-gatherers enjoy unparalleled plenty, because they are satisfied with a low standard of living. The widely reported optimism about tomorrow has however, to be distinguished from the concerns of today.

There are two classic accounts that document the prevalence of demand sharing: Holmberg's 1969 account of the Siriono painted a dismal picture, but Turnbull's 1972 book on the Ik was the first extended report of a situation less idyllic than normally described. While some accept the veracity of his description of the Ik's outrageous behaviour more or less at face value, others decry it for taking unwarranted liberties with the ethnography. If the account is accepted, is it the case that deprivation in the case of the Siriono and starvation in the case of the Ik has transformed their normal behaviour, or is it more likely that stressful conditions have simply intensified a common pattern?

Inertial generosity could be an important daily strategy, even in conditions where there is no material shortage.[5] Consider the situation of a person with limited means living in a community of several dozen people all of whom are kin. On the occasions when they have a limited amount of goods which they could share generously or give away, who are they to share with or give it to? If they have lived in the community all their lives, there will be scarcely a person with whom they have not had some interactions and to whom there is not some kind of social debt. Are they to run through the entire list of people to whom they are indebted in one way or another, rank the debts and then distribute the surplus as far as it goes? Should they concentrate on meeting the largest or oldest debts, or only those to close kin, to the neglect of more distant relatives?

An alternative strategy to this book-keeping approach is simply to respond to demands as they are made. This has at least

four advantages: difficult decisions are avoided; the onus is placed on others; discrepancies in the evaluation of relationships are not laid bare; and an excellent excuse is provided for not meeting some obligations within the context of behaving generously. Further, it fully recognises the inherent difficulty in delayed reciprocity: time alters the value of objects and the perception of relationships, compounding the difficulties of calculating the correct return.

Such an inertial strategy also provides an additional possibility: demands can be refused. This can usually only be done through hiding, secretive behaviour and lying. It is not just the Siriono under difficult conditions who hide their food, such hiding is widespread and is a fully self-conscious strategy. A Pintupi man talking about collecting and using wild tobacco in Central Australia has this to say:

> Don't bring back the weak leaves without trying it. Let us bring back ash tree to mix with the pitcheri. Let us eat it together with the ash, we who are starving for pitcheri. Let us eat it, so it can burn our throats. When walking without water, chewing pitcheri is good to keep one alert. Let us cook pitcheri. One should break his lump in half and give it to another. After preparing it, let us hide it in the shelter, so the women won't grab it from us. Let us carry it in our pockets. If you keep it where people can see it, they ask you for it, and finish it all up. Not only pitcheri but tin of tobacco and cigarettes as well (Hansen and Hansen 1974, 13-14).

It is not only potential givers who hide resources, but also potential receivers who hide what they have so that they may ask others because of a perceived need. Fred Myers records how, after reacting angrily to a demand for cigarettes from a Pintupi man, he was suprised by the man not taking offence at his anger, but sympathising with the fact that Myers had been taken advantage of. He told Myers that he should not give things away so easily and instructed him on how to hide a packet of cigarettes in his socks so that he could tell people he had none. He also gave Myers a packet of cigarettes and told him he had several others buried near his camp.

Many other examples of hiding could be given, including those drawn from my own personal practice in places like Alice Springs, where I may encounter many people I know who ask for money, leading me to keep large denomination bills in one pocket

and smaller change in another.[6] All this suggests that such hiding behaviour is commonplace, even among people who are not in trying circumstances.

While this construction of the logic of demand sharing in terms of self-conscious and self-interested strategy is heuristically useful, it lacks a certain plausibility as an accurate representation of lived experience. Calculation is undeniably part of the everyday practice of demand sharing, as the evidence of concealing alone makes clear; but, for demand sharing to be a pervasive social practice, it has to be a part of the habitus and of moral education in the management of interpersonal relations (as, indeed, the nature of socialisation suggests it is).

Sharing, uncertainty and risk

By its nature the hunting and gathering life involves risk and uncertainty, particularly where there is no storage and where provisioning is on a day-by-day basis.[7] Under such conditions, sharing appears to make good economic sense. As Tim Ingold put it (1980, 145):

> Were each hunter to produce only for his own domestic needs, everyone would eventually perish from hunger ... Thus, through its contribution to the survival and reproduction of potential producers, sharing ensures the perpetuation of society as a whole.

Eric Smith (1988, 234) calls this the 'received view'. From the perspective of evolutionary biology it is problematic, because it depends on the suggestion that the survival of the social group is the function of sharing practices. Setting this phrasing aside, Kaplan and Hill have shown in 1985 that among the Ache, where large animals are shared, such sharing does indeed increase the nutritional well-being of most band members, although not equally.

Smith argues however, that a simple risk reduction model of sharing fails to consider the costs of sharing, such as transporting food for others and ensuring that others share. Using a game-theoretical model, he shows that from the point of view of evolutionary biology, truly altruistic or indiscriminate sharing is evolutionarily unstable and will be undermined by freeloaders. A

system of generalised reciprocity is dependent on a way of monitoring reciprocity and a means of invoking sanctions against these freeloaders.

The virtue of an individualistic and rationalistic risk model, Smith argues, is that it provides a general framework for predicting the degree of variation in sharing from time to time and place to place. This means that it predicts the existence of demand sharing under certain conditions in a way that the received view does not. The model is based on the assumption, which Smith admits to feeling a little uncomfortable with, that most individuals would prefer to get something for nothing, all else being equal. The rigour introduced by such formal models allows for quantification, and through the game-theoretical aspect, they introduce the world of interpersonal politics; but these models seem scarcely adequate for dealing with the contingencies and historical particularities of everyday life, and they overdraw the distinctions between nature and culture, selfishness and altruism, and individual and group. Further, because they are framed with reference to non-selfconscious life forms which do not engage in strategic manipulation of the social in the way that humans and other primates do, they underplay the social and symbolic significance of much sharing behaviour in maintaining and modulating relationships, concentrating too single-mindedly on simple hunger.

Game sharing

It is widely reported, particularly in the older literature, that there are strict rules regulating the distribution of meat. Such rules, if observed, would eliminate the possibility of demand sharing. Dawson provided the following account in 1881 of game sharing in Victoria:

> When a hunter brings game to the camp he gives up all claim to it, and must stand aside and allow the best portions to be given away, and content himself with the worst. If he has a brother present, the brother is treated in the same way, and helps the killer of the game to eat the poor pieces, which are thrown to them, such as the forequarters and ribs of the kangaroos, opossums, and small quadrupeds, and the backbones

> of birds. The narrator of this custom mentioned that when he was very young he used to grumble because his father gave away all the best pieces of birds and quadrupeds, and the finest eels, but he was told that it was a rule and must be observed (1881, 22).

Reports like this are common in Australia. They imply that Aboriginal people are captives of custom and they have been construed as evidence for the collective appropriation of nature, two enduring representations of Aboriginal societies and cultures.

Rule-bound game sharing has been seen as evidence for the collective appropriation of nature in two different ways. One view is that game in the wild cannot be owned either by individuals or groups, because it wanders widely regardless of boundaries. Thus it must be collectively owned. However, it is acknowledged that it does not appear to be collectively appropriated, because it is widely reported that one or another person is designated as the owner of the kill. Frequently, it is the owner of the spear, where this weapon is used. Ingold asks why the owner of the spear should become the owner of what was previously collective property. He suggests that ownership of tools of the chase is primarily a mechanism for identifying the killer of the animal, who then acquires the right to distribute the meat. Without such a mechanism for identifying the successful hunter, it would be difficult to motivate people to hunt in the presence of an ethic of sharing, since everybody would sit around waiting for others to hunt, knowing they would automatically receive a portion of game. By identifying a hunter with the right to distribute, hunters are motivated to hunt, because they receive substantial prestige by being so identified. Thus there is no contradiction: game was collectively owned and appropriated.

An alternative view has been elaborated by Alain Testart (1987). He has been struck by what he perceives to be two distinct patterns of sharing game in hunting and gathering societies. In type A sharing systems, sharing is initiated by the producer, the hunter himself shares out the game. In type B sharing systems, the process of sharing is initiated by somebody other than the hunter, as in the account provided by Dawson. Testart argues that, because these two systems define the relationship between producers and

non-producers completely differently, they represent two distinct kinds of social system, critically differentiated in the nature of their kinship systems.

Type B systems are allegedly only found in Australia. As described by Testart, game usually goes to somebody in the category of father-in-law, in the opposite part of society. This system presupposes a society organised into sections. The meat is distributed through each of the major sections into which the society is divided. This is, then, a society with a collective appropriation of game and Australia has the only set of societies with true primitive communalism. Despite this communalism, evidence for the distribution of meat by age and sex in two contemporary Arnhem Land outstation communities shows that distribution practices advantage senior men and disadvantage elderly women.[8]

Where there are accounts of sharing that distinguish between normative statements and practice on specific occasions, a more complex situation emerges. My evidence from the eastern Gunwinggu shows that formal sharing rules only allocate about half the maximum number of basic cuts, leaving up to fifty per cent by weight unallocated, and that where a capable hunter is not pulling his weight, meat is witheld from him, occasioning a dispute. Gould, writing of the Western Desert in 1982, notes that the hunter gets the entrails and the participants in the hunt then take it in turn to make their choice of cut, with the father-in-law and brother-in-law having first choice. This kind of description implies that people always camp and go hunting with their fathers-in-law and brothers-in-law, which is unlikely.

Emphasis on the rules pure and simple obscures the probability that they are only really significant if there is a shortage where they help reduce conflict by either ranking people or the cuts of meat. Much of the time there was probably no shortage. People lived in small groups, often quite dispersed, and a much more complex social interplay was at work, as the frequent disputes or complaints over food sharing suggest. JRB Love remarked of the Worora people of the north-west Kimberley region (1936, 73): 'One of the least pleasing features of savage life [in Australia] is the quarrelling that results from disatisfactions over food sharing' and Polly Weisner reports that over sixty per cent of the topics in a sample of everyday !Kung

conversations were to do with food and complaints about people's generosity. Game sharing is nowhere near as rule-bound as many accounts suggest.

Demand sharing: non-food exchange and accumulation

Most of the evidence on demand sharing concerns food exchange. However, the same inertial principle is as evident as the unsolicited dynamic of generosity in non-food exchange, although it may not be so common. Its general presence is indicated in a wide-spread feature of trading partnerships and exchanges: commonly the creditor goes to see the debtor. By presenting themselves, creditors make at least a non-verbal demand for partners to meet their obligations. It could be, of course, that the debtor has sent for the creditor, but this would still leave the question of why the debtor does not arrive with the return gift. Here the calculus of interpersonal relations suggests that an egalitarian logic is at work, because by the creditor visiting the debtor, even if by prior arrangement, there is a small but subtle loss of status that amelio-rates to some degree the inequality created by the debt, putting a person on their best behaviour in a situation which constrains their action.

Thomson, writing on ceremonial exchange in Arnhem Land in 1949, notes that there is an indigenous distinction between items sur-rendered because they are asked for as against those that a man gives because he likes to: the latter kind of gift is known as *wetj*. Nevertheless, he still speaks of the 'incessant demand for *wetj*'. Further, the term for exchange or barter is *djauyunamirri* — to take from one another, which when used without qualification, Thomson says, has almost the force of 'steal', although there is a separate word for theft.

On the Daly River three kinds of movements of goods are named and in at least two, the movement is initiated by demand. Short loans (*mima*) are claimed on the basis of friend-ship and have to be repaid as soon as possible in the exact form loaned. In the *kue* marriage gift exchange, the precipitating factor, Stanner says, is the demand from the wife's parents, via their daughter, for the husband to make the *kue*. The situation

with respect to the third kind of exchange, the *merbok*, is more ambiguous, since Stanner uses the word 'send' to describe the movement of goods, without indicating who it is that takes them. Even if they are spontaneously given most of the time, Stanner indicates that:

> Men occasionally make special visits to see their *merbok* partner. If a partner is lagging a little in his *merbok* a man takes the first favourable opportunity of making a casual public reference to it (Stanner 1933, 161).

Demand sharing clearly makes accumulation difficult. Accumulation is possible, however, and occurs in three main spheres: money or artefacts for valued social purposes; wives/social relationships; and sacred objects/knowledge.[9]

Limited accumulation of money or artefacts can be achieved by declaring that it is to be dedicated to a specific valued social purpose, such as for the purchase of a major capital item, like a car or a ceremonial prestation, or for one's children. This protects the money or items in question from demands, but, in the case of saving for the purchase of capital goods, not from demands to use or borrow once the item is acquired. Powerful Aboriginal men have acquired several, and in some few cases, many wives. Exactly what pressures were placed on such men to share their wives' labour power or sexuality is not well documented in the literature, but it seems highly likely, in the light of the construction of authority and deference, that they were subject to greater demands, at least in the flow of goods. It is recorded that Aboriginal men who had good access to income from mining royalties in the Oenpelli area seemed to have more kin. That is, more people claiming kin links of a close nature than those people who were less wealthy. It is also clear that men and women seriously involved with local ceremonial life deliberately accumulated huge bodies of religious knowledge in the form of songs, designs, dances, stories and myths, and that men in Central Australia accumulated large numbers of sacred boards and other objects. The ethnography does not indicate how these stores of sacred objects were managed, whether they were subject to demand and if so, how they were protected.

Demand sharing and the representation of social relations

David Riches (1981) suggests that in small-scale societies with uni-
versal systems of kin classification and multiplex relationships,
sustaining the obligation to give is a rational response. In such soci-
eties, where one may be involved in several different kinds of
purposive activity with any one person, people can make high
demands, he suggests, because they know that the person to whom
the demands are directed is unlikely to jeopardise the existence of a
connection in which many other vital interests are subsumed. While
this view is plausible in general terms, the fact that people do conceal
things from each other, and have no trouble lying to each other in the
face of requests, raises problems.

Fred Myers recounts the case of the male leader of the Pintupi
community he was living with hiding cooked meat in a flour drum
on hearing of the arrival of his close and generous relatives from a
nearby community. One of them came across and asked whether he
had any meat, to which he replied that he was empty-handed. The
visitor clearly did not believe him in the light of the evidence of
cooking strewn about and proceeded, without rancour, to open
various flour drums lying around until he found the meat. Myers
argues that property of all kinds is significant primarily for its ability
to express autonomy or relatedness. The leader's polite rejection of
his kinsmen through hiding was an expression of autonomy which
did not lead to a repudiation of relatedness; nor did it create conflict,
because he had been generous enough in the past. The visitor's sense
that he could search without offence was likewise an expression of
his relatedness to the leader and at the same time a recognition of the
leader's right to autonomy as expressed in hiding the meat, since in
searching without rancour he accepted the likelihood of the leader's
deception. As Myers observes, there are nevertheless potential
dangers in this kind of behaviour, which are clearly outlined in many
Pintupi myths and which are evidenced in the splitting up of bands
because of conflict over food.

Another difficulty for Riches' view is raised by James
Woodburn in a 1982 observation that in the societies he designates as
immediate return (Batek, Hadza, !Kung, Malapantaram, Mbuti and
Paliyans), corresponding to those that Meillassoux would identify as

hunter-gatherers, there is no expectation, even in the closest kin rela-
tionships, of strong moral commitment. Apparent indifference
permeates interaction, allowing relatives to abandon the old or seri-
ously ill and often to laugh at their misfortunes. A super-ego which
acts as an impulse, ensuring that people feel they should do some-
thing even in the absence of others, seems to be diluted to a more
pragmatic concern with being seen to do something when requested.
Such a morality would seem to be congruent with the apparent indif-
ference implied by demand sharing.

Woodburn suggests that what might be called an immediate
return morality is constituted in this way because the individual
hunter is not able to invest the yield of his labour in specific social
relations, apart from those with his parents-in-law, in order to estab-
lish future claims on those who have received meat from him.
Strong, morally binding commitments to kin are created, he sug-
gests, by the constant transmission of important goods and services,
characteristic of delayed return societies. In such societies demand-
ing might be expected to be greatly diminished and replaced by
more active servicing of obligations.

Demand sharing, however, is clearly not confined to immedi-
ate return societies. It is also prevalent in delayed return societies,
like those of the Australians and for example, among the Inuit and
Siriono, which renders this suggested association between demand-
ing and the absence of load-bearing relationships problematic. The
failure of kin to offer support before it is requested may not be so
much a moral indifference to their plight, as Woodburn suggests, as,
in part, a heightened sensitivity to the meaning of giving, which
often constrains people to act only when faced with a demand. Thus
giving can be construed as both rude and as dominating, even as an
aggressive act, where large gifts are concerned. So, rather than rela-
tives being without compassion — compassion it seems, is usually
only evoked when people present themselves as lacking something.
This concern with the needs of the demander is reflected in the Batek
and Semai belief that, if a person refuses demands, the demanders
may fall sick, because their needs have been made evident but not
met.

If demand sharing is not predicated on an immediate return
morality, neither is it clearly based on a simple normative kinship

morality. That is, people are clearly not following prescriptive behavioural formulae in day-to-day sharing, any more than they are in game sharing. As Myers has emphasised, relatedness has to be produced and maintained in social action, which suggests that seeing Aboriginal social relations in terms of what Basil Sansom calls 'a grammar of service exchanges', where the history and type of services rendered define the norms of interaction, has much to recommend it.

Sansom distinguishes three types of service. There are routine services of the daily *quid pro quo* variety; there are signal services, which are those rendered to people in great need and which incur a debt that is never completely eradicated; and there are dedicatory services, such as a mother renders to a child (or, less frequently, an adult renders to another adult who shares a common history), which may only be reciprocated when the child reaches adulthood. Many of the obligations that underwrite the economy of service exchange arise as much from the specific personal histories and the patterns of nurture that have brought an individual to adulthood (Smith 1980) as from any material exchange of goods. The giving of care, nourishment, protection and support is the foundation for an extensive and highly personal system of reciprocal responsibilities, rights and commitments on which the right to make claims and demands is founded and by which particular kinds of knowledge, experience, property and authority are transmitted.

Demand sharing also relates to constructions of authority. In an elegant analysis in 1986 of authority and ideology among the Pintupi, Myers has shown how demanding and deference go hand-in-hand. The Pintupi term *kanyininpa*, meaning to look after, is used in several senses. It is particularly applied to parental care, especially as expressed in a mother holding her child, but it also refers to the relationship between successive generations. The senior generation holds the religious law and derives its authority from having already been involved in the process of transmission of that law from previous generations. Collectively and individually, members of the senior generation are obliged to look after and nurture the succeeding generation, preparing them for holding the law. Hierarchy and authority thus come to be presented in the guise of concern and nurturance, and generosity consequently becomes the complement of

authority. In return for respect and deference, the subordinate gener-ation can legitimately make demands for goods on their relatives in the senior generation. Of course, such demands are not made at random. They are made when a history of services leads to an expec-tation that they should or will be met. In the arena of non-contractual relationships, leaving people to ask is one way in which people secure the recognition of their status and authority: in the arena of contractual relations it seems to serve as a constraint.

Demand sharing reflects the underlying tension Myers has identified between autonomy and relatedness that runs throughout Aboriginal life. On the one hand, there is a socially created scarcity arising from the preparedness to recognise a widespread range of kinship ties, and this brings with it many demands, often more than can be easily met. On the other hand, the stresses of having too many social relationships to negotiate leads people to try to reduce demands by retreating into smaller groups, being passive in sharing and keeping production to a minimum.

Conclusion

It seems then, that there are ample ethnographic and intellec-tual grounds for assuming that demand sharing is not simply undomesticated self-interest, even though it certainly incorporates a fair degree of it, however constructed. Because demand sharing con-flicts with the Western view of generosity, which equates the latter with unsolicited giving, we see demand sharing in negative terms and as purely self-interested. It is a short step from this view to casting it in sociobiological terms. But should the practice be con-strued negatively?

Free giving in our society is often informed by self-conscious strategy and assessment of what is appropriate, so there are no nec-essary grounds for negatively evaluating a different construction of the ethic of generosity simply because it may involve self-conscious strategy. Indeed, focussing an account of demand sharing on strat-egy is part of the problem, because it is really a deeply sedimented social practice, often well removed from self-conscious calculation. From this perspective, if moral obligation and commitment to others is construed, not in terms of giving freely, but in terms of responding

positively to their demands, the morality of demand sharing is as positive as that of generosity.

Another construction of demand sharing could be that, rather than being a behaviour of long standing, it is a transitional phenomenon resulting from a breakdown in social obligations and surges in wealth differentials that the orthodox ethic of generosity cannot handle. Demand sharing seems however, too deeply embedded in the daily practice of Aboriginal life, and too integral to the tensions between autonomy and relatedness, to be accounted for by wealth differentials, disruption, poverty or the entrenching of social inequality, although these may have intensified the practice.

