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Rulug wayirri:
Moving kin and country in the Northern Kimberley.

Anthony Redmond 2001

Cassidy 10
Rulug wayirri: moving kin and moving country in the Northern Kimberley.

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Sydney

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification. I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

[Signature]
Anthony Redmond
Acknowledgements

This thesis is the result of four and a half years of fieldwork conducted with my Ngarinyin hosts between June 1994 and April 2001. Without the enormous generosity and forbearance of Ngarinyin people who took me, and then my wife, Diana, and then my daughter, Clair (or Nyornja [Sugar-bag Pollen] as she is called in the Kimberley), into their lives and homes, none of this would have been possible. I can only hope that the material presented here goes some way to doing justice to their richly poetic and vibrant views of the world. In particular, my now deceased Ngarinyin teachers, D. Mowaljarlai and L. Gowanulli, are remembered here with abiding love and respect. My wife, Diana McCarthy, has allowed our lives to be hugely determined by our ever intensifying webs of relatedness with Ngarinyin people and thrown herself with love and energy into a world radically different from our pre-Kimberley life. Through her professional research, she has also been a major contributor to the process of preparing the Ngarinyin Native Title claim currently before the courts. The constant guidance and insight offered by my supervisors, Alan Rumsey, who has been a critically knowledgeable force in my project from the very beginning, and Franca Tamisari who nurtured the thesis through the labyrinths of contemporary theory in the writing up stage, have been enormously appreciated. I also pay tribute here to a hugely influential teacher, Jadran Mimica, who made the practice of ethnography for me a passionate pursuit of the philosopher’s stone, and where better to find such stones in abundance than in Ngarinyin country itself where stones are clouds and clouds are the watery essence of self-renewal.

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References to data from my notebooks is indicated with brackets thus [.....] at the end of sections of quoted or transcribed dialogue.

The volume of the notebooks is indicated by a capital [V] followed by a numeral.

The page number of the notebook is indicated by the number following the comma e.g. [V9, 23].

Occasionally where there have been no page numbers entered in a makeshift notebook or on a loose leaf the date the data was recorded is indicated rather than page numbers thus [Ts. 9/8/94].

The names of the people with whom I worked are reduced to initials and further encrypted in order to protect their privacy. This is for several reasons. One is that under local protocols deceased people should not be referred to by name and this will obviously be a continuing problem. The other is that living people should not be subjected to undesired scrutiny and requests for further information without their consent and desire to engage in such an enterprise. The intense pressure for mineral exploration and other kinds of development in Ngarinyin country means that identifying individuals in relation to specific blocks of country could open them up to unwelcome approaches outside of local protocols. The same can be said for the insatiable desire of the wider non-Aboriginal public for knowledge resources of the "tribal" kind which is often used to pad up "New Age" mythologising of Aboriginal life-worlds.
Spelling and Pronunciation (provided by courtesy of Alan Rumsey)
The Aboriginal-language words which are used in this work are mainly in Ungarinyin, since it is the main language associated with the research area. The letters are pronounced as follows:

ny as in English canyon, not as in many
yn same as ny. This spelling is used at the end of words to help prevent English speakers from pronouncing it as in many.
ng as in English sing, singer, not as in finger.
ng as in vanguard
r with the tip of the tongue curled back as in American English car or Mary, not as in the Australian or English pronunciation of those words.
rr with the tip of the tongue tapped or "rolled" against the roof of the mouth, as in Scots pronunciation of English.
rd with the tip of the tongue curled back as in American English card or bird, not as in the Australian or English pronunciation of those words.
rm with the tip of the tongue curled back as in American English barn, not as in the Australian or English pronunciation of that word.
rl with the tip of the tongue curled back as in American English girl, not as in the Australian or English pronunciation of that word.
a as in English father, not as in mate or apple
i as in English pit or Fiji, not as in find
u as in English clue, not as in but or cute. (In English this sound is usually spelled with oo rather than u; for example as in goose or tool)
o as in English poke or lock
e as in (the Australian or British pronunciation of) fête or set, not as in me
b, d, j, g, m, n, l, w, y, all as in English
Chapter 1. Introduction.

1.1 The Core Problematic

"And if the body is composed of relations, if it shows the imprint of past encounters, then the relations are not in a state of stasis. Awareness of them implies that they must be attended to. These internal relations must either be further built upon or must be taken apart and fresh relations instigated" Marilyn Strathern (1988:131).