Demand sharing is a complex behaviour which is not predicated simply on need or biologically driven self-interest. Depending on the particular social context, it may incorporate one, some or all of the following elements. It may be a testing behaviour to establish the state of a relationship in social systems where such relationship have to be constantly produced and maintained by social action, and cannot be taken for granted. It may be assertive behaviour, coercing a person into making a response. It may be a substantiating behaviour to make people recognise the demander's rights. And paradoxically, a demand in the context of an egalitarian society can also be a gift: it freely creates a status asymmetry, albeit of varying duration and significance.

Chapter 10

Dr Hiatt and Mr Brown: Gidjingali Sociality and Culture Theory
Warren Shapiro

This essay is proffered with some diffidence. On the one hand, I am delighted to help honour a superb scholar and fine friend, a brother of the same ritual lodge — indeed, one generated by the same pseudo-procreative father. But, having recently finished paying like tribute to this father (Shapiro 1990a) — a task in which Les Hiatt assisted me (Hiatt 1990) — I find myself confronted by an intimation of my own mortality. Because of the truncated span of pseudo-procreative generations, my brother is, all of a sudden, about to receive this double-edged homage. There is patently a chink in my defensive armour, and in this respect I claim kindred with other pseudo-procreative theorists.[1]

The same ambivalence is called forth by the recent appearance of an overview of Aboriginal social anthropology during the quarter-century 1961–86 by Berndt and Tonkinson in 1988. The chapter on kinship by Keen (1988) especially accords my work a considerable if not always sympathetic treatment; but it also reminds me that these

efforts began in the early years of the period under scrutiny, when I was an aspiring academic, and that I am now middle-aged — a part, however small, of the history of anthropology.

Yet all students of Aboriginal sociality know that this is the life-season of greatest influence for their male theorists; and although my ethnic affiliations lie elsewhere, it seems a reasonable surmise that the Aboriginal situation is in this matter not unique. In fact, I feel strong enough (and I judge the scene to have ripened enough) to attempt a re-assessment of my brother's investigations into Gidjingali sociality — as both ethnographic contributions and as theoretical treatises, and especially in the light of that much maligned American school variously dubbed ethnosemantics, ethno-science and cognitive anthropology. This is my intent here.

I

I need to dwell a little on preliminaries. I use the underemployed term 'sociality' so as to afford me a freedom of expression which more established cousins, like 'social organisation' and 'social struc-ture', cannot provide — they carry too much excess baggage — and I return to this in my concluding remarks. And, following certain developments in neuroscience, cognitive psychology and linguistics subsequent to about 1950, I assume that human behaviour displays underlying structures, reflects cognitive maps, rules and plans.[2]

Anthropologists (except perhaps, for Marvin Harris and his admirers) will probably hold this latter assertion to be uncontrover-sial, but it really needs to be pressed and to be grounded in disciplines reputedly harder than anthropology. For it is now fash-ionable in our field to claim independence from the methodological restrictions of those disciplines, even while some very impressive post-structuralist ethnography pushes Lévi-Strauss's First Principle (that structures, rules, etc. exist) considerably further than he himself has done.[3] Lévi-Strauss correctly (if inadequately) locates such things in the human brain. (Where else could they be, unless one believes in such hobgoblins as cultures and social systems?).[4] Yet having done this, he proceeds to ignore most of the brain's products, including virtually all that are conventionally subsumed under the rubric of behaviour, and to focus instead on certain matters of

ideology. Criticisms of Lévi-Strauss abound of course, including Les Hiatt's on Aboriginal kinship and totemism, and my own recent observations that Lévi-Strauss has been somewhat less than generous in acknowledging his scholarly inspiration. But the most ironic of all is surely that he is, after all, not much of a structuralist: homage to cybernetics aside, the schemes he adduces are relatively simple ones that, at best, scratch the surface of lived human experience.

I want to suggest here that there is a considerably greater concern for the organisation of this experience in cognitive anthropology. Initially, and with considerable self-consciousness, this area of the discipline declared itself to be a methodology of ethnographic replication. But as such, it could scarcely avoid the claim that it was knocking into people's heads — though in its early years the issue was not without controversy. It has since become stylish to declare cognitive anthropology dead and buried, or at least absurdly limited, allegedly because of a lack of concern with metaphor and other areas of non-designative significance; because of a preoccupation with linguistic forms, to the neglect of non-linguistic symbolism; because of an idiographic focus with no wider theoretical implications; and because of a commitment to ethnographic trivia without 'real world' relevance. Although the allegations were not without foundation, there were examples to the contrary even in the early cognitive anthropology literature. The recent and almost equally self-conscious resurgence of cognitive anthropology builds upon these examples, whilst at the same time rooting itself in the pioneer efforts of Ward Goodenough.[5]

In the following, I contend that there is considerable convergence between Les Hiatt's analyses of Gidjingali sociality and cognitive anthropology's concern with ethnographic replication, and with the structure of behaviour. I also suggest how some of the shortcomings in these analyses might be overcome by attending further to such concerns, and how they have been or might be applied elsewhere to deepen our appreciation of Aboriginal life.

II

In the Preface to *Kinship and Conflict*, Les Hiatt lists six points of theoretical contention upon which he expects his own presentation

to bear. Two of these have to do with what, following David Schneider (1965), I call descent theory. Its early formulation by Radcliffe-Brown in 1930 and Fortes (1953), argued that residential groups in the 'tribal' world are nearly always generated by a unilineal (or unilateral, or unilocal) principle, which in Aboriginal Australia is always patrilineal (or patrilateral, or patrilocal), and that such groups are political corporations, where male agnates act as solidary and exclusive units in conflict situations. The second proposition depends upon or at least is made more likely by, the validity of the first, by 1965 which had already received by far the greater attention in the literature. Indeed, what is at issue in the seemingly picayune, and seemingly endless, debate about the Aboriginal 'horde' is a view of essential human sociality as agnatic corporations and their inter-relations. The commitment to this view is as strong as the evidence for it is weak. This being so, I have argued elsewhere (1990b, c) that what is at stake is not an empirical issue, but a metaphorical one in which the most remarkable objects of analysis are supplied by the heads of certain anthropologists.

In 1965 there were few challenges to the African models propounded by Fortes and others that Commonwealth anthropologists were likely to consider. John Barnes' classic statement (originally published in 1962) of the limitations of such models for the analysis of Melanesian materials had only recently appeared. A mixed bag of cognatic societies was being 'discovered' in Polynesia, Borneo and elsewhere, but these were widely (and incredibly erroneously) considered aberrant departures from a unilineal archetype.[6] Les Hiatt and Mervyn Meggitt had begun to challenge the 'horde' model of Aboriginal residential grouping in 1962, but the model had already been sustained by two of the respected elders of Australian anthropology (R. Berndt 1959, 96; Elkin 1932a, 129–30) and would soon receive a fresh pledge of scholastic allegiance from a third (Stanner 1965). Ronald Berndt's attempt in 1955 to ram the north-east Arnhem Land materials into an African mould was ironically (if appropriately) criticised by Radcliffe-Brown in 1956, but it was in fact as fitting a capstone as can be found to the extant prestige of descent theory and its hold on ethnographic analysis.

Hence Les Hiatt's demonstration that Gidjingali patriclans have no residential solidarity, particularly when coupled with the

comparable demonstration by Meggitt for the Warlpiri, should have been part of the mainstream assault on descent theory. That it did not turn out to be so is due, I think, to several factors.

First, the evidential standards for the support of descent theory required and supplied by ethnographers of Aboriginal sociality have been remarkably low. Neither Radcliffe-Brown nor Elkin nor Stanner nor Berndt ever bothered to publish even the most elementary analysis of residential or action grouping in any of the numerous settlements at which they worked. Their arguments for Aboriginal clan solidarity derive entirely from expressions of religious commitment. Kenneth Maddock, David Turner and others have continued this undemanding tradition of inquiry. Most remarkable of all is Nicolas Peterson's continued support of the 'horde' paradigm (Peterson and Long 1986) in the face of some remarkable findings (Peterson 1970) on the composition of aggregates on the ground.

Second, what Keen (1988, 91) has called 'the Birdsell defence' has been a powerful undercurrent of inquiry into Aboriginal sociality. The reference is to Joseph Birdsell's contention that evidence contrary to the 'horde' paradigm should be discounted because of its derivation from contact situations. Such Edenic quests are far more pervasive in Aboriginal studies and probably account for most of the uncritical bent already noted.

Third, Les Hiatt's analysis of residential grouping is primarily deconstructive: it does not deal, except in a partial and indirect way, with the principles pertinent to Gidjingali choice of residence. In this respect it contrasts with such milestones of cognitive anthropology as Goodenough (1956) on Trukese residence rules and Burling (1969) on Garo household composition, as well as Hiatt's own analysis of Gidjingali marital politics (1965). But, having made this point, I should add that such an analysis would in this domain probably have made little difference, apparently because of the force of the other two factors. Thus my inquiry in 1973 and 1986 into the structure of north-east Arnhem Land residence groups has gone almost unnoticed.

It may be too early to tell what the effect on descent theory will be of recently published findings from the Western Desert and Cape York, where ambilineal modes of recruitment to groups are very much in evidence. Elkin's early insights into the significance of

'spirit-finding' for 'clan' affiliation as well as my own and subsequent research in north-east Arnhem Land, suggest that the Western Desert and Cape York cases represent only extremes of affiliational flexibility. They also suggest that, even where this flexibility is limited by certain factors (particularly the existence of exogamous moieties), the regnant agnatic solidarity model of Aboriginal group affiliation is hopelessly inadequate.[7] Thanks mostly to Les Hiatt, the insufficiency of such a model has been plainer longer in the politics of Aboriginal marriage, to which I now turn.

III

A third key point made in the Preface to *Kinship and Conflict* (1965, xiv) is that Gidjingali patriclans are 'not units in wife-exchange systems of the kind implied by Lévi-Strauss's theory on kinship and marriage'. Les Hiatt subsequently showed in 1967 that much the same holds elsewhere in Aboriginal Australia, and then re-stated his argument for the Gidjingali in somewhat different form, in direct confrontation with Lévi-Strauss. Here Lévi-Strauss attempted to counter Hiatt by rendering the Gidjingali as 'what is left of a collapsing Australian tribe' which Keen (1988) astutely perceives to be another version of the 'the Birdsell defence'. I think it clear that what both versions wind up defending in scholarly polemic is their own position(s) from any contrary evidence. Lévi-Strauss's quest for Paradise Regained is of course widely appreciated. But since the subject of this essay is Aboriginal sociality, and not Lévi-Strauss's head, I intend to disregard it, at least for the moment (but see my concluding remarks).

   Although put forward in opposition to what I call alliance theory, it needs instead to be stressed that Les Hiatt's remarkable contribution to our appreciation of Aboriginal marital politics can also be seen as yet another counter to descent theory, specifically to the claim that agnatic corporations are solidary units in such politics. It is by no means incidental in this connection to point out that, in Radcliffe-Brown's best-known explication of the Aboriginal materials (Radcliffe-Brown 1930), the patrilines are affinally linked, and can be (and have been) assimilated to patriclans so linked. Thus in this

confrontation, too, Les Hiatt is set as much against Radcliffe-Brown as Lévi-Strauss.[8]

Moreover, versions of alliance theory which exceed even Lévi-Strauss in speedy retreat into an unreal world of 'Pure Ideas' have been put forward by Louis Dumont since the 1950s, and by Rodney Needham since the mid-1960s, with an eye to the Aboriginal materials. Les Hiatt has not dealt in any detail with these, but the following summary points need to be made.

First, Needham has analysed certain systems of kin classification as lineal even where isomorphic groups are absent. Such analyses rest upon a remarkably restricted segment of the pertinent semantic field and have on these grounds readily been shown to be inapplicable to non-Aboriginal systems. By contrast, most Aboriginal systems of kin classification appear to have a lineal structure: hence Radcliffe-Brown's ability to represent them as a series of patrilines and Hiatt on the Gidjingali system. But such a unity-of-the-lineage rendition, with or without lineages, is inadequate for the Aboriginal materials as well. It can be shown not to apply in the Western Desert and elsewhere on much the same grounds as with the non-Aboriginal schemes. And even in such areas as north-east Arnhem Land, with exogamous moieties and patriclans, the model can also be questioned, even for close kin. Thus, citing some examples from my own field materials there is some attempt to keep a patrisequential MB/MBS/MB/ ... structure in ego's mother's clan; but this is frequently disrupted by the generation of a child of a man called MB from a woman called (say) Z, which child may then be called not MBS but ZS. Among individuals less closely connected, such matrideterminations of kin class are still more frequent.[9]

Second, both Dumont and Needham have taken Aboriginal and other systems of kin classification to be monosemic. But the evidence for polysemy and extension is as overwhelming here as it is in other semantic domains more carefully explored by cognitive anthropologists[10.]

Third, Dumont and Needham have mistaken for their primary referents the affinal connotations of kin terms in Aboriginal and other systems. The latter, they usually hold, pertain to classes of wife-givers and wife-receivers which are (or are isomorphic with) lineal groupings. Scheffler has proffered devastating criticism in this

regard, and it needs to be added that this criticism applies as well to Maddock's (1969) attempt to refine these conceptual classes so as (allegedly) to take account of the Aboriginal data.

Fourth, the patrisequential ordering of sections (and subsections), to which both Dumont and Needham have given some attention needs more respect than Radcliffe-Brown was prepared to give it. There may well be in Aboriginal thought a fairly regular shift from matri- to patri-determination in such systems, so as to jibe with co-existing patriclan schemes, but the evidence is now compelling that such schemes have to do with the ordering of ritual life and are of minimal importance in other domains, as Les Hiatt has stressed.[11]

Fifth, Dumont and Needham, like Lévi-Strauss, might be dubbed pseudo-structuralists. It is not only that their analyses are empirically flawed. More important, their sense of the structure of human affairs is approximately as absurdly limited as is descent theory, from which they have self-consciously distanced themselves. Just as Lévi-Strauss has been vastly more interested in 'elementary structures' than in their 'complex' analogues, so Dumont and Needham have retreated into a Platonic realm of social classification. All three have encouraged (however implicitly) an impressive contingent of admirers not to take seriously the notion of structure in social and cultural analysis.[12]

The contrast with Les Hiatt's inquiry into Gidjingali marriage is stark. The analysis begins with a statement of marriage rights:

> A man's right to marry certain women was defined by specifying the kinship category and patrilineal groups of their mothers. The patrilineal group affiliations of the potential brides were irrelevant.
>
> Potential brides' mothers were of two kinds. One comprised all women who (a) belonged to the same patrilineal group as the groom's MM and who (b) were in the genealogical generation of his MMBD or a generation alternating with it ...
>
> The other comprised all women whose MMs (a) belonged to the groom's patrilineal group and (b) were in the genealogical generation of his FZ or a generation alternating with it (Hiatt 1965, 38–39).

Rather than render such regulations through alliance theory as Platonic ideals, Les Hiatt locates them in the earlier claims of individual actors. Moreover, the statement of pertinent rules even at this point is considerably richer than the established 'a man should marry his MMBDD or a woman classed with her'.[13]

But, in analysing the individual marriages in his sample, Hiatt does not treat unrightful instances simply as deviations from a (too) simple set of rules — the messy world of statistical models for Lévi-Strauss, or of institutions for Dumont and Needham — but instead attempts to account for them by appeal to further rules. Thus in only six of thirty-three marriages did the husband have rights to the wife of the sort cited above. Yet:

> ... there were no mature males with rights to eighteen of the [remaining] twenty-seven at the time of marriage. That is, in order to marry upon reaching an appropriate age, these eighteen women had to wed men without rights to them. The remaining nine married men who did not have rights to them, even though others did (Hiatt 1965, 79).

Which is to say that the majority of cases can be accounted for by either the statement of marriage rights, or the following rule: *a woman should be married when she reaches marriageable age, even if there is at that time of her life no man available with marriage rights to her.*[14]

The factors relevant to the marital destiny of the nine women covered by neither the foregoing rule nor those pertaining to marriage rights are not systematically treated. Hiatt notes in passing such considerations as a man's claim to a ZD of his ZDH — i.e. to niece exchange; the value placed upon generosity, such that a married man may wish to, or be expected to, renounce his claims to further wives in favour of single men without marriage rights; leviratic and sororatic claim; claim based upon an extant record of prestation to bestowers; and bestowers' preference for mature men over youths. Although Hiatt obscures the point by confining his express notion of rules in Gidjingali marriage to marriage rights, what we have here is a set of actual or potential normative propositions which Gidjingali use to *make sense of* (presumably to both themselves and the ethnographer) choices in the marital distribution of women. Les Hiatt's was in 1965 by far the richest structural

analysis of Aboriginal marriage in existence and has gone almost unrivalled since. My similar study in 1981, based upon materials further to the east in Arnhem Land was inspired by Hiatt's remarkable statement.

The expression 'make sense of' is important. What is involved is not an abbreviated set of ideals, to which is affixed a presentation of real facts. Nor is it a formal model (in the truncated style of alliance theory) supplemented by informal materials. Rather, it is (or can fairly readily be rendered as) a statement of the rules by which the Gidjingali structure one of the more salient realms of their social experience. Although Les Hiatt probably had no way of knowing it, cognitive anthropologists were recommending and applying closely comparable analyses around the same time. Roger Keesing's self-conscious 1967 attempt to supersede Lévi-Strauss's statistical models was perhaps the milestone effort, but richer appreciations of the notion of rules in ethnographic analysis were published around the same time.[15]

These developments were stimulated largely by the hopelessly limited 'jural rules' of descent theory, and that theory's corresponding inability to deal structurally with issues of individual choice in cognatic systems. Whereas descent theory (and alliance theory as well) have bought massively into native reifications — solidary groups, monosemic and bounded categories — cognitive anthropology has addressed itself to the more liberating issues of real world decision making in fluid social fields. There is no reason to suppose that these are non-issues in unilineal systems or 'elementary structures of kinship'.

This point can be made more forcefully by juxtaposing Keesing' (1971a) main assault upon descent theory with Les Hiatt's statements of Gidjingali bestowal rights. Central to Keesing's analysis is the notion that people act, in unilineal societies as elsewhere, in various social identities. Thus my participation in this Festschrift is (I presume) governed by two such social identities of mine, designated as 'friend of Les Hiatt' and 'academic' (most likely the 'anthropologist' subclass thereof), both of which are necessary, but neither sufficient, for this particular piece of social action. But (to paraphrase a piece of street wisdom) neither of these social identities is relevant to my travelling on the New York City subway system,

where like everyone else (except, for example, those designated as a 'senior citizen' or 'city employee'), I must pay US$1.25 or risk penalty.

All of this is unremarkable and may seem nothing more than a co-option of the sociological notion of 'roles'. But Keesing makes the telling point that much anthropological discourse about unilineal societies assumes that people (or at least men) always act in a social identity designated as a 'member of descent group X'. To this I would add that alliance theory, although perhaps less consistently, comparably straightjackets people as 'member of wife-giving descent group (or category)'.[16] Thus Les Hiatt reports that authority over a Gidjingali girl's bestowal is vested in her mother and MB, and that other *egocentrically-defined* kin can co-opt this authority; and he correctly points out, (especially in his 1968 work), that this challenges alliance theory on 'elementary structures of kinship'. He ought to have noted a comparable challenge to descent theory, for the Gidjingali also have ritual corporations that might pass as patrilineal descent groups. Be this as it may, by a simple sleight-of-hand which cements people inescapably onto descent groups, Lévi-Strauss can be rescued by inventing a wife-taking/wife-giving/wife-yielding triad and similar concoctions. There is even some evidence that Aboriginal Australians themselves like to toy with such notions; but the games people play, though eminently worthy of ethnographic attention, should not be confounded with their more earnest plans for social action.

IV

In the previous section I showed that Les Hiatt correctly proffers a kinship rather than clanship view of Gidjingali marriage. The same position is taken in the Preface to *Kinship and Conflict* in a summary of his findings on feuding:

> ... patrilineal groups never opposed each other as corporate units. Men had obligations to support close uterine and affinal relatives as well as close agnates, and there was always the possibility that members of the same patrilineal group would behave differently from one conflict situation to another, depending on their relationships to those concerned (Hiatt 1965, xiv).

Implicit in Hiatt's analysis is the view that, however important clans may be in Aboriginal religious life, the first Australians rely mostly on egocentric kinship principles to order other spheres of sociality. And the implied debate has not lost currency. Indeed, the four recent general statements of Aboriginal sociality collapse into a neat moiety scheme on the matter, Maddock (1972) and Turner (1980) emphasising clanship, Scheffler (1978) and myself (1979) emphasising kinship. Yet we are all of us rooted in Radcliffe-Brown.

Radcliffe-Brown's horde (or clan) model of Aboriginal sociality is, of course, well-known. The same is true of his kinship model: indeed, Aboriginal Australians provide most of the textbook exemplifications of kinship society. Although he seems to have employed both paradigms throughout his career, the idea of the horde seems to dominate most of his established work, while kinship characterises his earlier efforts. Chief among the latter is his classic 'Three Tribes of Western Australia', wherein we are told the following:

> Although the use of the terms of relationship is based on actual relations of consanguinity and affinity, it is so extended as to embrace all persons who come into social contact with one another. If we take any single member of the tribe, then every person with whom he has any social dealings whatever stands to him in one or other of the relations denoted by the terms ... In this way the whole society forms a body of relatives (Radcliffe-Brown 1913, 150).

The alleged behavioural entailments of such egocentric schemes of classification will be considered later. Nor will I deal here with Radcliffe-Brown's extensionist position and its fluctuations in the history of anthropology (but see Shapiro 1982), except to stress the implied distinction between close and distant kin. Briefly, my own position is this: although, with certain modifications, I consider the extensionist position to be correct, there seems to be strong evidence that Aboriginal sociality is governed not so much by a close and distant kin distinction as by a kin/non-kin one, and that the application of egocentric terms to non-kin is therefore of the sort usually called metaphorical.[17]

Although by 1965 there was already compelling indication of the existence of such personal kindreds in unilineal societies, as well

as in other societies with lineal relationship terminologies, *Kinship and Conflict* provides no direct evidence on the matter and little in the way of indirect evidence. We learn that, among the Gidjingali, 'each individual applied a kinship term to every person he met' (Hiatt 1965, 38), and that matrilateral ties are criterial for certain ritual and affinal rights and obligations; and there is occasional implication of a distinction between close and distant kin. But it seems to me safe to speculate that Les Hiatt was unaware of the pertinent comparative developments at the time of writing his little gem, and that we therefore ought not take seriously the suggestion of such a distinction, which would appear merely to mimic received opinion.

Indeed, things have scarcely improved since in the study of Aboriginal sociality. When I suggested that endogamous kindred organisation is present in north-east Arnhem Land, though it tends to be idiomised in terms of egocentrically-defined patriclan sets and their reciprocals, Ian Keen accused me of conflating egocentric and sociocentric categories, and of confusing personal kindreds with residential groups; and he further argued that the latter conflation is allowable only if such groups are completely endogamous.[18] But this last requirement is too severe: a rule involving marrying close, plus another involving residence with kin, together generate an on-the-ground approximation to such a plan in north-east Arnhem Land and probably elsewhere in Aboriginal Australia. And if the conflation of personal kindred and residential group be permitted on the basis of such a tendency for on-the-ground isomorphy, so too must the conflation of egocentric category and sociocentric category. There is, admittedly, the danger of mistaking arrangements on the ground for those in the head, but there seems to me at least *prima facie* evidence that the latter exist among the first Australians. What complicates the matter is the importance in Aboriginal ontology of metaphorical descent groups. But these should not be allowed to prevent us from seeing the profound similarities between Australian Aboriginal societies and those elsewhere in which marriage and residence are cognatically ordered in more obvious ways.

I think we have to modify the extremes of both clanship and kinship views of Aboriginal sociality. 'Sacramental corporations of a perennial order' (Stanner 1960, 253) patently exist in Aboriginal Australia, and they should not be dissolved, as Scheffler suggested

(1978, 513ff.), into egocentric kin classes. At the same time, their importance for social action has been remarkably overstated by both descent theory and alliance theory. The competing stance, nowadays represented most starkly by Scheffler, correctly attributes overall behavioural priority to egocentric notions and also (again I think, correctly) attributes cognitive priority to persons whom native English-speakers are likely to designate as close kin. My suggestion is that its outstanding error lies in the all-too-ready assimilation of this designation to the full range of Aboriginal discriminatory systems, together with the consequent inability to distinguish kin from non-kin.

It is doubtless too early to tell what the impact will be on our appreciation of Aboriginal sociality of my recent comparison of Aboriginal spirit-finding with exogenous notions of ritual kinship. The issue in any case is only indirectly an ethnographic one. The more immediate analytical concern is to compare it intra-culturally with other bases for relationships which we might by local standards be justified in calling pseudo-procreative, such as those designatable as 'fellow clan-member', 'manager', 'circumcisor' and 'ritual guardian'; and to comparing these, again intra-culturally, with conceptualisations from other domains.[19]

V

In *Kinship and Conflict* Les Hiatt (1965, 53) tells us that there is no isomorphism in Gidjingali social theory between kin class and behavioural class: 'Although an individual applied a kinship term to everyone in his social universe, he was not expected to behave in the same way towards all members of the one category'. This statement should not have gone without remark in 1965, for it controverted the textbook homilies declaring such isomorphism, which derived from Radcliffe-Brown's utterly inadequate investigations into Kariera sociality in 1913. Worse still, such underanalysed declarations continue. When Maddock (1972, 21) tells us that 'kinship norms regulate the behaviour of all Aborigines who have dealings with one another', he is aping Radcliffe-Brown rather than summarising any secure knowledge of Aboriginal sociality. When he proffers an analysis of the pan-Arnhem Land *mirriri* (Maddock 1970), the mentor is

not an Aboriginal informant but Lévi-Strauss (1963, 31–54), borrowing from Lloyd Warner (1931, 180). That Lévi-Strauss's 'atom of kinship' is nonsense (Shapiro 1982, 261) does not concern us here. What does, is Warner's situation in the maximal pseudo-procreative lineage deriving from Radcliffe-Brown — including (but not confined to) the latter's nomination of avoidance and joking relationships as if they were embedded in extant ethnography.[20]

The alleged isomorphism between kin class and behavioural class was in fact challenged early on by one of Radcliffe-Brown's American students, Morris Opler in 1937. It was challenged again in Ward Goodenough's pathbreaking Truk monograph (1951, 111–19), and yet again by cognitive anthropologists in ensuing years. To my knowledge, the ethnographic validity of the avoidance and joking rubrics has at best been ignored rather than expressly questioned.

Let me present some pertinent materials from my own research in north-east Arnhem Land and its hinterland. Throughout the area, informants spoke of the relationship between male ego and individuals who stand to him in the WM and WMB kin classes in such terms as to enable one to designate them as avoidance relations, if one so desired. But consider just the following information:

ego and WM	ego and WMB
eye contact prohibited; head turned completely away[21]	eye contact prohibited; head turned slightly away or downwards
untouchable	touchable, but only with the left hand
conversation prohibited	conversation permitted, but only on instrumental (not discursive) matters

On this basis, one might characterise the relationship with a WMB as less avoidant than one with a WM: and some of my informants did just this, saying that, whereas the latter is '(simply) shameful' (*guramirri*), the former is only 'partially shameful' (*marrkangga guramirri*). But this information is very nearly irrelevant behaviourally, for it tells us next to nothing about how one should act in the presence of a WM or a WMB and thus ignores the classic formulation of the goals of cognitive anthropology (Goodenough

1951, 10). Nor does it say anything at all about the relationship with a Z, which is not classed as shameful, but whose avoidant qualities are so stark as to have engaged the attention of several (pseudo-procreative) generations of ethnographers; or that with a secret/sacred creditor (a man who shows ego his ritual posts) with whom social intercourse is held to be shameful and who may be a member of any (male) kin class whatsoever.

Nor are matters any simpler with females of the WM class. For one thing, the canonical isolation of the class is in fact blurred. Along the north-east Arnhem Land coast the WM class (or subclass) is very obviously the marked member of the FZ superclass (or class), as I have shown elsewhere, and the relationship with a FZ is very different and not said to be shameful. The same can be said for the interior of the area, though here the element of class inclusion is less obvious. Worse still, the coast/interior distinction is itself blurred. Individuals readily move within the region, and there is evidence for historical and situational variation which can only artificially be rendered as ethnic difference.

We can (however artificially) confine our attention to the coast, the *locus classicus* of Warner's pioneer ethnography, only to find Warner's statement of the 'Murngin' WM/DH relationship entirely inadequate.[22] Thus all three of the behavioural rules noted above do not apply when the WM is pre-pubescent, when (literally) touching her in a defined public context earnestly establishes her as a future mother-in-law. And all three are optional once the WM reaches menopause. Moreover, when the rules are usually expected to apply during a woman's ontogeny (between puberty and menopause) they do so mainly with full (*dangang*) members — a subclass of any kin class it took me four pages of my book-length ethnography just to set (flexible) bounds for, and to which I refer the interested reader for further detail (1981, 38–41). With the residual subclass of this class there is the option of a very different relationship, which is not said to be shameful and which I have elsewhere glossed as a joking relationship. Finally, men sometimes look a full WM straight in the face, thereby signalling not (or not only) that they break rules, or that (pace those two guardians of traditional morality, Radcliffe-Brown and Lévi-Strauss) times are changing, but that they wish to renounce conjugal claim to her daughters. Exactly how all this can be

comprehended by an alleged isomorphism between kin class and behavioural class, and by the avoidance/joking distinction, is quite beyond me.

VI

Les Hiatt's late 1960s corpus on Gidjingali kinship, centring of course around *Kinship and Conflict*, was an absolutely seminal contribution to our appreciation of Aboriginal sociality. More cogently than any previous body of literature, it countered the notion that clans are the elementary units of Aboriginal social life, in residence, conflict and the politics of marriage. It proffered the first serious decision-theoretic analysis of marriage in an Aboriginal community. In so doing, it demonstrated the advantages over a clanship emphasis of a kinship perspective on Aboriginal sociality; and it suggested the limitations of the latter view by noting the lack of congruence in Gidjingali thought between kin class and behavioural class. Even within the kinship emphasis of the corpus there were flaws. The analysis of residence groups was mostly deconstructive, and there was only an implied recognition of a kin/non-kin distinction. But it remains a milestone.

Les Hiatt made it plain that his two major theoretical opponents were Radcliffe-Brown and Lévi-Strauss. I have argued that even those complaints that accrue more obviously to the latter can also be attached to the former: hence it strikes me as by no means unrealistic to construe Hiatt's corpus as a confrontation with the ghost of Radcliffe-Brown. This is all the more so because of the remarkably (and similarly) truncated view of human affairs espoused by the two senior men, in comparison to the far richer one embedded in Hiatt's writings. For, despite Lévi-Strauss's allegation of a radical break with Radcliffe-Brown and the British school on the notion of structure, the concern of the latter with behaviourally significant rules is superficial. British structuralism involves a fetishised world of social persons and jural rules, and thus seems to me to be about as capable of handling real world situations as its presumed counterpoint on the other side of the Channel.

I do not wish to be too hard on Radcliffe-Brown. On the contrary, I believe the present-day devaluation of him, especially by

Rodney Needham in 1982, has gone too far, and that for his day, he proffered valuable analytical schemes for our appreciation of Aboriginal and other social theories. But Radcliffe-Brown's day is long gone. In my opinion the real villains of the piece are more recent scholars who continue to cling to his ancestral emanations: Joseph Birdsell is an outstanding example in the pseudo-procreative generation immediately senior to mine, whereas Kenneth Maddock is one who fills this position in my own cohort.

We need I think, to realise how firmly Edenic quests and other pseudo-procreative projects are embedded in our analyses in order to purge them and show greater respect for the ethnographic materials. With Lévi-Strauss such projects run so deep as to require an analysis in its own right, comparable to the one I have made for Radcliffe-Brown. It is unsurprising that their followers continue these quests. That Aboriginal Australians engage in similar endeavours, in much of their social theory that has passed for social organisation, in their ritual life and in the outstation movement and other re-inventions of tradition, provides us with a rich source of data; but these data are not, as some of us seem to think they are, without need of further analysis.

Related to this is the consideration that situations of social change are not unnatural or ontological hand-me-downs of (allegedly) pristine conditions. T*hey provide most of the data-base for our generalisations about Aboriginal sociality*, including those Aboriginal quests for a Lost Paradise from which the present polluted order of things departs. No ethnographers worth their salt would now seriously attempt to treat Aboriginal Australia as if it were a series of discrete tribes devoid of historical connection. That history should be seen as beginning, and important inquiry ending, with European contact is a pseudo-procreative stance, not a meta-plan for an empirical discipline.

This line of argument bears some pursuit. In my opinion, the two thickest monograph-length descriptions of Aboriginal sociality are Kenneth Liberman's *Understanding Interaction in Central Australia* (1985) and Basil Sansom's *The Camp at Wallaby Cross* (1980). Both deal unabashedly with stark situations of change induced by European contact and are thus able to dispense with the legacy of local organisation, clanship and other elements of

pseudo-procreative theory bequeathed to us by Radcliffe-Brown and his co-conspirators, both European and Aboriginal. Their focus instead is on the micro-sociology of Aboriginal life (i.e. with actual social affairs and the plans that underlie them) and they are forced to use modes of analysis far more discerning than what passes canonically for the elements of Aboriginal social organisation. The results, coupled with those of recent sociolinguistic inquiry (eg Haviland 1979; Heath et al 1982; Merlan 1981), are among the most penetrating insights we have into Aboriginal sociality.

Further, we need to follow the lead of Liberman and Sansom by de-reifying the local organisation controversy and seeing it as an issue of Aboriginal sociality (i.e., of the plans by which Aboriginal Australians choose to associate). It is, after all, mostly a special case of consociation.[23] Early in my fieldwork in north-east Arnhem Land I busied myself by noting which particular individuals were talking (or otherwise in close proximity) with which particular others. At that time I had no idea why they were consociating or what they were saying or doing. Later I was able to fill some of these gaps; but, by the time I began to publish, the outstanding problems (and my career concerns) seemed to entail attention to social organisation. Undaunted by 'the Birdsell defence', braver souls have made available at least some of their statistical materials on Aboriginal consociation in situations of change (eg Biernoff 1979; Larbalestier 1979; Michaels and Kelly 1984). The rest of us (myself included) might consider dusting off our field notebooks, looking for comparable materials, and trying to discern underlying plans.

Finally, and probably most importantly, there are immense gaps in our knowledge of Aboriginal childhood. It can hardly go unremarked here that one of the very few monograph-length studies of the subject is Annette Hamilton's (1981) fine piece on the Gidjingali situation. It seems fairly clear that the low prestige of childhood research in Aboriginal studies reflects the concerns of adult male ethnographers working with adult male Aborigines, a focus which I have suggested elsewhere, accounts at the same time for the immensely overblown status of both descent theory and alliance theory.[24] In any case, the point (however obvious to some of us) needs to be stressed that childhood is not only the time in which culture (in the received, adult-oriented sense) is learned: it is also the

emotionally richest period of life, when the bonds that hold adults together are forged in earnest. A plans-oriented study of childhood is no easy matter, for children, especially young children, cannot tell us how they learn, and adult models of childhood are a different matter altogether. But the fact remains that we have nearly cut the guts out of Aboriginal sociality by failing adequately to pursue Géza Róheim's insight that a boy's libidinal energy is largely transferred at initiation from his mother to the community of adult males, and by similarly giving short shrift to the maturation of girls into women. If we are to build on the splendid foundations laid by Les Hiatt's investigations into Gidjingali sociality, I suggest we especially attend to these considerations.

Materialism, Sacred Myth and Pluralism: Competing Theories of the Origin of Australian Languages

Peter Sutton

> I am maintaining a realist and pluralist position against a form of intellectual monism that seeks to reduce cognitive, conative, and affectual complexes to modes of thought.
> LR Hiatt 1969

Introduction

Philosophical realism and pluralism, with the addition of material- ism, are probably the three definitive streams of the work of John Anderson, the philosopher active in Sydney in the period 1927–62.[1] They are also fairly characteristic of Australian philosophy in general, both academic and folk, at least among those of European descent. Although much has been made of Anderson's influence on Australian thinkers, Les Hiatt among them, it is important to

remember that it takes two to tango.[2] Les has developed his own anthropological mix of these characteristic positions, and more besides, over a distinguished and continuing scholarly career.

As a 1968 philosophy student in what had been Anderson's department I first became aware of this cluster of general positions and noticed how easily they could be absorbed, given my own Australian cultural background with its predisposition to scepticism, nostalgia for sense-evidence, dislike of grand unifying theories, Caledonian parsimony, and a bowerbird (or is it larrikin?) approach to other points of view. It was a relief to consider that materialism and an anti-reductionist habit of mind might finally be compatible, not just culturally but intellectually as well.

That was the year DM Armstrong's *A Materialist Theory of the Mind* appeared.[3] I read it with unaccustomed concentration, sparking the initial logical collapse of the rather extreme mysticism I held to at the time. In a linked process, I began to look at Old English poetry, which was one of my subjects as a 1969 undergraduate, more and more from an ethnographic point of view, reading the abridged *Golden Bough* of Frazer (1963 (1922)) and deciding that discursive analysis only killed art when carried out too boringly. It was also in this year that Les's Howitzer reply to Lévi-Strauss on totemism appeared (Hiatt 1969), combining well-informed and rigorous argument with dry, laconic, sardonic humour — and a passion for open debate. The revealing quotation at the head of this chapter comes from that energetic, slightly mocking paper. I doubt if I would have been drawn, eventually, to Australian anthropology as such without the presence of this kind of human quality contained in the writings of Les Hiatt and, in more conventional style, those of WEH Stanner.

Coming after the relative coolness and formality of *Kinship and Conflict* in 1965 and his earlier work on local organisation in 1962 the totemism paper seemed rather more representative of Les's philosophical roots. The verve of the attack, however, was certainly compatible with that of his earlier joust with Lévi-Strauss in 1968 over Gidjingali marriage arrangements. I have to admit, that *Kinship and Conflict* only started to come alive for me on page 55, when experience interrupts the flow of summary ethnography and systemic analysis with the paragraph that begins: 'Late one afternoon I was crossing the Blyth River by canoe when one of the five natives with

me uttered a cry of alarm.' Unlike his own duels with anthropologists, the conflicts of the Gidjingali seemed to spark comparatively little literary colour.

If Les's pluralism allows for a generous view of the uses of conflict, it also allows for a rather avuncular approach to the academic conflicts of others. A characteristic Hiatt paper is one that starts out summarising two opposing or contrasting views of the same subject. He then tends to find some solid worth in both. Next, the anxiety which this plurality of truths might inspire in a reader is suddenly relieved, not by a sweeping replacement of the two views by Les's own, so much as by a skilful reconciliation of the apparent opposites, Les adding his own evidence and argument here and there. Both original views, thus redefined more as partial truths than as irreconcilable opposites, are essentially accommodated, missing links are provided, and the complexity of reality is affirmed once again.[4]

Of course the particular debate in question has to lend itself to this kind of libertarian treatment before receiving it, and there are notable moments in Les's work where the combative mode dominates and the ecumenical is invisible.[5] But with an attitude of late Hiatt intellectual generosity one can often avoid the need to denounce all former theories and relegate them to the dustbin just before advancing one's own.

Taking a leaf out of Les's book, I will try to do justice to the two main competing theories of the origin of Australian Aboriginal languages, and show that they form a more real, and pluralist, account of things when connected together into a third theory.

The theories, much simplified but at least in the order of their arrival, are these:

Thesis: Different languages were left, found or made by heroic Ancestral Beings (Dreamings) at the foundation of human sociality in each region, often clan estate by clan estate, at least in the better watered areas, and usually along major songlines in the desert. In most areas, Dreamings switched to different languages as they moved across the landscape, putting their imprimatur on a pre-existing Babel-like reality if they had not indeed made it themselves. Language differences, in an immediate sense, thus rest on ancestral

history, religious identifications and land relationships, but ultimately they arise, or are constituted, as *meanings,* as being among those patterns of same-but-different that are so central to Aboriginal philosophy. They are not mere human artefacts, but are like totems. They have been there from the start. Multilingualism is not merely a convenience but the Law. Each small land-based social group may have its own distinct way of speaking. This is important.

Antithesis: That's all cultural ideology. Languages are made by people. Aborigines migrated to Australia bringing a small stock of languages, perhaps even only one, and millennia of relative social isolation in different parts of the continent have resulted in gradual linguistic diversification. Language differences mark breaks in density of communication, based on the ecology of land use. About 500 people make a language by not talking very often to anybody else and by mainly marrying among themselves. Multilingualism is a boundary phenomenon. Small differences between dialects are not important.