When an older Ngarinyin person asserts that "we (present day Ngarinyin people) didn't make the world with our own hands", he or she seems to be denying other statements and activities which assert their belief in ever-present processes within living beings which shape the sense of self in the world, and indeed shape the world itself. These processes, which have all the qualities of being primary processes, are, however, not felt to be reducible to either the practical consciousness or actual physical capabilities of individual human-beings\(^1\). Rather, these primary processes are believed to be active and accessible in each living subject and this becomes most clear in the explicit identifications which a person makes with his or her wanjina (patrilineal ancestral personage), totemic species, conception spirits, specific places and specific deceased relatives. Indeed, the above expression, disclaiming participation in the original act of creation, contains within it the sense of an irrepressible narcissism\(^2\) - a narcissism which may have been fundamental to the survival of Aboriginal people and the famously persistent quality of Aboriginal cultures against enormous odds. While denying human agency in cosmogonic events, older Ngarinyin people, in common with many other traditionally orientated Aborigines, also deny that the human person is merely that which visibly presents itself in the here and now (cf. Munn 1970; Myers 1986; Morphy 1995). It is the totality of their being as

---

\(^1\) The term primary process was coined by Freud to describe a kind of thinking/experience characteristic of dreams and symbol formation in which predominate "mechanisms like projective identification, condensation, displacement and denial...distortion of space and time, absence of contradiction and negation, logical connection represented by simultaneity, and causality by succession" (Hook 1994:237).

\(^2\) The term "narcissism" is used here in Kohut's psychoanalytic sense of "the libidinal investment of the self" of which he says that "[a]lthough in theoretical discussions it will not usually be disputed that narcissism ... is per se neither pathological nor obnoxious, there exists an understandable tendency to look at it with a negatively toned evaluation as soon as the field of theory is left" (1978:427). Narcissistic energy, then, is the source from which all object relations with the world are made and invested with significance.
embodiment of *wanjina* and re-incarnation of a father's father's brother who is felt to be the original creator of the world. This specific "ideal ego" with which the bush raised generation identify is omnipotent and continually generative.

Kolig (1981,1987,1996), Munn (1970,1973) and Morphy (1995) were inclined to equate human creativity exclusively with innovation in their varying degrees of separation of ancestral subject from human object in Aboriginal cosmologies. This is to underestimate the sense in which a full mobilisation of human imaginative resources is required to grasp the world, regardless of the "pre-packaged" cultural forms which are offered to the human subject. Neither the physical landscape nor the constellations of affect which are offered with it in the form of stories are just a *fait accompli*. As Wagner has pointed out:

The necessity to innovate is characteristic of all cultural activity. It amounts to the cultural necessity to attribute meaning to every successive act, event, and element, and to formulate that meaning in terms of already known referents or elements (Wagner cited in M. Strathern 1988:17).

In this thesis I attempt to elaborate upon and extend a theoretical paradigm which has construed Aborigines' experience of the landscape as "set in stone" by ancestral action. By taking too literally Aboriginal statements about the immutability of received knowledge, this theoretical paradigm obscures the extent to which these same people dream new songs, "find" children in dreams and re-organise and reproduce mythic materials. Rather than simply receiving dogma about Creation, Ngarinyin people themselves elaborate upon the bodily imagery which pervades expressions about country and the sense of agency which the human subject brings to the interpretation of the life-world. I propose here that mythopoeic feelings of "everlastingness" and "enduring places" exist not in opposition to the inescapable finitude and temporality of bodily experience but as interoceptions of a core continuity of being enveloped within the kinesthesia of the embodied self.

John Morton, in his critical appreciation of Nancy Munn's (1970) seminal paper on Walbiri projective/introjective practices, argued that while there are strong tendencies to conservatism in Aboriginal religions, he was not convinced that such "characterizations......tell the whole story" (1987:111). He argues, correctly I think,
hat creative interaction with the world is no less intense because the process involves reproducing exactly a design, song or track that is pre-established. Furthermore, a human subject "will create songs...and designs in response to his own visions and dreams" (1987:111). This is quite clearly the case in the material which I am about to discuss from my recent fieldwork in the north Kimberley, where new songs are seen to be given to the composer from a deceased person but in which the composer, the recipient, makes a perilous journey to attain these songs. A composer of songs is believed to be gifted with the particular skills required to withstand the psychophysical fragmentation necessary to the song-dreaming process. The subsequent restoration of his body after such flights of fancy is something which is achieved through collective human action in the same way that the annual restoration of the land-body is achieved though an interactive mirroring of humans and *wanjina*.

At least for the older Ngarinyin people with whom I have worked, images of land and body are interpenetrating, polymorphic, shifting and metamorphosing sediments of experience which establish a foundational identity (*boro*). In order to explain such interpenetrations I will examine a cluster of phenomena bound by a single string; places that move, features in the landscape which travel, shake, tremble and split. These places range from cave sites which were said to be transported on the shoulders of *wanjina* during the *Larlan* (Dreaming), to giant stones with soft centres which were carried from one mountain range to another by personages assimilating historically known persons with originary beings, to stone formations which are said to teeter, sway, move and sing in a permanent state of unstable equilibrium. Indeed, many land formations in the eroded, glaciated and crumbling stone-scape of the north Kimberley readily lend themselves to imagery of a precarious and momentary balance, far removed from the static, timeless images of land which non-Aboriginal Australians are inclined to imagine. This is a case where the physical world can be shown to play a powerfully determining role in the life of the local imagination. This is not purely a result of processes of perception, a thrusting of scopic imagery of a disintegrating landscape upon a neutral subject, so that anybody, regardless of cultural background, might simply perceive it as such. Rather, it involves a co-structuring of a social/physical world through imaginal structures. That Ngarinyin people have

---

3 Fred Myers, despite his concern with the contingency and negotiability of social life amongst the Pintubi, also noted that Aborigines engage in a “construction of reality” in which their current (*fr. Continues o.p.*)
experienced country as mobile, unstable and open to elicitory appeals from men and women, is apparent from the mythic elaborations with which they evoke bodily experience in country. These particular mytho-poeia (see chapters 8 and 9), considered in tandem with underlying cosmological data which provide the basis of a distinctive local identity (see chapters 6 and 7), deal with experiences of bodily splitting and the fracturing and movement of monoliths in a most telling way. Casey has written in this regard that;

if the body were an inert and intact thing with no moving parts, a fleshly monolith, it could be grasped as something sheerly physical that is punctually located at a given position in space and does not reach out farther (1996:21).

The Ngarinyin stories about such places are eloquently explicit about this "reaching out", the inherent intentionality of place and human desire which creates the "interanimation" (Basso 1996:55) between them.

Stories of moving places, I will argue, explore the tensions and overlaps between the living, active, moving, changing body and the resting, sleeping, dreaming, dying and dead body. This applies equally to the bodies of ancestral beings and the human bodies which fill the contemporary social universe. It is apparent in the Ngarinyin world that the ability and desire for mobility forms the foundational common ground between animal, plant, human, mineral and heavenly bodies. Indeed, this is the primary quality all bodies share. It is also primary to the mytho-poeia and everyday practices of Ngarinyin people who matter-of-factly point out non-human species and even what non-Aborigines would classify as "non-sentient" entities as "my granny that one", "my uncle that one" or "that me that one". This is a product of patterns of relatedness, the social embodiment found amongst groups of relatives, being extended to country.

Munn's insightful and innovative description of the "double movement" of the transformative process speaks of "on the one hand a process of separation from the originating subject; on the other a binding of the object to the self in permanent, atemporal identification". This allows the country to act as "the fundamental object-system external to the conscious subject within which consciousness and identity are anchored" (1970:143, my italics). This structural/phenomenological schema has been profoundly influential in shaping subsequent anthropological thought. Indeed, these practices are "seen as imposed by an embracing, cosmic order" (1986:69).
structures form the ground upon which a theoretical approach to identity and transmutation of the human subject can be elaborated in terms which include the essential plasticity and mobility of the imaginal process. Such an approach will inevitably problematise Munn’s notion of an "object-system external to the conscious subject", the "non-sentient environment" and the idea of "permanent, atemporal identification" (1970:143) while retaining the vital import of what has been discerned as the indigenous insistence on the existence of such “bony structures” within the otherwise plastic image of the ancestral and human body.

It is not for the sake of finding a theory which reflects current western ideological obsessions with “fluidity” and the post-modernist claim of an absence of structures that I come to re-examine these formulations. Munn’s analytical abstractions of subject/object transactions has allowed the phenomenon of desert Aboriginal cosmogonic beliefs to be circumscribed without what Kapferer called

overdistortion, leaving the course open for its detailed examination as practised. The phenomenon itself directs the analytical gaze rather than vice-versa (postscript to Handleman 1979).