Synthesis: Both theories contain some truths, and both kinds of truth are necessary to a well-rounded account (from an academic point of view). Phenomena such as clan dialects, where a case for clans can be made out, are real, yet clans are never discrete interactive populations and indeed are normally exogamous: their members spend their married lives with members of other clans. Why, then, have they maintained different ways of speaking? If the communicative density argument fails for clan dialects, as it certainly does, why should it not fail for closely related sets of dialects vis à vis other sets? Aboriginal multilingualism both defies and affirms what the standard academic theory says about discontinuities in communication density, since particular multilingual repertoires were always regionally confined. But high endogamy among owners of the same language was by no means general at the time of early European contact. And there is no simple match between ecology and language diversity.

Splitting and coalescence of languages are social and cultural processes, not merely demographic ones; they are also political, not

merely mechanical. The factors of intention and of consciousness of kind cannot be ignored. Without a consciousness of the Dreaming and its complex mediation of ritual, connubial, political and ecological conjunctions and disjunctions, the local dialectal pattern makes no sense on purely mechanical hypotheses. Yet there is a gross relationship between environmental richness and language diversity, between density of communication and the numbers of people claiming particular languages, and thus between rainfall and grammar. The trouble with earlier forms of this theory is that it is the most isolated people, not the high density communicators, who maintain the lowest linguistic diversity, generally speaking.

I will now expand on these three positions in greater detail, beginning with the academic historical–linguistic position.

Evolution and equilibrium: European origin myths

Before outlining what I shall call the standard academic theory of the evolution of Australia's linguistic diversity, it is worth noting that there have been other suggestions put forward by non-Aboriginal writers. An early one was Eyre the explorer. In 1845 he made the important observation that the denser the Aboriginal population, the more linguistic and cultural variety there was, and attempted to explain the phenomenon:

> The reason of this apparent anomaly would seem to be, that those tribes now living near to one another, and among whom the greatest dissimilarity of language and customs is found to exist, have originally found their way into the same neighbourhood by different lines of route, and consequently the greatest resemblances in language and custom, might naturally be expected to be met with, (as is in reality the case), not between tribes at present the nearest to each other, but between those, who although now so far removed, occupy respectively the opposite extremes of the lines of route by which one of them had in the first instance crossed over the continent. (Eyre 1845, 393).

Eyre's theory does not allow much room for the idea that linguistic variety might evolve *in situ*. It is also rather circular. That is, it does not explain how the original stocks, from which emigrant outliers

might be found in regions of dense population, managed to arise in the first place, nor does he offer a basis on which the direction of migrations could be detected.

Eyre was not alone in starting from a hypothesis of movement rather than of evolution. A somewhat similar theory was arrived at by Holden (1879, 26):

> I consider the variety of languages [on the Murray River] has been brought about in the first instance, by outlaws, men banished from the tribe for some crime, families formed, and there by degrees adopted new words, so that their conversation, planning, or scheming, might not be known by any eavesdropper from the tribe the banished ones came from; and the repeated changing words, owing to any deaths would assist in making a new language.

This theory is partly similar to that of Howitt (1904, 79–81) in relation to the constitution of the Biduelli of Victoria, whom he considered a mixture of 'broken men', refugees from three other tribes, who spoke a mixture of those three languages in their 'cave of Adullam' in Gippsland.

Holden's theory also looks remarkably like something modelled on an awareness of the notorious prisoners' cant or convict argot which itself was present at the founding moments of colonial Australia (Grose 1963). Holden's is an interesting speculation, and it at least has the virtue of being based on social, political and cultural forces rather than some mechanical 'drift' model, but the evidence is wanting. His suggestion that banishment is a primary force in Australian language diversification has failed to get modern support.

James Dawson, another early ethnographer, accounted for the maintenance of linguistic diversity in Victoria by noting that each child had to speak its father's language only (the exception being that mothers had to speak to children in their husband's language). People normally spoke to each other in their own languages. 'This very remarkable law explains the preservation of so many distinct dialects within so limited a space, even where there are no physical obstacles to ready and frequent communication between the tribes'

(1981, 40). He attributed the active multilingualism of his own period to the impact of colonisation. He did not venture to explain how the original diverse linguistic stock got there.

Wyndham (1889, 42) gave an early version of the more standard academic theory:

> Evidently the different languages have been derived from one original. The aborigines having broken up, and formed small tribes from the original stock, have altered their customs more or less, to suit the requirements of the districts where they have located themselves, and their language has undergone similar changes.

RH Mathews (1900, 558) had a more complex theory involving successive waves of Aboriginal immigration:

> In the speech of the present occupants of these lands traces of an original stock language can be detected ... It may be reasonably expected that the dialects and customs of the later immigrants would differ in some respects from those of their precursors, owing to their arrival at long intervals during successive ages ... [I]f they kept by themselves for any considerable time the dialect of each [clan or family] would be modified ... [This] would account for the immense variety of different dialects we find spoken by the present inhabitants.

Tindale and Birdsell (1941), hypothesising successive waves of immigration as had Mathews, suggested that the people of the Cairns rainforest region were 'Tasmanoid', not only physically but linguistically, a kind of hills deposit of an earlier population. Nekes and Worms (1953), however, demonstrated that there were relationships between the rainforest languages and those of non-pygmoid Queensland peoples far to the south-east, and on their evidence and a comparison with Tasmanian languages, Capell (1966, 110–114) concluded that the Tindale/Birdsell hypothesis of a Tasmanoid linguistic flood-wrack left suspended in the rainforest was unsustainable. Dixon (1972, 348; 1991) has driven this refutation home with detailed evidence. The high degree of superficial linguistic diversification that has happened both here and in Princess Charlotte Bay (Rigsby 1980, 1992) is arguably

evidence, not of relict peoples, but of an efflorescence that has occurred in situ among small and quite tightly knit and perennially polyglot populations.

Close interaction between speakers of different varieties does of course provide a context for linguistic convergence, even where certain features of different varieties are consciously emphasised in an effort to maintain diversity. This has been reported from northeast Arnhem Land by Frances Morphy in 1983. There, local linguistic criteria for distinguishing languages and dialects thus do not always match the comparative-linguistic picture arising from the analyses of a linguist (Keen 1994, 78–79). Post-settlement history has played a role in rearranging the pattern of communication density in that region and is said to account for some recent linguistic convergences. Clan estates associated with a common dialect form, however, are in many cases discontinuously distributed; that is, they are interspersed among estates associated with other linguistic varieties named after their near demonstrative pronouns ('this-categories'; Schebeck 1968, Keen 1994, 76). This does not suggest any particularly neat relationship between communication density and linguistic uniformity.

Density of communication: twentieth century models

The prevailing assumption of Australianists in this century has been that geographical separation and parochialism, combined with the critical factor of the passage of time, is what causes linguistic diversity among Aboriginal people.[6] Linguistic convergence, by the same token, arises from geographical proximity of different languages plus the passage of time.

Ferdinand de Saussure, a founding intellectual ancestor of western linguists, believed that: 'In every human collectivity two forces are always working simultaneously and in opposing directions: individualism or **provincialism** [*esprit de clocher*] on the one hand and **intercourse** — communications among men — on the other' (Saussure 1960, 205). Language is splintered by provincialism and unified by mobility. Unique language features are due to provincialism and shared language features are due to intercourse. But provincialism is nothing more than the force of intercourse peculiar

to each region, so there is really only one cause of linguistic variety and unity: intercourse.

But the two original forces of Saussure's argument were of different analytic orders: one was an *esprit*, a cultural/political motive force, while the other was a statistical process consisting of the density of communication networks and degrees of spatial mobility.[7]

A problem with this mismatched dichotomy is that linguistic varieties (whether similar or different) always have the capacity to convey social and attitudinal implications. Whether a culture identifies a variety as regional, class-based, ethnic, or even as a national standard designed to be as free of regional or class connotations as possible, any variety can be placed by reference to some notion of social group or set. Individuals acquire these varieties through exposure, but it cannot be assumed that there will always be a direct correlation between degrees of exposure to a variety and either competence in that variety or the degree to which it gets used in practice. The intent of the subject is a rather libertarian variable in this situation.

In any case, there are no agreed technical senses in which the phrases 'degrees of exposure' and 'degrees of use' are used by scholars. Do they, for example, refer to utterances per minute of total speech, proportion of non-perfunctory conversations per week, number of meaningfully distinct contexts of use, number of different individuals spoken to /listened to? Choosing among these definitions presumably requires a theory of language change which makes some such parameters more 'causal' than others, and therefore more significant to the definition of degrees of exposure and use as forces in the history of language. Must we assume, then, that such objective and quantifiable parameters as 'utterances per minute' take priority in our research over the subjective evaluations of speaker-hearers as to the relative amount, or the culturally-prescribed necessity, or the functional load, or the political and economic empowering, of their use of different varieties? Hopefully not. Similarly, if physical distances between villages, schools, suburbs, band ranges, clan estates or islands are to enter our calculations, must we not give at least equal value to subjective and culturally-mapped views of distance, to attitudes of coercion, respect and defiance, or the requirements of religion, in choices of certain codes over others?

In sum, the density-of-communication model of the causes of linguistic diversification and convergence in Australia is insufficiently based on cultural and psychological rather than demographic and other statistical factors that can be modelled. And yet Aboriginal linguistic models that consciously underlie observable behaviours are not hard to discover.

In south-east Arnhem Land, for example, not only were languages 'assigned by the dreamtime cult totems, and … inherited patrilineally as part of clan territory' but there are myths where 'two dream-time beings' belonging to different languages exchange linguistic rights so that the present people of each relevant clan have a secondary right to use the language of the other, 'chartered' by myth. 'Multilingualism is considered not to be a chance by-product of interaction, but rather an aspect of social relationships' (Heath 1978, 15). This is also made explicit, usually in a religious and/or descent-based idiom, by the peoples of western Cape York Peninsula, the Princess Charlotte Bay region and north-central Australia, in my own experience. Multilingualism of this kind is considered by Aboriginal people to be not just a useful skill, but Lawful behaviour that rests on the sacred domain (Rose 1992, 87).

It is curious then, that proponents of the standard academic theory on language differentiation in Australia have said that different grammars and lexicons arise from a relatively closed pattern of social relationships, when it is social/ritual relationships and their thoroughly embraced multilingualism that appear to explain linguistic diffusion and convergence between languages whose identities are maintained as separate, in the case so ably documented by Heath. Why should not divergence also continue to occur between linguistic varieties spoken by the same community of people and their direct descendants? High local lexical diversity among dialects of virtually identical grammatical structure, spoken among the members of small intermarrying populations, may be best explained as evolving *within* the repertoires of a speech community. Such communities also maintain sets of languages of widely differing types, as in the Daly–Darwin area of the Northern Territory. In the Victoria River district people speak of the members of a multilingual community as being a linguistic unity, a repertoire group rather than a language group. It is one based on sacred Law:

> Mudbura, Ngarinman, Gurindji [names of languages].
> Everybody relations. Same language ... And all the same
> language. We hear him [understand them] ... All different
> tribes, but they understand. We living together by language.
> They [ancestors] been only [all-day?] living together. We here
> today top of that. From beginning, we here. We understand
> that Law. (Rose 1992, 87–88)

'Tribal split'

RMW Dixon's work in particular in 1972, 1976, 1980, presents
Australian 'tribes' as self-contained political units, each with its own
(emically defined) language, and consisting of a number of local
groups that use the land. When local groups of a tribe spend most of
the year in different parts of the tribal country they may drift apart,
their dialectal differences expand and these dialects may undergo
loss of mutual intelligibility. If their populations rise they may
develop into two separate tribes.

　　This confusion of a categorial unit of identification, what
Peterson called the 'formal-tribe' in 1976, with on-the-ground resi-
dential aggregates is the fundamental weakness in Dixon's analysis.
Furthermore, most anthropological writers, even Birdsell, deny
political unity to the language-affiliated category or formal-tribe,
and many ethnographies attest to the polyglot composition of land-
using aggregates, which are thus not structural sub-units of single
language groups at all.

　　Birdsell's statistical models based on biological anthropologi-
cal work in 1973, 1987 and 1993 place a similar emphasis on
Australia's 'dialectical (*sic*) tribes' as population units or isolates, and
indeed may be the source of much of Dixon's commitment to this cel-
lular approach to the relation between language and society in
Aboriginal Australia. Birdsell frequently provides evidence or argu-
ment to establish that homeostasis, or population equilibrium, was a
characteristic of the sizes of family, band and tribal units and their
density of geographical distribution in relation to rainfall.[8]

　　The appeal of this construct to a conservative sensibility —
and it is remarkably close in spirit to what old Aboriginal men and
women say about the changeless order of the Aboriginal world —

perhaps explains part of its longevity. Philosophically it is in a sense a post-evolutionist position, arising at the height of the popularity of structural-functionalist anthropology with its synchronic, organicist predilections and its love of pigeon-holes. It rests very heavily on an assumption of generalised low linguistic exogamy, but it is clear from the marriage statistics on which Birdsell relies (Tindale 1953) that this low average figure on Australia-wide linguistic exogamy conceals a wealth of variation. In Dixon's Cairns rainforest region, for example, linguistic exogamy appears to have been quite high, and in western Cape York Peninsula it was even higher.[9]

Given these preferences for language-group models that emphasise social closure, it is not surprising that linguistic diversification in Australia has so long been explained almost exclusively in terms of demographic and communicative density, a kind of culture-less theoretical machine that drives linguistic evolution on the basis of putative behaviour in the absence of an adequate ethnography of intention. It is in this sense behaviourist rather than culturological in origin, and emphasises mass processes at the expense of the role of influential individuals, the latter being never or almost never mentioned.[10]

Dreaming languages: Aboriginal origin myths

By stark contrast, Aboriginal traditions about the origins of the diversity of languages begin with known, individual Ancestral Beings; the creative or revelatory intent of their engagement with different tongues is redolent with land politics, local sentiment, religious activism, and concern with group identity, in the midst of polyglot social interaction. They also emphasise travel rather than insular sedentariness.

The attested Aboriginal myths on the foundations of language variation can be broadly divided into two types: accounts of Dreamings which institute culture and allot languages to different groups of people, and those in which Dreamings switch from one pre-existing language to another as they carry out a foundational performance in which meaning is added to a formerly less meaningful world: that of creative travel across a wide landscape (and sometimes one finds both). The 'creative act' in this case does not

require the making of something out of nothing, or indeed the making of anything at all. WEH Stanner referred to the critical part of the process in 1979 as 'the institution of relevances'. Typically, a multiplicity of languages, not just one, is either instituted or recognised by the travelling Dreaming or Dreamings. In other words, mythic foundations of language are not specific to languages or language groups, but recognise them as a plurality and a diversity at the outset. It is transcendental powers, not parochial ones, that create Babel (cf Maddock 1982) or rather, that provide meaning and relevance for Babel. It is the serial discovery and maintenance of diversity rather than particular birth-moments of individual languages that seem to be the main thrust of the Aboriginal stories.

In espousing this principle, the Aboriginal 'native theories' are intellectually closer to the nub of the problem than the Birdsell/Dixon theories based on the (undemonstrated) parochial demographics of language groups. The Aboriginal theories start from regional populations rather than from alleged units within them. They stress the cultural valorisation of difference as well as of unity, they attribute local linguistic diversity to acts of interaction rather than to isolation, and they stress consciousness of kind rather than kinds of consciousness. These are classical Aboriginal social and philosophical principles. And they are focussed on finding cultural relevance and symbolic import in the linguistic differences that exist, rather than on the putative moment of 'creation' of a particular new language. Differences of linguistic identity within society are part of its order, not manifestations of disorder.

Leaving the languages for the people

In 1979 Stanner said that the Dreaming myths of Australia characteristically have three elements: dramatic marvels; the institution of many natural and cultural phenomena for the first time; and a presupposition that many of the main rules of customary law already obtained in the Dreaming period. Among things typically instituted in these events he includes 'how such social divisions as tribes, clans, and language groups were set up'. In searching the literature for examples of the instituting of languages by Dreamings, however, I

found little evidence for the desert inland and the south-east, and rather a lot for the tropical north.[11]

These founding heroic beings tend to come not merely from outside the area of focus, but frequently from the sea or from the direction of the sea. An example from south-eastern Australia is the story of the three brothers who came from somewhere about the equator and landed at Clarence River. As their different families spread and multiplied 'they kept in touch with each other all the time' but developed the dialects Biriin, Gumbaynggirr, Wiyabal and Galibal (Robinson 1965, 40–43 and see Crowley 1978). Unfortunately, the relevant ethnography for south-eastern Australia is usually very thin.

In the far more richly documented area of north-east Arnhem Land, Nancy Williams (1986, 39, 40, 61–64, 102) suggests a 'chain-mail' metaphor for the linkages between Yolngu groups and their lands as established in mythic narratives about the creative travels of ancestral beings. As such beings move about, they 'name' species and natural features in each area, bestowing some special and unique names of these types and also listing names of the first true human beings in which title to that land is vested. As the beings enter another territory they change dialect to reflect this.

Thus not only dialects as such, but special terms for species, places, rituals and sacred objects (some of them too powerful and sacred to be public knowledge) are associated with the different landed groups in that region. Not only distinctiveness and connectedness but also ritual and political power and danger are encoded in these mythologically established varieties of language. The myths tend, in the telling, to emphasise linguistic/land units (*matha*) rather than other possibly appropriate entities. The *matha* group defines the maximum potential membership of a single land-owning group, but does not constitute the most critical level of organisation that determines control of sacred objects and hence of the land itself.

Ian Keen's study (1978, 74) in the same region, but further west, concluded: 'Yolngu stories state on what grounds a particular group owns the land and 'holds' the rangga [sacred clan emblems]. They tell how a wangarr [Dreaming] created each group and language at each country, and men assert that present clans are

descended from these ancestral groups'. These are typical of north Australian accounts.[12]

Switching languages

When Dreaming characters switch language, it is normally because they are entering an area that is 'already' associated with the new language in a formal, Dreaming-sanctioned sense. This, rather than a language creation or bestowal myth, appears to be the norm over most of the interior south of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. Some of these mythic journeys are vast. The most travelled Dreamings were more polyglot than any living person could be. The Wati Kutjarra, according to Berndt and Berndt (1988, 243), passed through the areas of 'possibly twenty-five to thirty dialect or language units'. Of even more continental proportions is the Dreaming track connecting Port Augusta to Roper River (Sutton 1990, 72), the southern half of which is concerned with Native Cats which change languages from Western Desert dialects to the very different Arrernte, Warlpiri and Kaytetye languages as they travel north through the Centre.[13]

David Wilkins found that in Arrernte traditional narratives such changes of Dreaming characters' languages are sometimes referred to overtly, but that in other cases linguistic markers representative of the differences between groups may be used instead.[14] Similar reports come from the monsoon belt to the north, although details of morpheme substitution of the Arrernte type have not been published.[15]

In several western Arnhem Land cases there are two common themes: the Being switches to the local language of the narrator's area and remains there, and tensions, sometimes extremely violent ones, exist between the local people and the group from which the immigrant Being derives. In all the cases cited, association of each language with particular lands and their denizens is pre-established.[16] It is this that drives the switch of tongue in the Dreaming Being, not the world-changing powers of the Being. In this, the mythic message nicely parallels the evidence of geographic stability and demographic porosity in the case of land-language groupings in the well-documented upper Roper River case (Merlan 1981).

The Pungk Apelech men

I am now going to give one detailed example of a myth of the creation of languages. The most important point it makes, perhaps, is that for coastal western Cape York Peninsula the languages in one's own homeland area are those of an entirely known population of individuals, in a classical Aboriginal experience of the world. A number of linguistic varieties, some very distinct from each other, and all named, are here part of the fabric of a major ritual grouping (Apelech) which has long had a tendency towards relative endogamy. (See Map 2; linguistic endogamy in the region is low, and at the level of recognised clan dialects virtually zero; statistics are presented in Sutton 1978). The contrast between this local, if polyglot, intimacy and a very negative attitude towards far distant peoples is stark. If there is a causal relationship between social and linguistic closure in this and many other cases, it does not obtain between local languages and their owners but between locals and neighbours of neighbours of neighbours...

Another very important message in this text is that languages here came into being contingent on the existence of specific clans and their estates, and the totemic centres in those estates. Languages as named with linguistic labels (Wik-Mungkan, Wik-Ngathan, Wik-Ep etc), and shared by a number of clans, were not instituted as such. It is the clans' local variants of such languages, often named more specifically after their principal totems (Brolga Language, Bushrat Language etc), which they receive in the process of coming into being.

One day in 1977 I asked Alan Wolmby, at Watha-nhiin outstation (western Cape York Peninsula), where languages came from. He said he would arrange for two older, knowledgable people to help me. Noel Peemuggina and Johnny Ampeybegan, along with Alan, sat with me to give the story. It is consequently a version slanted towards my request for a linguistic focus, and in any case it is highly selective, just as performances of the associated ritual sequences are, in real ceremonial contexts. A 'complete' version of the myth has probably never been told, and consensus on such a thing might in any case be impossible.
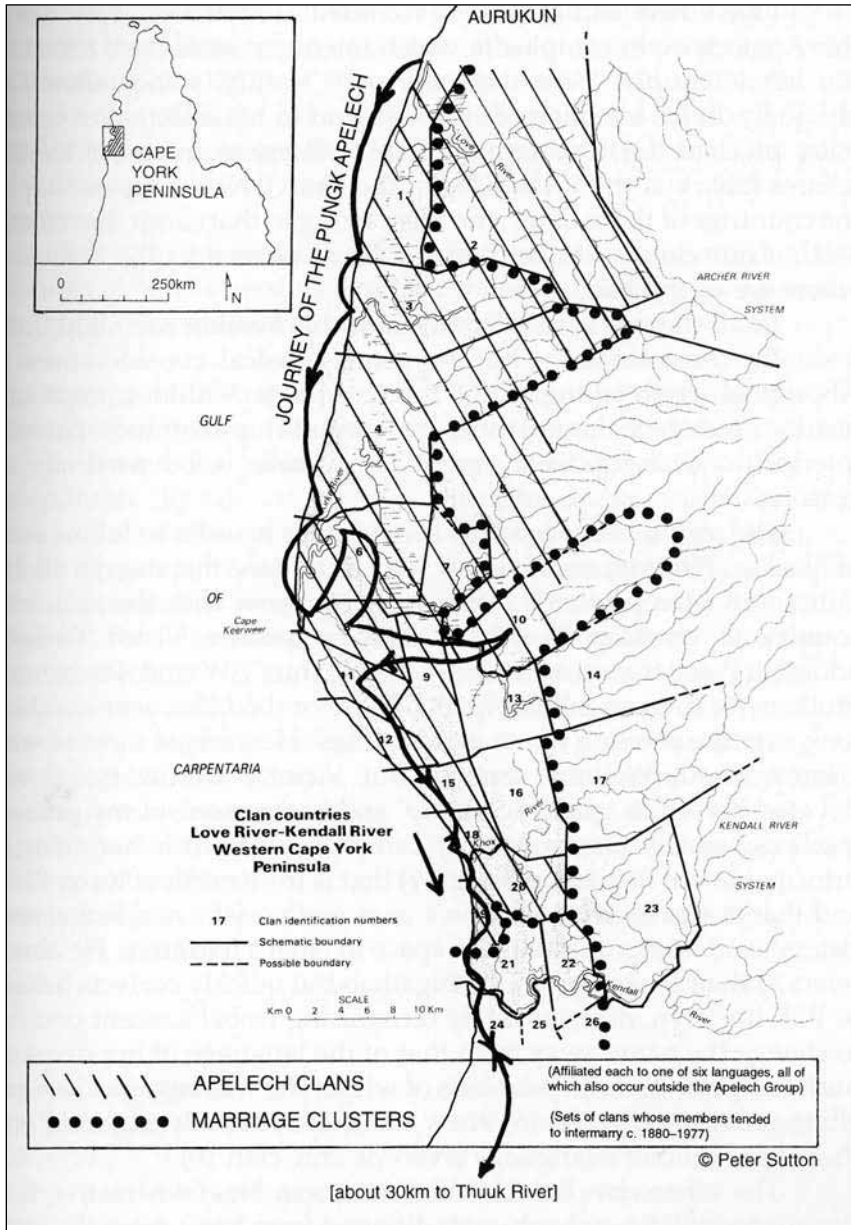
Map 2
Apelech clans and marriage clusters

I have here and elsewhere recorded around forty episodes of this Apelech myth complex in which totemic centres were found by the heroic couple. Here there are only twenty, some referred to obliquely. In his selection of episodes, and in his selection of certain pairs of clans for illustrating conjoint interests in major totemic centres (Shark at the Kirke, Dog at the Knox), Noel concentrates on the countries of those of us who were living in that camp that month, and on our closest kin, and on the lands nearest to the outstation where we were sitting.

In all these ways the contents of this version are highly contextually constrained — but by some classical considerations in Aboriginal myth-telling: focal topic, who is within earshot and nearby, and genealogical and geographical proximities between interlocutors, co-residents and places. There is no myth for all seasons.

The reader needs to know some details in order to follow some of Noel's references, and to know why he told me this story at all. His father and Alan's father's father were brothers, with the same clan country (6 on Map 2). Alan's father's brother, Victor Wolmby, adopted Peter Sutton in 1976 as a son; thus AW and PS are clan brothers (6; language: Wik-Ngathan). Victor died that year and Noel took over the position of my closest father. He told me most of what I know about Wolmby country. But Victor's widow Isobel also devoted herself to 'growing me up' and became one of my primary teachers, usually resident in my camp or house. It is her clan (15, principal totem Flat-tailed Stingray) that is from north of Knox River, and that is also the clan of Alan's own mother (she and Isobel were sisters), and it gets quite a lot of space in Noel's narrative. He almost refers to their language as Wik-Ngathan but quickly corrects himself to Wik-Iincheyn, diplomatically recognising Isobel's recent decision to change the name away from that of the language of her deceased husband's clan (6, with members of whom she was engaged in a gruelling political struggle) to a new name semantically identical with that of her mother's language (Wik-Me'enh, clan 16).[17]

The other clan linked with Isobel's in Noel's narrative is 20 (language: Wik-Mungkanh, very different from hers), from the south side of the Knox, and this is the clan not only of Noel's own wife and brother-in-law Jack, present in the camp and referred to explicitly by

Noel, but also that of Johnny Ampeybegan's wife, and Johnny is present at the telling. Johnny's country (that of clan 4, language: Wik-Ngatharr) is contiguous with Noel's, Alan's and mine on the opposite side of Kirke River, and with him we share a local Shark cult. Differences between the two languages involved are often publicly downplayed, as they are here, but they are technically significant.

This tight interlocking of kin and country explains much of the emphasis of Noel's version. The tape transcript and my own translation (from Wik-Ngathan) came out like this.

NP: Minh ... pul *Love River* anthepalinth-ey iincheyn. Minh thatpelawent inthitha, inthitha pathepathenh. "Ey aak anth-ey thila, aak thanent aliyentiyn [ngamp]." "Aak ... pama ... aliyangeniyn kan wune-wunek-e?" Pula nhuurran (xxx) yaaka' [thanenh pay inhenginth] thanenh pay inheminth-eya. Ngaye ke'emang ngaycheyn, nhul antiy ke'em ngaycheyn, wuut inyaminy-ey. Paaaaay inyeminth-eya, eemoeth inthith-ey pul waantenh — yaatemaya, ngeen inthe thanent. 'o', *Love River* inthith-ey.

NP: Those two came this way [south] from Love River. They sang Scale Mullet there. "Hey, then this country will be for those around here, this [river]," [one of them said]. "Those people are going to stay around here, eh?" [said the other]. Those two must have found those people there before, [at Love River]. I never saw them, nor did this person here [Johnny Ampeybegan] ever see them, those two early men. It was way before [our time] that they left that totemic centre, of Amethystine Python, that [centre] for those people. Truly, [at] that Love River there.

Palul pul iinchenya ...
AW: Wike ngeen wantenh-e, *Love River*'-eya?
NP: Inya pam Wik-Ngatharre, wiiy Wike-Paach.
AW: 'ee.
NP: 'o', nhaanth, wiiye Wike-

Next they came this way ...
AW: What languages did they leave at Love River?
NP: Those people were Wik-Ngatharr, some Wik-Paach.
AW: Right.
NP: Indeed, in that way: some

Paach, wiiye Wik-Ngatharr, inyiyn. Wuut *Murray* wee'iythan inye, inye Wik-Ngatharre waantenh, nhule ... Wik-Paache wiiykenh oeyeman, inyinyey, nhaanth. 'o', inyiny-ey waante-waantenh.

Wik-Paach, others Wik-Ngatharr, those people there. That clan of Old Murray, they were left Wik-Ngatharr; he ... they used to talk Wik-Paach [as well], those people — that's how it was. Certainly, those [languages] were left there.

Palul iinchenya, Kooewk-aw anthitha eemoeth thun anthithe waantenh thanent, walemericheyn inthith. Aak inhamenhinth Wik-Paach nhaanth-nhaanthem inthe thuuypenh, inheminthey aak.

Coming this way, [the two men] left another totemic centre for them at Kooewk-aw, that of the Whale. The Wik-Paach people from that country are all dead also, those from that area.

Palul iinchenya, ya' pul iinchinya, pula thaa'-thaa'-keentenh oeyem. 'o'. Iinchiny pulaaaa — minh nhul inthith, minhe ngampunng kooenhiy kalpay inthith, pul nhuurran. "Ooooooooe" — pul ngeethenh — "Ey antha awul kalpaya!" Aake elkenang oeyem nhiinenha, eemoeth inthith-eyen waantenh, minh kalpay iny-eypiny-ey, eemoeth nhungk inth winen. 'o'. "Pbbbbbb" umpen. Pul inth-ey thaa'-thaa'-keentenh inyenginth [?iithenma] — "Yaa, anthe eemoeth thanenta thila, aak anhanchemintha." Nhaanth, inthith-ey pul waantenh.

Then they came this way [south], and when they had come they were singing. Truly. They came along — and found that bird, the Magpie Goose, which is a totem of all of us [here now]. "Errrrrrrrr!" [went the geese] — while the two men listened — "Hey, now here's a big flock of Geese!" They were sitting on a dry place, and they left the totemic centre there, that of the Geese I've just mentioned, that totemic centre we showed you. Truly. The [Geese] flew away — pbbbbbb! The two [men] were singing there [down ?west of here]. [One said:] "Yes, so this totemic centre will be here for those whose country it is". That's how they left it there.

AW: "Anth-eya ngalng kooenhiy", oeyem wiiykenh pul.
NP: "Anth-eya, ngalng kooenhiya", nhaanth.
AW: Mm.
NP: 'o'.
AW: Pul iny-eya.
NP: Ee', pul inyey oeyem wiiykenh: "Minh puul-waya ngalntama — ngampunt ... ngalng kooenhiy, inhanchinth".
PS: "Anthe pam Wik-Ngatharrenta"?
NP: Mm, "Pam Wik-Ngatharrent anth-eya", 'o'.

NP: Nnnnnn — minh *salmon*ul inthe pul nhuurran — 'o minh yamp inthe kan kaa'-uuk oeyem pul nhuurran. 'aaa' — "Anthe pam Wik-Ngatharrent, eemoeth anthey; ngampunng kooenhiya".

Inthepalaa — minh *shark*ul inthith pul nhuurran, eemoeth, Poenp inthith. "Yaa anthe *shark*, ngampunng kooenhiy, aak anhanche, Wik-Ngatharrent".

Pakul inthe pul iincheyn, maye kuth eemoeth inthith, inthe pul nhuurran. "Inthe eemoeth kutha", 'o', "Inthe Wik-Ngathanent."

AW: "This one is *our* totem", they would say.
NP: "This one is *our* totem", like that.
AW: Mm.
NP: Indeed.
AW: The two of them?
NP: Yes, those two would say: "It's *our* totem animal — belongs to all of us ... the totem of we two, for that place."
PS: [Did they say:] "This belongs to Wik-Ngatharr"?
NP: Mm, "This belongs to Wik-Ngatharr", truly.

NP: After a while they found Salmon — no, they were first discovering Butterfish. Then [they said]: "This belongs to Wik-Ngatharr, this totemic centre, and it is our totem."

Coming further this way they next found Shark and its totemic centre at Poenp. "Yes, this is Shark, our totem, which belongs to this place, and to Wik-Ngatharr."

Next they went down river and found the Long Yam totemic centre. "That is Long Yam totemic centre," yes, "It belongs to Wik-Ngathan".

'aa yuul'ul inyinya, keren-ul inye pula, thunte-thuntiynngan wey. Nhuurr-nhuurran pul unch-elkenh pul. "Yaa anthe eemoeth thanente, Wik-Ngatharrent, ngamp anhanchemintha, Thewen eempel inhanchintha."

Next those Baler Shells and Conch Shells were gathered together by those two dear [men]. They went on finding these [shells] and heaping them up. "Yes here is their totemic centre, belonging to Wik-Ngatharr, to this river, to Thewen river junction."

AW: *Only* "eemoeth" — "kooenhiy" ke'em wiiykenh pul, "kooenhiy" ke'em wiiykenh pul?
NP: 'ee, nhule eemoeth inthith; pule ... "Thaneng kooenhiya".
AW: 'o'.
NP: Nhaanth: "Ngampunng kooenhiy yuul' anthith-eya", nhaanth.

AW: They only [referred to] a "totemic centre" — they didn't say "totem", they didn't say "totem" did they?
NP: Yes, there is an increase centre there, and they said: "The totems belong to them".
AW: Indeed.
NP: They [spoke] this way: "This Baler Shell is our totem," like that.

NP: Kaawul inthe pul wumpany-eya — "'o ngale kan kaawe nhaam-ow?" Uuke-miipeng inthith pul ngeycheyn, Merrekeng-weykenh inth. Maye kutha, minhe ngaypathenha,
 inyiyn ngeyche-ngeycheyn: "yaa aliya ngampunng kooenhiya, pam Wik-Ngathanenta, anth-ey", ele-yepeyn inthith, manth inth pul ngeycheyn.

NP: Next they went up east — "Oh, could we please go east upriver?" [one asked]. They sighted Uuk-miipeng, in the area of Merrekeng. They were noticing all those Long Yams and Terns: "Yes, these are our totems, belonging to Wik-Ngathan, at this place". They saw the hole in the ground belonging to Shark.

Iithel um pul poencheyn intha — Warpang inthith pul
 nhuurran, ngak yee' inthith. Ngeyche-ngeycheyn pul yaal intha — "Yaa anthe pam aak anhancheminth, thanent

They went back down west again. They found Warpang, and the Fresh Floodwater [totemic centre] there. They were looking at Fresh Floodwater there — "Yes, the people belonging to this area,

eemoeth; ngampunng kooenhiya, maye kuth ... ngeen, minh thawela, chirrna", nhaanth.

Pul puyem iithelul iinchenya, wunkenh thiiypemankul inth. Moenchenul inthe pul nhuurran. "A minh moenchen [iyn] antha; ngampunng kooenhiya!" "Yaa, eemoeth thil anthemintha, story'-eya", ya' pul wiiykenh. Nhin-nhaanth-inthem.

Thiiypiyul inth-eya — *mama* wee'iy-thanentul inth — minhe puynpa, yuumela, kurraw pulngk inth eemoeth anth-ey, inthitha nhiinenh; 'o'. "Minhe kurrawa, yuumela, yaa anthe eemoeth thanent anhanchinha, Wik-Ngath ... Wik-Iinchenyanta". "Kanemp iincheka" than *mama* wee'iy aleya [?iliya] kan wiiyk-wiiykenh; 'o'.

Wike thanempunent inth-ey nga ... wik intheminthe ngampel mayng nhule ... "Ngathenhungkun alente kaareka!", nhaanth anthith-ey; intheminthe kan wiiykenh. Than-ey minh-eya, yuumelan kooepenh, thun-thunem; 'o'. Than *mama* wee'iy-ey, *uncle* wee'iy, minh yuumel.

it's their totemic centre. Our totems ... Long Yam" — sorry — "Wallaby, Kite Hawk," like that.

After having gone west, they then went south to the other side [of Kirke River]. There they next found Barramundi. "Ah, Barramundi are here; they're our totem." "Yes, and also this totemic centre here, the [Barramundi] Story [Place]," they said. And so they kept on in this pattern.

They then went south — your mother's clan's [country] — File Stingray, Flat-tailed Stingray, and also Salmon totemic centres exist there. Truly. [They said:] "Salmon, Flat-tailed Stingray, yes, these totemic centres will be here for the people of this land, will belong to Wik-Ngath ... Wik-Iincheyn." Your mother's clan always say, "Kanemp iincheka" [for 'let's go']. True.

That language of theirs and ours it's the same language we all have together ... "Ngathenhungkun palente kaareka!" ['Bring it over to me!'], it's like that, that's how [we and they] talk. But their totem, the Flat-tailed Stingray which they look after, it is different [from any of ours],

clearly. Your mother's clan, that of your uncles, they're Flat-tailed Stingray.

Thaa' thiiypiy inthe pul Iinchenya — ngamp Eere-mangk pul nhuurran, ku'ul inthith; ku' inthithe waantenh. Ku' inheng ngoetp pul nhuurran. ' a nhul pulente ku' kampel yaa-ke' maawkenh-eya — eemoethe ngee'enh: wopm!

The two men went on southwards. They found Eere-mangk [Knox River mouth], and then the Dog. They left that Dog there. What they had found there was actually a real dog. Perhaps the Dog ran quickly away from them and went down into the totemic centre — wop!

"Inthe thila — ngampunng kooenhiya, ku' anthe thanent, eemoeth anhanchemintha. Pal thiiypemanta, ngamp wunkenh nthepal[ent], pal kungkem." *Mama* wee'iy-than, *uncle* alpen inth, *Jack*, thanent inth-ey, thanent wunkenh pal thiiypem. *Mama* inthe wunkenh pal kungkem, thanent, *uncle* wee'iy-thanent aliyentiyn, inthith.

"Anyway, it will be our totem, this Dog of theirs, and also a totemic centre for those who come from here. It will belong to those from the south, the other side of the river, and those from the north side." It belongs to those of your mothers and your invalid uncle Jack who are from the south side. It also belongs to the clan of your mothers and uncles who are from the north side. That's it.

Eemoethe thanente mayng intheminth. Ka' *poppa* anthith, nhulampunenta, *wunkenh* alem: ngampele wunkenh inthe-pal — eemoethe mayng. Wik *language* intheminth mayng. Minhe kooenhiy inyiyn ngampunent, thanenta — kooenhiy inthitha — ku' inthitha, minhe ngeen — way-min-ey inya — inye

The [Dog] totemic centre there is theirs fully in company together. It's like this father of yours here [JA], this one of our group, who comes from this side here: although we come from the other side [of the Kirke], we share a totemic centre [Shark]. Language too is shared. We share certain totems, but theirs [of both sides

thanente mayng intheminth.
Ngakenga, elkenang inye
eemoeth kan nhiinenh inya
thanent mayng, nhaanth. Inth-
ey waante-waantenh thanent.

of Knox River], their totems such
as Dog and other animals — the
rest of them — they are theirs in
company just the same. Both under
water and on dry land, where
those totemic centres exist, they
hold them in company, like that.
They were all left for them.

AW: Inhanchem thiipiy.
NP: Thiiypiy inhanchem?
AW: 'ee, inhanchemul pul
[yeenpenh pul inth].

AW: And from there south ...
NP: South from there?
AW: Yes, from there they next
[had a fight].

NP: *Kendall*ankul inthe pul
iinchenya, thiiypiy thiiypiy
thiiypiya! *Kendall*ul inthith
pul nhuurran. "Ayang, ngamp
anthe wuut awunya, *big
river*'a", ya' wun-wuna. "Ngale
wantere maaypekal ey?" "ee,
ngale ngul wumpak."

NP: Next they went towards
Kendall River, southwards
southwards southwards! Then they
found Kendall River: "Hullo, this
is a huge river". It had been
just sitting there. "How will we
go, swimming it?" "It'll be OK,
we'll soon cross over."

'aa' — yeemen inthe pul
ngeycheyn, kethen yeemen inth-
ey, than inthe kan keente-
keentenh. Yeemen inth, Apelech
inthith pula. *Two long one.*
"Ayey, yeemene aliya,
kethena." "Yaa." Chakeng pul
nhiitheyn; nhul-nhungun
nhiithenya; chak thun inth.
"Yaa, anthe eemoeth thanent,
thil aak ananchemintha."

Then they saw a long fighting
stick, the Long Yamstick, the one
that they dance there. The two
Apelech [looked at] the Long
Yamstick. There were two
extremely long ones. "Hey, these
are long fighting sticks,
yamsticks!" "Yes" — thud! they
sent them down [into the ground?
river?]: one sent his down, then
thud went the other. "Yes, this
will be a totemic centre for
them, and for those from this
country."

Wunkenh thiiypemem iny-eya, Wik-Ngencherre waantenh thanenh, Uuke-puntem inhanchinth-ey. Thanenh wunkenh palem inth-eya, Wik-Elken waantenh thanenh, *Kendall this side* inth-ey. Thanenh thiiypiy-eya, inye Wik-Ngencherre waantenh thanenh.

On the south side [of Kendall River] Wik-Ngencherr were left, those belonging to Uuke-puntem. Those left on this side of Kendall River [the north] were Wik-Elken. Those left on the south were Wik-Ngencherr.

Thiiypiyul pul iinchenya, pul inhancheminth-ey Wik Ngencherr inhancheminthe Wik-Mu'enha, Wik-Muminh inhancheminthen wiiyk-wiiykenh ya'e pul wiiyk-wiiykenh-e.

Next they continued on south, and the Wik-Ngencherr languages, Wik-Mu'enh and Wik-Muminh which are spoken by those who belong there, were being spoken by those two men.

'aaaaaaa — Mengeny-antem panthith; pantheminth ... intheminthepal iinchenya, ngampe Thuuk inthepal wumpayn waarr, ngampe Thuuk. Pame Wik-Ngencherr inyamiyn, wike thun epem — 'o' Wike-Mu'enh, Wike-Muminh inyiyn oeyem. Ya' oeyem pula, nhuurran thanenhe wiiykenh pul wiiyk-wiiykenh pul — pul inth-ey. "Ayang nhuntane wike thun ngul kanente paam-paampeyn, [nhunte] Wik-Ngencherre ngul ey?" oeyem pul wiiykenh. "Wike-Mu'inh oo Wike-M ... ngeenul kanente wiiyk-wiiykenh-ey?" "'ee". Pulentan oeyem pul wiiykenh. "'ee ngale kan thunul wiiyka", Pungk-

On and on they went: all around this place Mengeyn, and from this one ... from there they travelled this way [north], and they safely forded the Thuuk River coming this way, that 'Snake' River. Wik-Ngencherr people, only those ones, no other languages were being spoken there — really just Wik-Mu'enh, Wik-Muminh, those ones. Those two had been finding the [languages] and speaking them — both of them were doing this. "Hey, are you going to go jumping over onto this other language now, it's Wik-Ngencherr next eh?" they would say. "Wik-Mu'inh or Wik-M... what are you going to be speaking next?" "Yes," they would say to each other. "OK let's talk

Apelech iny-ey oeyem pul
wiiykenh.

'aa' puunt inthe pul
ngeycheyn. Okench-thonengam
 inhanchinth nge ... "Ngaleng
 ngak wantith thila?" "Ngaleng
 ngak anth-ey." "Yaa." Kooewk
inthe pul thee'-thee'enh. 'a
puunte pul ngeycheyn. "Puunt
antha." Chenye pul palkenh.
Wurrrrr kempiy, karrkenam pul
 thee'enh. "Nhuntane theethenka
maawka!" "Yey, ngaye weye
peche-pechenyaka. Nhul-nhungun
inthe theethenk inheng kaaw
maawkenh dhrrrrr! 'o'

Nhul intheya, penthenh, puunt
inth-ey. "Ngaye kaneng make."
Pantan pantan pantan pantan,
thicheyn oeyem, pantan oeyem,
thicheyn oeyem, pantan oeyem,
thicheyn oeyem, thicheyn,
thicheyn! Kunge anthe thoelp
inth-ey oeyem nhii-nhiinhenh,
katheng thicheyn inth-ey.
Iimpen aleng!

Nhul inthe pal kaawema, theeth
anthem thap-thapenya — looooh!
Nhule minche ngaycheyn: "'a!"
— winen wey. "Nhule kan
thicheyn ey? Minhe kathenge
wantiny-e?" "Minhe ngayang
thicheyn, meech, yaamul aleng

another one now," the two Pungk-
Apelech would say.

Then they saw Shovel Shark. At
Okenche-thonengam [they said]:
"But where is our water?" "Our
water is here?" "Right." They
cleaned out the well. Then they
saw Shovel Shark: "Here's Shovel
Shark" [one said]. Thwack! They
speared it. They dragged it up
the shore and made a big fire.
One said: "You go and get tea
tree bark for us. OK, and I'll do
the cooking", The other one went
somewhere to the east for tea
tree bark — dhrrrrr! [it was a
long way]. True.

The Shovel Shark was now cooked.
"I'll squeeze it now," [thought
the one left behind]. He began
wringing [the flesh] out,
wringing, wringing, wringing,
wringing, eating some, wringing,
eating, wringing, eating, eating,
eating! The belly was sitting out
like this, the guts on that
shark-meat eater. His stomach was
out to here!

The one coming back from the
east, carrying the tea tree bark,
dropped it in a heap. He noticed
the [shovel shark's] bones —
"What!" — and its dear skin. "So
he's eaten it eh?" [he thought],
[and said:] "Where are the pieces

pi'-pi'enh, nhunte theeth yaam kanente warrp-warrpanh."

of shark-meat?" [The other replied:] "It was I who ate the meat, I was hungry, keeping it here so long, and you taking so long to strip off the tea tree bark".

"'oo minhe ngathe yaay " ke'alente ..." Kencheyn pul-pulentan, kencheyn pul-pulentan, kencheyn pul-pulentan, kencheyn pul-pulentan, kungkiy thee'empinh, Mulam palkenh inthith-ey, nhin-nhungun kungkiy. Pungk inthe mulam palkenh-e, [strikes hand], nhule-nhungune thiiypiy kan iincheyn.

Oh, you couldn't even [keep] me a token amount ..." They attacked each other furiously, fighting, fighting, fighting, until one knocked the other down northwards. He practically killed the one on the north side. Then he in turn nearly killed the other one, who went off south.

"'a nhunte wanteng-e?" "'a ngaye thiiypiy." "Yaa, ngaye thil kungkiya, kungkiy umema." "Koooo!" wiiykenh, nhul-nhungun inth-ey, Apelech inth-ey. Nhul-nhungun-eya: "Drrrrr, 'eeeeeh!" wiiykenh, inthe Wanem inthith; Wanemul oeyem pathe-pathenh, thiiypiy. Thiiypiy, thiiypiy, thiiypiyula Wanem pathe-pathenh. Munkul inhengintha pathenh, Anch-elem pathenh. Nhul-nhungune Apelech inth thaa'-thaa'-keentenhaaaaa. Wantiyn ngulma' waantenh, inthith-ey?

"Hey, where are you going?" "Oh, I'm heading south." "Yes, well I'm heading north, back north again," the other said, and this Apelech man called "Kooooo" [the Apelech cry]. The other one "Drrrrr, 'eeeeeh!", the Wanam cry, and began singing Wanem, as he was going on south. Southwards, southwards, southwards he went, singing Wanem. Then he sang Munk, and then he sang Anch-elem. The other one just went on performing Apelech. I wonder whereabouts he might later have left it?

Conclusion

Basil Sansom, at least, supports the view that the subject I have addressed in this paper is more than a trivial one:

> There is, I think, an ultimate destination for those who work in Australia on language and society, society and language. In *After Babel*, Steiner (1975, 50) writes that the "prodigality of the language atlas" is, in the end, *"le mystère suprême"* of Anthropology. The destination for Australianists is, then, to arrive at a socially grounded theory to explain the production, maintenance and proliferation in Australia of such quantities of sedulously guarded tongues (Sansom 1980–82, 6).

To advance further towards this destination we have to question the existing cultural closure between traditional Aboriginal and academic linguistic theories. I am not suggesting that linguists and anthropologists take myths as literal accounts and simply incorporate them, although there may be cases where myth and history are close. Les Hiatt was right to reject the view that Australian myths were in any simple sense records of former migrations or past customs (Hiatt 1975, and see Sutton 1988). What I am suggesting is that a myth might very often be closer to analytic truth, in terms of *underlying principles*, than a professor's hypothesis about the same thing.

For example, Aboriginal language speakers frequently ascribe their use of a particular language to Dreaming-based factors (ownership of the variety through genealogical and spiritual inheritance, being situated on land left behind by a certain Dreaming), and on occasions may use that language in talking to people who seldom or never reply in it. In what sense is their use of that language maintained, in such cases, by the factor of 'communcation density'? Certainly some density of comprehension, if not common usage, is required unless languages are to fall into disuse. But is not language use in this case maintained by the same principles as those enshrined in the myths themselves?

Those classical Aboriginal principles include at least the following:

1. Languages are owned, not merely spoken. They are inherited property.

2. Languages belong to specific places, and the people of those places.

3. Use of a particular language implies knowledge of and connectedness to a certain set of people and a certain part of the country. The direct implication always is: If you can speak my language you must be my relation (somehow).

4. Languages are like totems — they are 'natural phenomena' of mythic origin whose very distinctiveness and variety enhances their capacity to provide forms of identity for human groups. They are part of a group's sacra, held collectively, but acquired by right individually. Like totems, they are relational symbols, connecting those who are different in a wider set of those who are the same, all having totems and languages. This variety itself is part of the common condition.

5. At the local level, however, such differences (as is the case with clan and patrilodge totems) are internal to society, not markers of the edges of different societies.

6. The ancestors moved about and spoke different languages, and this is how people still do or should live today. But in most cases, at least, these ancestral travels were regionally limited, not truly continental in scope. There is, in other words, a limit to how far one's multilingualism can and should extend. Strangers are not those whose languages differ from one's own, but those whose languages one does not know.

7. It is important, not accidental or trivial, that we speak different languages. It says something. It is something we intend. The heroic ancestors knew that cultural differences made for social complementarity, in a world where cultural sameness alone could not prevent deadly conflict. Otherness can level, as well as block, relations between people. There is no balance without complementarity. There is no complementarity without distinctions and differences.

The arrogance of colonial academia has been a factor in scholarly dismissal of so-called 'native theories' as being, at best, interesting religious sideshows.[18] The world is only impoverished, assuming some kind of legitimacy for the intellectual enterprise of university-based disciplines, when 'native theories' are not taken seriously as analytic constructions of reality.

WEH Stanner wrote in 1953 (see also 1979, 29):

> The tales [about The Dreaming] are a kind of commentary, or statement, on what is thought to be permanent and ordained at the very basis of the world and life. They are a way of stating the principle which animates things. I would call them a poetic key to Reality. The Aboriginal does not ask himself the philosophical-type questions: What is 'real?' How many 'kinds' of 'reality' are there? What are the 'properties' of 'reality?' How are the properties 'interconnected'? This is the idiom of Western intellectual discourse and the fruit of a certain social history. His tales are, however, a kind of answer to such questions so far as they have been asked at all. They may not be a 'definition', but they are a 'key' to reality, a key to the singleness and the plurality of things set up once-for-all when, in The Dreaming, the universe became man's universe.

But does a pluralism of the kind I am implying only amount to the final insult to native theory, namely its incorporation into the industrial academy and its materialist and empiricist Eurocentrism? One answer to this is to point out that the body of academic empiricism is no longer the too solid flesh it once was, particularly in the realms of social and cultural history. There is increasing recognition of the mythic qualities of western intellectual traditions themselves. Such western myths include the view that history is a stream of known events that can be treated as uninterpreted until interpreted, or that academics deal with history while people like Aboriginal traditionalists deal with the illusion of myth (see Friedman 1992).

Another answer, though, is perhaps to say that Aboriginal people themselves are increasingly part of the changing international academy and have begun to contribute to its post-positivist struggles with relativism. Non-Aboriginal scholars may also now be more

open to listening to the potential intellectual contributions of so-called 'native theories' about native peoples' own cultural institutions, recognising that symbolism is a form of analysis, just as analysis is a form of symbolism. It may be that as social closure between the academy and the cultures of the colonised diminishes further, there will be room for more than an impoverished creole on the borders of two formerly separate discourses, particularly if the tendency to reduce everything cultural to 'modes of thought' is successfully resisted (Hiatt 1969). Complex, difficult and largely unfinished enterprises such as the one explored a little further here — understanding *le mystère suprême* — will continue to require both the best researched evidence and cultural reflection distilled as poetic insight, if their pursuit is likely to engage the intellects of the future.

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Chapter 1 — Annette Hamilton

Note

My references here to Hiatt and Meggitt are indicative of their contributions to the work of the period, rather than exhaustive or in any sense complete. I realise I am oversimplifying a very complex intellectual history here. Aboriginal Studies in Australia passed through many quite different phases, with certain approaches coming into dominance and passing away, leaving their traces behind, creating a palimpsest of intellectual, philosophical and strategic interests which have been formative and decisive for the way in which Aboriginal Studies has been understood both in Australia and overseas.

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Chapter 2 — Betty Meehan

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Chapter 3 — John Mulvaney

Note

I thank Jacqui Lambert, the longest serving Institute officer, for advice in preparing this paper. As a former long-time member of Council, some of the documents cited are in my personal possession.

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Chapter 4 — Kenneth Maddock

Notes

1. Though born in Britain, these two Sydney University professors were more than simple imports. As Anthony Quinton has remarked, 'Anderson owed a lot to Australia and, in a way, to Australian philosophy, or, at any rate, to a philosopher of Australian birth' (1986, x). Quinton is referring to Samuel Alexander, born in Sydney, a Melbourne graduate, and later a tutor at Oxford and professor at Manchester. His Gifford Lectures of 1916–18, published as *Space, Time and Deity*, greatly influenced Anderson, and it appears that Alexander may have helped him obtain the Sydney chair. As for Radcliffe-Brown, his association with Australia was long, though intermittent. He came out for fieldwork in Western Australia, 1910–12, revisiting Australia in 1914 for the congress of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Marooned by the outbreak of war, he spent 1915–17 as a schoolmaster in Sydney, where he became known in literary and artistic circles. So he was no stranger to Australia or Australian culture when he took up the Sydney chair in 1926. His publications show that he was more interested in the Australian Aborigines than in any other people. In 1952, in what may well have been the last of his many talks to student clubs, Radcliffe-Brown spoke to the Geographical Society of Rhodes University in South Africa on his impressions of Australia.

2. The latter comment by Raymond Firth was in response to my article on the relations between Anderson and Radcliffe-Brown and their respective circles (personal communication, 1991–93). I am indebted to him and to Sandy Anderson and John Garrett for their reminiscences of the 1920s and 1930s. For a fuller examination of Anderson's social thought, see Baker 1979 and Maddock and Thiele 1992.

3. I am grateful to Les for sending me a copy of his speech, given on 10 December 1991. The argument of my paper had however, already been formulated, first in an abstract submitted to the editors of the present collection in August 1990, and second, in a first draft of about 5000 words sent to them in February 1991.

4. Hiatt was the only anthropologist to speak at either conference. His paper, 'Anderson on obscenity', which took up issues raised by Anderson in a 1940 address to the Freethought Society, has not been published. Most of the other papers have

appeared in the Libertarian Society's *Broadsheet*, the Newcastle University Philosophy Club's *Dialectic* or in *Quadrant.*

5. Empiricism is not mentioned in Hiatt's farewell speech. This may seem odd, since in the first paper he published in Australia in 1927, Anderson gave empiricism the central place in his philosophy and stated that his realism and pluralism could be maintained only if an empiricist view were taken. But according to Baker (1986, 1, n. l), Anderson oscillated between realist and empiricist as the best description of himself. His empiricism should not be confused with what is commonly called 'British empiricism' (see Baker 1986, 33–38; Passmore 1962, x–xiii). It is the latter variety of empiricism which is often contrasted by anthropologists with the 'intellectualism' of Lévi-Strauss.

6. When Partridge recalled Anderson as a teacher, it was to comment on his 'unusual powers of theoretical imagination, a rare capacity for throwing out novel and illuminating ideas; he was a great starter of theoretical hares' (Partridge 1958, 51). The thinkers who 'most attracted and stimulated' him displayed 'the same temper and capacity — men like Alexander, Vico, Marx, Sorel or Freud.' Lévi-Strauss could be characterised in much the same way.

7. For amusing examples of possible analogies between human conduct and that of ants, sticklebacks and dogs, see Hiatt 1970.

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Chapter 5 — Ian Keen

Notes

1. See for example Sutton 1978; Tonkinson 1978, 1988; von Sturmer 1978; Maddock 1980; Hamilton 1982; Layton 1983; Hiatt 1984; Bern and Layton 1984; Palmer 1984; Peterson 1986; Merlan 1981; Myers 1986; Sutton and Rigsby 1982.

2. Chase 1984; Hamilton 1980; Strehlow 1965, 132; Sutton and Rigsby 1982, 158; Peterson and Long (1986, 152–53); Myers (1986, 294–96); Tonkinson 1986, (1988, 152–53).

3. The field research took place in 1986 and the hearing in 1988–89; the land was granted in 1992.

4. Spencer and Gillen (1904) included Warumungu, Alyawarre and Kaytej speakers in their ethnological survey; Chakravathi recorded men's statements about land ownership in 1966, and Stanner (1979) carried out brief fieldwork at Tennant Creek in the 1930s; Hagen et al (1982).

5. Peterson (1969, 30) also questioned Meggitt's depiction of the community as a unit of land ownership, while Munn (1973, 21–22) referred to the patrilines and patrilodges as 'patrilineal descent groups', with descent groups of different subsection and moiety affiliation being included within a single 'constellation' or general region. She adds that the lineages are genealogically shallow, and not segmental as in African models. Women of a lineage are excluded from the cult lodge but share rights in the totemic ancestors and sites with the men who are ritual guardians (1973, 22–23).

6. Stanner's (1979) description of Warumungu land tenure differs from Meggitt on the Warlpiri in that Warlpiri 'communities' are not primarily associated with one moiety. Warumungu 'big-countries' are not correlated by Stanner with communities or with dialect differences, and indeed, Warumungu does not seem to have the dialect differentiation that is found in Warlpiri (David Nash pers. com.).

7. The land claims prepared by Sutton and his associates were in the vicinity of McLaren Creek and followed the McLaren Creek claim, so that their analyses drew on the events on which this paper is based; thus the parallel analyses are not surprising.

8. Such ambivalence may be the result of attachment to one language through the father and another through the mother, or to one from a genitor and another from the person who 'grew one up', or as the result of residence history.

9. The name Warupunju is derived from waru, the word for 'fire' in Warlpiri (warlukun in Warumungu), and pwentye, a suffix on some country names in Kaytej (David Nash pers. com., Harold Koch pers. com.).

10. Not however, in relation to Fire country, which is known by a name for Fire, *Warupunju*, rather than by the name of a focal site.

11. Another way in which people express the relationship of a group to a country is with reference to a key individual, usually an older person. The identity of that person depends on context including the gender of the speaker — women tend to nominate older women, and men refer to men.

12. In preparation for a land-claim over Kaytej, Warlpiri and Warlmanpa country, Koch et al (1981) wrote of 'countries' known by the name of a focal site, each of which belonged to a different land-holding group. One of these, Wakurlpu, associated with Kaytej language, was regarded as a discrete 'block', consistent with an

Arandic pattern of land tenure (2–3). In less well-watered areas, and following the usual pattern of Warlpiri and Warlmanpa land ownership, a country consists of an area surrounding named sites on a dreaming track or a number of dreaming tracks. Two or more such countries might overlap. According to the the Warumungu Claim Book (Central Land Council 1985), the areas of responsibility of two or more land-holding groups sometimes overlapped and intermingled, as when two or more groups acted jointly as custodians for country between two dreaming tracks or for particularly arid areas. Sites and dreaming tracks were the main defining features of country, not precise boundaries (49).

13. Warumungu classifies FM/FMB and MF/MFZ together as *tapurtapu*, whereas these are distinguished in the neighbouring languages. The equivalent to *-walji* in Warlpiri is *-walalja* (cf. Myers 1986, 109–113).

14. As in other Arandic languages, the Alyawarre and Kaytej equivalent for *kurtungurlu* is *kwertengerle* (Nash 1982, 150; Moyle 1986, 34–35).

15. Witnesses explained that people live wherever the country is green, but the proper way is to live on one's 'own' country, meaning country from father's father; a person might live on their mother's country for a week or two, or travel widely, but the person had to come back to their own (father's father's) country to 'sit down'.

16. Namely, the presence of a *kurtungurlu* is required as 'witness' to ensure that *kirta* act in a proper way over country or ceremony; a person has to ask both *kirta* and *kurtungurlu* for permission to use country, and the latter are active in guarding and transmitting religious knowledge; both *kirta* and *kurtungurlu* claim the right to hunt and to tell others where they can forage in the country; *kurtungurlu* asserted that they did not require permission to forage on the country in relation to which they were *kurtungurlu*; roles in rituals are not always as clear-cut in practice as they are in theory — in men's and women's ceremonies performed during the McLaren Creek land claim hearing, some *kirta* painted themselves and each other in preparing for a ceremony, while *kurtungurlu* helped perform the dances and were painted with the designs of the opposite moiety; a male *kurtungurlu* took it on himself to move sacred objects which he thought were in danger of being stolen, without waiting to be instructed by *kirta*.

17. Warlpiri and Warumungu subsection names applicable to males begin with 'J', and those applicable to females begin with N. Constitutive rules govern relations of filiation such that if a woman is called Napanangka her children are Jakamarra and Nakamarra; the children of a Nakamarra woman are Jungarrayi and Nungarrayi, and so on. Ideally, the spouse of a man called Japanangka is a woman called Napurrula, and so on. The form of these constitutive rules results in two matrifilial cycles, and four patrifilial couples of subsections. Warumungu subsection names are similar to Warlpiri ones. Kaytej subsections make up a similar system but the names are different, and male/female differentiation applies only to children.

18. Which is used seems to depend on context, the relevant patricouple or at least patri-moiety being emphasised in the context of relations to father's father's country

(Toohey 1980). Meggitt (1962, 218) found that 91 per cent of Warlpiri marriages conformed to the subsection ideal, although occasional anomalies in 'lodge affiliation' occurred; while according to Nash (1980 #2.4.3) 90 per cent of Warlpiri marriages were between people in an ideal or second preference subsection relationship; first and second preference marriages, however, are to subsections of different patri-couples of the same patri-moiety.

19. *Ngurra-yatujumparra*, 'camp across the north', comprises J/Napanangka, J/Napangardi, J/Nungarrayi, and J/Napaljarri subsections; *ngurra-kulaninyarra*, 'camp across the south', comprises J/Nupurrula, J/Nakamarra, J/Nangala, and J/Nampijinpa subsections (Ken Hale, fieldnotes; Laughren 1982; Nash pers.com.; Keen et al 1988, 49; cf Meggitt 1962, 203; Pink 1936, 300).

20. The Alyawarre moiety categories Arlekwarre and Angele are equivalent to the Warumungu categories Wurlurru and Kingili (see Spencer and Gillen 1904, 102; Central Land Council 1985, 34–35; Keen et al 1988, 50–51).

21. Warlpiri speakers differentiate among these moiety relations by applying kin-relational expressions to refer to people of one's own and other patricouples, and to a spirit ancestor associated with a given patricouple:

own patri-couple	kuyu-wapirra
mother's mother's patri-couple	kuyu-wurruru
father's mother's patri-couple	kuyu-kirda
mother's father's patri-couple	kuyu-yarriki.

22. *Ngurlu* categories are widespread, common to some Warlpiri, as well as Warlmanpa, Mudbura, Kurinji, Ngaliwurru, Ngarinyman, Nangyumeri, and Wakaya people (Stanner 1979, 18; Nash pers. com.).

23. People agreed that the Bonney Creek place was L___ Nappanangka's father's father's country. However, Kanturrpa and Warupunju people diverged over her identity and origins. Older Warupunju people, one of whom was her 'sister' and constant companion, said that she was born in Warumungu country. One man explained that the Bonney Creek site was her 'father's father' (*kangkuya*) country, but her father held Warupunju 'business' (sacred objects and related knowledge), and so she belonged to Warupunju as well as Kanturrpa. Another older Warupunju man thought that her father and father's father were from a place in Fire dreaming country. Kanturrpa people and their close Warlpiri kin, however, attributed personal names to her which were derived from Kanturrpa places, and said that her father was born and lived at the Bonney Creek site. A___ Jappaljarri claimed to be her father's half-brother and to have the same 'dreaming' as he had (Keen et al 1988, 85–86). Sutton, Morel and Alexander (1991) report that her father's father was a Jungarrayi, one of the subsections of the patri-couple associated with Kanturrpa, but as the result of a non-preferred marriage her father was Japangarti, and so L___ is Napanangka from her father, one of the subsections associated with Warupunju. She grew up with Warupunju people and like them speaks Alyawarre.

24. I think it unlikely that McLaren Creek people ever recount 'members' of 'lineages' in talk outside a land-claim contexts, so that lineages are to that extent an

artefact of the land-claim process. With that caveat in mind, people with a common identity in relation to country and ancestors, traced from father's father, comprise up to three genealogically discrete patri-lineages.

25. This woman was *kirta* for Wakurlpu through her mother's mother, but referred to herself as 'half-*kirta*', and did not claim unqualified rights of access over Wakurlpu country (Keen 1989, 44).

26. He explained that his sister took Akwerange (their father's country) while her children 'took' both Mirtartu (as mother's country, but through him) and Akwerange (as mother's country through his and his sister's father) as *kurtungurlu*. According to Dussart, *kirda* status among Warlpiri gained through knowledge and residence in the appropriate country and with the appropriate people, was extended by a *kirda* of this kind teaching siblings who then became *kirda* in respect of that place and the related ceremonies (Dussart 1988, 66–67).

27. The relation between language identity and identity in relation to country and ancestors could be represented as one of greater and lesser inclusiveness; however not all patri-filial identities are unequivocally associated with a particular language, and when mapped on to country language areas do not have clear boundaries.

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Chapter 6 — Francesca Merlan

Notes

1. See Hiatt (1962).

2. Hiatt (1984, 189) cites as evidence of the association between the provision of meat to mother-in-law and sexuality, parts of a myth from south-eastern Arnhem Land (Berndt 1951, 148–53) in which a Dreamtime old woman, 'Mumuna' [mamurna], continually entices men to her camp, feeds them, encourages them to have sexual intercourse with her daughters, murders them and then, the following morning, encourages the girls to eat their extremities and appendages, notably including their penises. Hiatt says that the mother-in-law is represented as dangerous in relation to sons-in-laws' genitals, and that seems true. What, however, the myth might also be seen to emphasise is how girls' access to male genitals is gate-kept by their mother, the men's mother-in-law. In other words, there is more than a hint here of the problems of control in a three-way relationship, among girls, men, and mother/mother-in-law. Does one want to interpret this as having to do only with

sexual jealousy, and the possibility of sexual relations between men and mother-in-law? It is worth noting that, having worked myself in the area of south-east Arnhem Land from which the Berndt version of the myth comes, I have recorded versions of it more recently. All of them always emphasise the elements of the girls' pleasure at the arrival of the men and their sexual relationship, the murder of the men by the mother-in-law, and her handing over to the girls of the men's genitals as their proper 'meat'. There may be a possible interpretation of the kind Hiatt sees here, but the identification of the sons-in-law as 'meat', and their dreadful handling by mother-in-law, need not be read in that way alone.

3. But the most extreme forms of avoidance relationship were not always, or just, between those in the son-in-law/mother-in-law relation. See e.g. Haviland 1979 on avoidance between brothers-in-law in part of Cape York. Generally speaking, however, the son-/mother-in-law dyad is the special focus of avoidance practices. There are clear indications that relations between daughter-/mother-in-law were not as highly constrained, and this may have to do with the greater extent of their cooperation and direct association in daily tasks. The problem of how the identity of people in these relations is indigenously defined cannot be ignored, and to some extent this is taken up further below.

4. For example Harris 1970, Rumsey 1982, Merlan 1982.

5. Cf e.g. Brown and Gilman 1960, Brown and Levinson 1978.

6. I have in mind here the many reported Aboriginal social systems in which marriage was considered usual and desirable, even normative, between people affiliated to particular 'countries' or 'clan estates' with their linked totemic powers (see e.g. Blundell and Layton 1978).

7. This is partly because the person making the demand expects that the person asked understands the significance of a request in terms of the relationship that exists between them. There are occasions when the punctilio of fitting demand to reckoning of its satisfaction is thrown to the winds; for example, when people are drunk they may make incessant and unreasonable demands, and/or when interpersonal relationships are generally unsatisfactory in some cases (in my observation, notably between Aborigines and outsiders). Again, demands may be made which seem to have no fit with the likelihood of their satisfaction. But that is because in such cases there may be no way of experiencing a sense of 'fit': it is in keeping with the lack of an existing, satisfactory social relationship (from the Aboriginal point of view) in terms of which demand may be formulated and modulated. It appears to me that the likelihood a demand will not be met in such cases is often well understood by the person making the demand.

8. I think the myth cited in Note 1 must be at least partly understood in this way.

9. Collier and Rosaldo do not pay sufficient attention to the later rewards of marriage which come to women, and which may become obvious to them in a way they had not foreseen, but this is not part of my immediate point.

10. Hiatt 1975a, 1975b, 1989, see also e.g. Meggitt 1962.

11. Discussion of this matter could engage with other aspects of Hiatt's work than those focused on here, and in any event is of great interest for the understanding of Australian kinship practice.

12. Thomson 1949, 77.

13. See Thomson (1949, 75) for closer specification of the particular combination of kinship and geographical elements typically involved in the relationship in north-east Arnhem Land.

14. Also, the contrast between partial identity and partial difference possible between people within highly typified kin relationships seems to me to be critical in the so-called 'joking relationships', as described for instance in Thomson 1935. A joking relation often exists, for example, between 'kinsmen' of the types MMB/MM and DD/DS, also FF/FFZ and SS/SD, i.e. parallel grandparents and grandchildren. Such people are identified socially with each other in many ways, often to the point that the junior may be considered to be the social continuation, through the relationship, of the senior. But it is significant that a person's reciprocal relation with his closer relatives of these kinds (often specifiable genealogically, but perhaps also in combination with other factors) is not the jocular, obscene joking relation, but rather is a more sedate relation of mutual concern. In this I see the interplay of identity and difference as that which fuels the 'joking relation' which one enjoys with more remote relatives of these familiar categories. The same sort of interplay seems to underlie the identification of 'non-close' or more remote members of 'familiar' kin categories (e.g. 'brother') as ideal and frequent trade partners (Thomson 1949).

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Chapter 7 — Horward Morphy

Notes

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1. However, over the years Birdsell (eg 1970) has made a spirited attempt to defend Radcliffe-Browne's model while simultaneously adopting an ecological paradigm.

2. See Keen's (1994, 270) concept of polydoxy in Yolngu ritual.

3. In what follows, I use the ethnographic present to describe some events which no longer occur in the Yirrkala region. The complex of ideas, beliefs and emotions surrounding stages of bodily decay are still current, though their expression in ritual has changed.

4. The political nature of mortuary rituals and the extent to which individuals claim rights in the bones of the dead is well brought out in McKenzie and Hiatt's film *Waiting for Harry* (1980).

5. The problem with this perspective is that at its most abstract it confuses the existence of a particular institution with the conditions of its existence and the means whereby it is produced. It is the reverse of the problem of functionalist teleology which interprets the context within which an institution, such as a clan, exists as being the necessary condition of its existence. In both cases, one component of a process simply becomes the shadow of another; the reality is much more complex than this.

6. As Franca Tamisari has pointed out to me, the complementarity of clan ideology and the kindred as components of Yolngu ideology are structurally equivalent to the tension between relatedness and autonomy, and the complementarity of hierarchy

and egalitarianism that Myers (1986) articulates in his analysis of Pintupi society. Similarities along these lines have also been noted by Keen in his contribution to this volume. Unlike Keen, I accept the validity of the contrast that Myers draws between Western Desert and north-east Arnhem Land society, since I see the ideology of patrilineal clan organisation as a major component of the process of social reproduction in the latter case but not in the former.

7. Sociocentric clan relations are integrated within a regional system in which one set of clans stands in a predominant relationship (e.g. as mother's mother's brother) to another set (Morphy 1978). Moreover, an individual may have classificatory relatives of a particular category in more than one clan. Although, when possible, the clan of the actual mother's mother should take the leading role, circumstances often mean that another group substitutes for their role.

8. See Morphy (1994) for a discussion of the pragmatics of Yolngu mortuary rituals.

9. Peterson (1976, 101).

10. An example of this is provided in the film *Madarrpa Funeral* in which one of the main dances, the yellow ochre dance, was put on by the Yarrwidi Gumatj clan in order to demonstrate that they bore the dead person's clan no ill will, even though his mother had originally been bestowed to a member of the Gumatj clan (see Morphy 1984, 55).

11. I am grateful to Franca Tamisari for suggesting that I add this paragraph, and for the insight into dance in mortuary rituals provided by her research at Milingimbi.

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Chapter 8 — John Morton

Notes

1. Hiatt (1969) Totemism Tomorrow: The Future of an Illusion, *Mankind* 7, 90–92.

2. See also the important but less systematic contributions of Géza Róheim (especially 1932, 1945), Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen (1899, 212–386; 1927, 175–303), Carl Strehlow (1910, 10–44) and T.G.H. Strehlow (1945, 96–119; 1971, 392–417).

3. See Morton (1985, 384–558) for an exhaustive analysis of the sequence along these lines. This paper relies heavily on that analysis, which should be taken as the primary reference.

4. See Baldwin Spencer's unpublished letters (Box 2, 27). This argument is partly informed by a critical reading of Bruno Bettelhwim's womb envy thesis in *Symbolic Wounds* (1954). It also owes something to Géza Róheim (1932, 1945) and to the ethology of Lionel Tiger (1969).

5. Native cats are now extinct in Central Australia.

6. Native cats share this quality of superfoetation with American opossums (Hartmann 1952, 71–101), a fact which is probably of great significance for Amerindian mythology (Lévi-Strauss 1970, 164–95). See also Johnson and Roff (1982, 223); Ride (1970, 106–8).

7. I hope that it is clear that I am using terms 'production', 'reproduction', 'symbolic', 'material' and 'biological' in a heavily qualified manner. The extent to which they are mutually exclusive is problematic, but here I use them simply as shorthand labels for certain well-established trends in the history of social theory — trends which I grant are probably full of confusions (Morton 1995).

8. Indeed, in the case at hand (the Aranda *ingkura* ritual) there is simply insufficient data for such an analysis.

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Chapter 9 — Nicolas Peterson

Notes

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1. Bird-David (1990) on the Nayaka; Clastres (1972, 170) on the Guayaki; Endicott (1988, 117) on the Batek; Helm (1972, 80) on the Dogrib; Henry (1964, 98, 101) on the Kaingang; Holmberg (1969, 88, 155) on the Siriono; Marshall (1976, 288, 303, 310) on the !Kung; Spencer (1969, 164, 193) on the North Alaskan Inuit.

2. I am indebted to Franca Tamisari of the London School of Economics, who has recently completed two years fieldwork at Milingimbi, for this information.

3. See Myers (1988, 56, 59) for Central Australia.

4. It is of interest that Dixon (1973, 206–8) records that the same Dyirbal mother-in-law language word *d'ayman* is used for give (*wugan*) and breastfeed (*gulnggan*), and that if a distinction had to be made in the mother-in-law language, breastfeed would be rendered by *ngunngudu d'ayman*, which literally means 'breast gives', nicely catching the decentred giving of demand sharing.

5. Something that appears like inertial generosity is the most common form of sharing among non-human primates. This is sometimes called 'tolerated scrounging', but, as Ingold (1986, 114) points out, to equate human and non-human primate inertial generosity on the grounds of behavioural similarity is to omit the all important consideration of intention.

6. Grayson Gerrard (1989) provides an insightful analysis of the extraction of cash and/or commodities from Europeans in Arnhem Land in terms of 'humbugging'. Humbugging means, in its widest sense, to annoy or to win something to one's own advantage at the expense of someone else (Gerrard 1989, 99). It is mainly directed at Europeans, who are seen as having more to give than other Aboriginal people. Although having a family resemblance to demand sharing, humbugging frequently circumvents any need for exchange (Gerrard 1989, 106). This, she suggests, is because of the short period most Europeans spend in Aboriginal communities,

which precludes the long-term reciprocal relationships that characterise Aboriginal 'service economies' (Gerrard 1989, 108). Humbugging is an Aboriginal attempt to gain power over cash and goods and is meant to influence what and how much is received and when, instead of simply waiting for social security payments (Gerrard 1989, 109).

7. Most, if not all, subsistence practices involve risk and uncertainty to some extent, as Susan Kent has emphasised to me, so the question is whether this is greater among foragers than among other peoples. I share her conviction that the risks faced by foragers are, in many situations, no greater than for dry lands farmers, non-irrigation horticulturalists or pastoralists.

8. White 1985, 337–39, 344; Meehan 1977, 507–8.

9. I thank Peter Sutton for raising this issue.

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Chapter 10 — Warren Shapiro

Notes

For readings of an earlier version of this paper I am indebted to Victoria Burbank, Ward Goodenough, Francesca Merlan and Alan Rumsey.

1. It is surely pertinent to note that 'pseudo-procreative' and like terms are Les Hiatt's coinage (Hiatt 1971). I shall use them freely here, although readers should be

aware that David Schneider (1989) has challenged such usage. For partial retorts, see Shapiro (1989a; 1990d). See also Shapiro 1989b; 1989c.

2. For example Chomsky 1959; Lashley 1951; Miller et al 1960; Tolman 1948.

3. For example Basso 1979; Colby and Colby 1981; Haviland 1977; Hutchins 1980; Sansom 1980.

4. Geertz (1973, 10–12) attempts to save the day for the establishment by situating culture irreducibly in public affairs and texts. His 'seduction of anthropology' (Roseberry 1982) is, I submit, in large part due not to the revolutionary nature of his thought (as many of his admirers would have it) but to its conservatism, in particular his cosy support of anthropology's classic reifications. I think much the same sort of argument can be made for certain other supposedly radical re-thinkers (eg Leslie White of yesteryear, and more recently, Marvin Harris), but this needs to be pursued elsewhere. For some telling criticisms of Geertz's view of culture, see Goodenough (1981, 53–54). Patently related to the reification of culture is the reification of particular cultures. Thus expressions like 'the Gidjingali' are more accurately regarded as pertinent to a clustering of information rather than to a discrete tribe (Shapiro 1977). Les Hiatt thus joins most of us, myself included, in contributing to the reificatory imagery of ethnography. But this train of thought too cannot be pursued here, where I shall follow convention and use such expressions unanalysed.

5. Beyond this I assume no scholastic uniformity among cognitive anthropologists. Indeed, their differences with one another have been remarkable, as the foregoing paragraph suggests. Nor can it be reasonably held (I return to this below) that other scholars have not advanced similar concerns. The expressions 'cognitive anthropology' and 'cognitive anthropologists' should thus be taken to refer to categories constituted in a fuzzy (or family resemblance) manner — the manner in fact, as cognitive theory has itself shown, in which the categories of natural languages are usually constituted (see eg Keesing 1981, 83–84; Kempton 1978; Rosch 1973). See also Davenport 1959; Freeman 1961; Murdock 1960. Goodenough 1951, 10; 1956; Burling 1964; Wallace 1965; Gardner 1985, 249–53; Geertz 1973, 11; Harris 1968, 568–604; Bean 1975; Berlin and Kay 1969; Keesing 1971b; Lounsbury 1969; Munn 1966; Rosaldo 1972; Wallace 1956; Dougherty 1985; Holland and Quinn 1987; Ohnuki-Tierney 1981.

6. There were, in fact, numerous potential challenges to descent theory in the Native American materials, but these were mostly unknown in the Commonwealth. Pertinent bibliography and analysis can be found in Murphy (1979) and Shapiro (1981, 24–27, 152–57; 1991), among many other sources.

7. Some of this selfsame research has also questioned my contention that semi-moiety organisation exists in north-east Arnhem Land. (See Keen 1988, 98 for bibliographic details). This is not the place for a detailed response to my critics, but I do wish to break my silence on the matter, lest it be construed that I accept their arguments. It needs also to be noted here that 'African models' have recently been questioned by Africanists themselves (eg Anglin 1979; Holy 1979; Kuper 1988, 190–209).

8. It is noteworthy that both of the last two men published other statements that are somewhat less well known. Radcliffe-Brown (1951) departs from the linked patri-lines model of Aboriginal kin classification and in other ways anticipates more sophisticated treatment of the subject. And the version of Lévi-Strauss's theory on kinship and marriage with which Les Hiatt takes issue is, of course, that propounded in Lévi-Strauss (1949, 1969). It is *not* the Lévi-Strauss of 'the atom of kinship', wherein affinal connection is said to hold not between clans but between elementary families (really, between [male] ego and various others linked to him by egocentric ties) and which both antedates and survives the Lévi-Strauss of 'the elementary structure of kinship' (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 31–54), originally published 1945; 1976, 82–112).

9. Shapiro 1981, 35; see also Falkenberg and Falkenberg (1981, 115); Rumsey (1981, 190) et seq; Turner (1974, 16–26).

10. For example Heath 1982; McConvell 1982; Shapiro 1982; Shapiro 1982, 283.

11. For example Scheffler (1973, 782–86; 1977); Scheffler and Lounsbury (1971, 21 et seq); Maddock 1969. See also Shapiro 1981.

12. There is a remarkable parallel here with Chomsky's contention that language is a self-contained system whose structure is unrelated to that of the non-linguistic world — a contention recently demolished in anthropological linguistics.

13. Hamilton (1970) provides a comparable statement of Gidjingali marriage rights from a woman's perspective, and concerning not claims to certain classes of women but perceptions of bestowal rights in females. Hiatt's statement that the WM is the focal other in framing initial marriage rights supports Elkin's time-honoured remark that 'the tendency amongst the Australian Aborigines is to select the mother-in-law rather than the wife' (Elkin 1938, 432). Hamilton's analysis makes a more direct case for WM bestowal. In a book with undisguised feminist appeal, Catherine Berndt (1981, 182–87) attempts to minimise my main formulation of the topic (Shapiro 1970) by associating me with the (male) chauvinistic implications of Lévi-Strauss on alliance. For my part, I have elsewhere augmented my original analysis of WM bestowal and called attention to the logical and empirical flaws in alliance theory (eg Shapiro 1979, 89 et seq; 1981; 1982, 260–62).

14. Gidjingali girls are sometimes bestowed in infancy (Hiatt 1965, 42), but it appears that they do not begin to cohabit with their husbands until around puberty (Hiatt 1965, 82; also see Hamilton 1981, 18).

15. For example Alland 1963; Kay 1970; Spradley 1970.

16. The sexism of alliance theory is transparent (see note 13). Descent theory's is somewhat more subtle: see Fortes' elevation of the folk distinction public ('politico-jural'), male/private ('familial'), female to meta-anthropological status (1969, 100 et seq). For pertinent critique, see eg Barnes (1971, 179–264; Comaroff 1987; Yanagisako 1987).

17. Shapiro (1979, 57–58); (1981, 38–41); 1982; 1989a.

18. See also Keen 1988, 91; Merlan 1983.

19. See Beckett 1967 for a promising and largely unrecognised start in this direction.

20. Turner's notion of totemic brotherhoods between patriclans is also worth noting here. His notion of patrigroup families linked by egocentric ties of cognation would be an immense improvement over, say, Maddock (1972), but, like the latter, he places far too much emphasis upon clans as elementary units of Aboriginal sociality (see especially Turner 1980, iii–vii). Radcliffe-Brown 1950, 56–60; 1952, 90–104.

21. These instructions correspond to what I take to be native understandings. They can be given in a variety of ways: by concrete or hypothesised example, by mimetic sign, or by express verbal equivalence — though the last, I found, did not collapse nearly into the lexical taxonomies well loved in early cognitive anthropology (see Birdwhistell 1971, 78).

22. So too is Ronald Berndt's analysis (1971, 326–17). Indeed, published as it was four decades later, it is more deplorable.

23. It can also be viewed as symbolic space, or as I prefer to call it, fetishised space (Shapiro 1988, 279). Indeed, this is the dominant perspective that has been employed. The irony is that most of those who have so used it hide behind techno-economic imagery (Shapiro 1990b; also see Burridge 1973, 130–33).

24. Also shortchanged, of course, have been Aboriginal women's lives. But Victoria Burbank's two books (1988; 1994) seem to me the best exemplifications in this domain of the perspective taken here.

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Chapter 11 — Peter Sutton

Notes

1. Baker 1979, 1986; Grave 1984.

2. And see Kenneth Maddock, this volume, for more detail on this.

3. Armstrong 1968. Armstrong taught in the same department. See also Armstrong 1978 on philosophical realism, a book he dedicated to Anderson.

4. For example Hiatt 1975; 1986.

5. Referring to his historic and successful attack on Radcliffe-Brown's vision of Aboriginal local organisation (Hiatt 1962), when replying to Stanner's (1965) defense of Radcliffe-Brown, Hiatt (1966) typically asserted that he '[had] not claim[ed] universality for any form of local organization'. In his argument concerning Aboriginal male pseudo-procreation rites (1971) he was aware that he might be criticised for offering 'a caricature in place of a complex reality', and said that he did not argue that his interpretations 'are necessarily hostile to others that may be concerned with different problems or more rationalized levels of meaning. At the same time, I believe that secrecy and pseudo-procreation are the central behavioural features of the class of Australian ritual that I have been dealing with. To lose sight of this is to miss the wood for the trees' (1971, 88). In spite of this commitment to seeing the wood, Les's commitment to complexity, as a form of realism, has perhaps made it difficult to identify particular propositions, rather than a philosophical and methodological approach, which can be said to typify his contribution to anthropology.

6. This view is perhaps best summarised by Dixon (1980, 43–45), but it is essentially the same line of argument as presented in Birdsell 1968 (and see other Birdsell references). During the conference discussion of Birdsell's 1968 paper, Les Hiatt took issue with Birdsell's assertion of relative constancy of sizes of Aboriginal 'tribes' and lent only lukewarm support to Birdsell's emphasis on density of communication by saying merely that 'Contact and separation ... are obvious factors in the persistence of common language and the formation of dialectal differences' (Hiatt in Birdsell 1968: Discussion p. 246). See Saussure 1960, 191–205, Sapir 1921, 148–51 and Bloomfield 1933, 345 for classical statements of the Birdsell position as a general theory by three of the main founders of modern linguistics.

7. The battle between these two kinds of construct, one warm, the other cool, underlies much of my chapter.

8. Alpher (1991) sees a similar oscillation from one extreme to another, but with suggestions of an underlying equilibrium theory, asserting that the mosaic distribution of languages among clan countries between Edward and Archer Rivers is one extreme of a pole of oscillations, the other of which is a more language bloc-like pattern about Mitchell River. This may account for the irregularities in the overall pattern whereby linguistic diversity increases with rainfall. The Western Desert, with its small, scattered residential groups, had low linguistic diversity. East of Lake Eyre, however, desert people maintained a number of distinct languages. In Cape York Peninsula there is great linguistic diversity in the Princess Charlotte Bay region, but north of there, almost to the tip of the Peninsula, there was a single language with several differently named varieties, albeit in a rich coastal and maritime environment. Generalisations about grammar and rainfall have their limitations.

9. Tindale's statistics, where the marriage samples are of significant size, all come from Central Australia (306 marriages). The cases from the rest of the continent (346 in all) mostly consist of less than 10 cases per language, plus a few in the range 11–17. These were all lumped together to give a continental average, a rather useless statistical fiction. Even regional averages are misleading. For example, Tindale said average language group exogamy in Dixon's Atherton Tableland area was only 20 per cent, but for three of the seven 'tribes' the exogamy rates range between 42 and 55 per cent and these three account for over 43 per cent of the Tableland sample. The smaller, less reliable samples skewed the average downwards. Where language group endogamy is relatively high, it is notable that the group itself is large (i.e. the chances of in-group marriage are naturally higher), but this carries no necessary implication that the language group is a population isolate. If all clans with adjacent countries intermarried at the rate of 50 per cent, those that belonged to large language groups would show a statistical pattern of linguistic endogamy and those belonging to small language groups would show a pattern of linguistic exogamy, without there being any validly established discontinuity of marriages across language group bounds in either case.

10. Compare with Sutton 1978, Merlan 1981.

11. For example: In the Lake Eyre district of South Australia, the Muramuras (Ancestral Beings) were held to be the ancestors of particular groups and the dialects of those groups were understood to be those of their founding Muramuras (Reuther 1981, 3/31–34, Stirling and Waite 1919, 109). Mick McLean Irinyili told Luise Hercus that speakers of different dialects of Wangkangurru, a Simpson Desert language, could not change their way of speaking '[b]ecause they were given their language in the History time[;] people look after it, you look after it because that is your own language. It is not a thing one changes. Language was given to people in the history [sic] time and that is the language they speak' (Hercus 1994, 8).

In the Kimberleys, Western Australia, Possum placed the Ngarinyin language at Gulemen, Beverly Spring, from which it spread to people over a bigger landscape (Rumsey in Merlan 1981, 146). In the Broome region a Garadjari myth recounts how two huge men called Gagamara and Gonbaren made the Law in the Dreamtime. 'Everywhere they gave different languages to people, taught the yuna-song and the goramedi-dance, caught the boys and circumcised them' (Worms 1949, 36).

In the Victoria River district of the Northern Territory Rose has recorded that 'Dreamings spoke languages as they travelled, defining localised Dreamings, people, and country', (Rose 1992, 53). She was told that three travelling Dreamings, emu, corella and Jurntakal (a giant snake) distributed three local languages (Ngarinman, Bilinara, Malngin) among the lands and people (1992, 53). In the same region two pigeon Dreamings began their journey speaking Gurindji. As they moved into lands associated with different languages they spoke, in turn, Bilinara, Karangpurru and Ngaliwurru. As Hobbles Danayarri explained to her, 'Everything come up out of ground–language, people, emu, kangaroo, grass. That's Law' (Rose 1992, 54).

In western Arnhem Land one major tradition says that an ancestral woman (Waramurungundju) came from Indonesia and when she got to the mainland 'she made children, telling them where they were to live and what language they were to speak'. She created landscape and species, and introduced circumcision (Berndt and Berndt 1988, 252). A recent and detailed version of the same myth recorded by Keen (1980, 198–99) is similar in most respects. Yirawala's painting of the Earth Mother Maralaitj giving birth to the language groups in the Boucaut Bay area (Holmes 1992, pl. 111) reflects a similar tradition of the same region.

In north-east Arnhem Land, in the Wangarr (Dreaming phase), Crocodile spoke Gupapuyngu, while Frill-necked Lizard spoke Djambarrpuyngu. Fly did not know how to talk, but his father came back one day with fish and said in Gupapuyngu: 'These fish belong to us,' and all Gupapuyngu people talk that way today (Warner 1958, 520, 534). Crocodile man was of Gumatj clan/language while he was in north-east Arnhem Land but when he arrived in the Cape Stewart area to the west he became Warrawarra clan and his language became Burarra (Davis and Prescott 1992, 41).
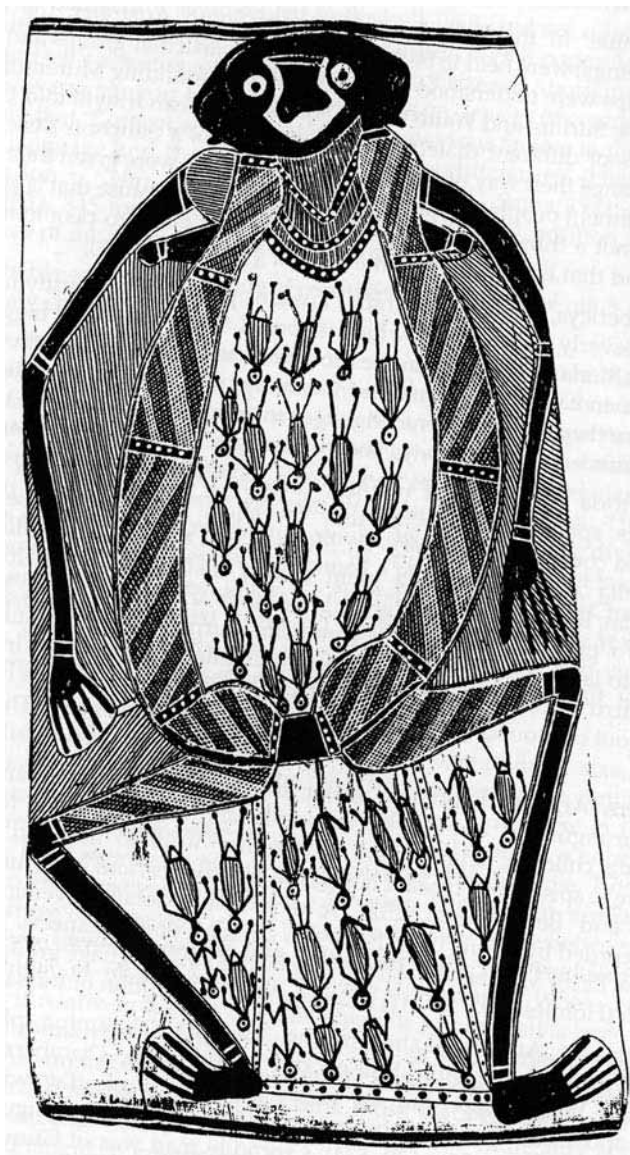
Maralaitj the Earth Mother giving birth to the tribes in the Boucaut Bay Area, by Yirawala.
Reproduced with the kind permission of Sandra LeBrun Holmes from her book, *Yirawala Painter of the Dreaming*, Hodder & Stoughton, Sydney, 1992 (1st edition); Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1994 (2nd edition).

12. Keen 1978, 74; See also Morphy 1989, 145. Also for example: In Daambugawumirri clan tradition, the Djang'kawu sisters travelled from west to east, giving birth to the first clanspeople and giving them their languages (Keen 1978, 70). In the same region, but further east, Berndt (1951, 23–24) recorded a myth in which Pythons of Dhuwa moiety were asked in turn what their languages were. Fifteen languages are listed among the answers, and there were more. The Djang'kawu Brother, in the region of Arnhem Bay, travelled about leaving wells for different peoples identified by clan language labels, eight in all (Berndt 1952, 32). The Djang'kawu Ancestral Beings spoke Rirratjingu on arrival, but as they moved about what are now the lands of clans with different languages they spoke each relevant language in turn (six are mentioned in this example), 'and it is implied that they left these dialects for the people who were removed from the Djang'kawu' Sisters' uteri' (Berndt 1952, 48).

In the Katherine River region (NT), Nabilil (Crocodile) moved up the river, creating places and naming them in the Jawoyn language, thus making the land Jawoyn country and installing or 'planting' that language in that land (Merlan and Rumsey 1982, and see Rumsey 1993). In eastern Cape York Peninsula a similar Crocodile culture hero (Iwayi) gave distinct named dialects to three particular areas still associated with them today (Chase 1980, 144). In western Cape York, one tradition has the languages of the area between Love River and the Kendall being implanted by the Pungk Apelech men as they established the clans and the totemic centres of their estates (Sutton 1978 and see following). Iwayi and the Pungk Apelech are the foci of major ceremonial traditions in their respective regions, and are shared by many small groups in each case. This theme of ceremonial unity coexistent with linguistic diversity is one older Aboriginal people often stress. Spencer and Gillen (1912, 450) recorded a myth in which the linguistic diversity of part of northern Central Australia is accounted for ('and thus, in the course of time, the dialects arose') while the ceremonial uniformity of the same region is simultaneously sustained.

In a chapter called 'Shaping the Aboriginal world' Berndt and Berndt (1989) present myths from different parts of Australia and in their summary state that the Ancestral Beings bestowed on their human descendants or successors 'a basic identity, by allocating language and territory, sustenance and purpose to their lives', p. 71). All the myths they present there that have explicit references to language bestowal, however, come from western Arnhem Land.

In one report the Dreaming figures actually differentiated dialects of a language. In the north-west of Western Australia a Karadjeri tradition says that two brothers, the Bagadjimbiri, made all natural and cultural forms and living things, and during this process they differentiated what Piddington (1932–33, 50) calls the Nadja and Nangu dialects of the Karadjeri language.

13. In Central Australia, a group of Native Cat ancestors came from country identified with the Loritcha language and changed their language to Aranda on reaching Imanda on the Finke. Another Native Cat party, also arriving from Loritcha country, changed their language to Aranda at Urapitchera near Running Waters.

At Achichinga near Mount Wells they changed language again to a mixture of Ilpirra and Kaitish. Another Native Cat party, also from Loritcha country, after travelling through Arrernte country, changed their language to Ilpirra at Ariltha. Two Devil women came from far to the west, and as they journeyed east towards the River Jay, changed their language to Aranda (Spencer and Gillen 1938, 405–16, 442).

Another Native Cat story has the party coming up from Port Augusta through areas associated with various Western Desert dialects (collectively Luritja in Aranda), and when they became deafened and confused by the chirping of crickets at Palmer River began to talk in a mixture of Luritja and Aranda after speaking only Luritja until then. They also had to begin using semi-moiety terms. Semi-moieties and sub-sections, Strehlow notes — and one could add here languages — 'were based on the land itself' (Strehlow 1965, 133–34). A recent account by Bagshaw emphasises the role of the 'changing voice' of a Native Cat Dreaming at specific sites in the same region, sites which mark the borders of present-day linguistic and cultural domains (cited in Davis and Prescott 1992, 107).) Strehlow also details the changes of song language in accordance with the language identity of country as song lines such as Native Cat run from Western Desert areas through Arrernte country into Anmatjerre country (1947, 154–55).

14. '[A] song in the first dialect or language may be sung in the early part of the text and when the change of country occurs, a song in the second dialect or language will be used. Similarly, reported conversation may first contain lexical items, or even full sentences, from the first group and then it will use ones from the second group. Most interesting, from the point of view of what sort of morphemes can diffuse from one area to the next, grammatical particles and even suffixes of roughly corresponding meaning in the two dialects or languages will be substituted for one another to signal the area change' (Wilkins 1989, 1–2).

15. In the Roper River region, two Olive Pythons spoke Mangarayi until they got to land sociolinguistically identified with Alawa, and from then on they spoke in Alawa (Merlan 1981, 143–44). In the Nicholson River region, the Budjarda snakes came from the west, speaking Jingalu (Djingili), but switching to Waanyi on reaching the western extremity of Waanyi country. The devil Ngabaya spoke Garawa as it went east, switching to Ganggalida on getting to Ganggalida country. Shark progressively changed language from Ganggalida to Garawa and then Yanyula as it moved west through those respective areas (Trigger 1982, 77; 1987, 219).

At Malay Bay in western Arnhem Land, the woman Imberombera walked through the sea, landing at Malay Bay. The first language she spoke was Iwaidja, and as she travelled she left spirit children and told them to speak this language. At Cooper's Creek she left spirit children, telling them to speak Umoriu language. As she travelled in the Alligator Rivers region she sent our spirit children to ten major named locations, instructing them to speak a different named language in each case. The languages were: Gnaruk, Watta, Kakadu, Witji, Puneitja, Koarnbut, Ngornbur, Umbugwalur, Djowei and Geimbio (Spencer 1914, 276–78; most of these

names are clearly recognisable as current names for languages in the area, although here as elsewhere I leave the spellings in the original form).

Another similar tradition from the same area concerns a woman called Ungulla Robunbun who came from between the McKinlay and Mary Rivers where she at first spoke Noenmil. Reaching the head of the Wildman Creek she left a boy and girl and told them to speak the Quiratari language. At other places on her journey she left more children and told them to speak, respectively, Koarnbut and Wijirk. When she got to Koreingen she spoke Kakadu and said to the local people: 'I am Kakadu like you; I will belong to this country; you and I will talk the same language' (Spencer 1914, 308–9).

In western Arnhem Land also, the hero Wuragag arrived (from what is now Indonesia) speaking Macassar language, switched to the local language at Melville Island, and then to Yiwadja language on the mainland. A group of Gunbalang-speaking Leech ancestors, as they got to the Cooper's Creek area and Wuragag's home, began to speak Gunwinggu and Maung for fear that Wuragag might hear them speaking differently. Fear again prevents two other myth characters from proceeding further across the landscape, as they get to the limits of their linguistic competence (they did not understand Maung) (Berndt and Berndt 1970, 13–14).

Again in western Arnhem Land, in the area of East Alligator River, a mythic brother and sister left wells for the Amurag people and spoke Amurag, but from Ibid onwards they spoke Mangeryu. Further east, the Night-bird man came down from the inland speaking Rembarrnga, but on getting to Gumadir he began to speak Gunwinggu. Cycad Man came from the east and met up with people whose language was Dangbon; 'At last, he left his own language and began talking in theirs'. Cycad Woman came from the south, speaking Rembarrnga, but then adopted to Dangbon when she got to its area. Two Rainbows came from inland of Milingimbi, speaking Yarlma language, and as they travelled west switched to Gudjalibi, Gurogoni, and lastly Gunwinggu. The old woman Wirindji came from the east speaking her own language, but on reaching the Gunwinggu area switched to the latter (Berndt and Berndt 1989, 30–32, 36, 53–56, 78, 170).

17. See Sutton (1991) for a discussion of this case; since her death the name has reverted to Wik-Ngathan.

18. Ironically, some writers have made an exception in order to allow for the reflection of geological history and similar natural events in Aboriginal myth. For a list of such cases see Sutton (1988, 251).

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