Just because as westerners we might wish to see everywhere around us an alleged dissolution of structures and the proliferation of a radical contingency which is strangely enough declared to be emblematic of the “agency” of humans creating their own worlds, just because this is presented as the new way of a world which, on the contrary, may be becoming rapidly constricted by ever more rigidly determining, if less discernible, structures, this is no good reason to declare that such radical agency must also be discoverable in other lifeworlds we might admire for any number of narcissistic reasons. It is a matter, as Kapferer said, of being directed by the ethnographic phenomenon itself.

All the available ethnography makes it quite undeniable that Aborigines have long conceived of the world as anchored in some sort of eternal Law put in place by ancestral beings prior to the concerns of human agents. Munn’s material and that which I present here, however, speaks to the fact that this idea of enduringness lies less in any fixity of objects and people themselves than in the persistent patterns of movement and the continuity of highly mobile transactions between subjects, what Munn called a “fundamental mode of orientation” to country (1970:157-8; cf. Rumsey 1994:120). This is the sense in which I propose here to examine the ethnographic
evidence concerning the nature of Ngarinyin cosmological ideas, dreams and everyday deployments of the body.

Morphy, writing more than twenty years after Munn's ground-breaking formulations, suggested a "triadic relationship between the individual, the ancestral past, and the world in which he or she lives" (1995:187). In this scheme, the ancestral past, objectified in the landscape, becomes reproduced by lived social interaction with that landscape. Morphy attempted to avoid assigning a determining role to what he identified as "social or cultural structures". These structures, he suggested, are "semi-autonomous" but "inter-dependent" and reproduced by human action. Yet his conclusions offer a view of human relationships with country as immutably grounded in the same determining structures which Munn's early work had enunciated. That is, "the ancestral beings, fixed in the land, become a timeless reference point outside the politics of daily life", "the ancestral journeying had... to be frozen over for ever at a particular point in the action", leading to a "subordination of time to space" (1995:188). For Morphy, Munn and Kolig, "unrammed creativity" (Morphy 1995:189) is reserved for the Ancestral Beings. Living human subjects "submit" their lived experience to be structured by the visible sediments of ancestral power frozen in the landscape. These structures, argued Morphy, are "outside the human world" (1995:189), just as Munn had posited the "creative locus 'outside' the individual" (1970: 160). This position, I argue, potentially inhibits further exploration of human relationships to country by assuming a particular notion of what it is to be human. Space and place have meaning and existence only in relation to the positioned, mobile and intentional human body. I have argued that rather than "taking on the determinate, unchanging structure of the object world" (Munn, 1970:150) the living human subject is constituted through an interaction with country which fuses images of highly mobile human, animal, plant, mineralized and stellar bodies. While subjectivity must be constituted through the structures of the Umwelt, this Umwelt is not a priori determinate, unchanging or "frozen over". The "eternal" element, the

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4 This seems to impute to cosmogonic time what Schutz and Luckmann described as the situation of historicality in which "in the living phases of actual experience there were horizons of open future: not now. The memory fulfilling my present conscious phase has another structure and has another position" (1974:87)

5 Franca Tamisari (1998) has reviewed and critiqued the prevailing position emerging from Munn's and Morphy's work by applying a phenomenological approach deriving from the later work of Merleau-Ponty, focussing on the central issues of mobility and visibility in Yolngu cosmology.
"timelessness", which has been discerned by so many ethnographers, is that which emerges from primary process thinking, of which Freud remarked

[T]he processes of the system Ucs. [Unconscious] are timeless; i.e. they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to the passage of time at all (1987:191)

At least one major divergence with Western cosmologies becomes apparent here. The common understanding of a modern European is that

[A]ncestors are not free: they can no longer act. I cannot act in relation to them. Social relations that are essentially reciprocal cannot exist with ancestors (Schutz and Luckmann 1974: 87).

In the traditions of the Ngarinyin world, on the contrary, reciprocal relationships do exist with the ancestral world, both in terms of the relationship of a person to the partial subject represented in their wanjina and in their reciprocal relationship with a classificatory father’s father (for male ego) or father’s father’s sister (for female ego). The markings which a child is born with upon its body, for example, can be either wounds inflicted by the father upon the child as animal body prior to conception or on a reciprocal relative’s animal body which has been made reincarnate as a son’s son or brother’s son’s son. Animal bodies, which are considered as having all been human at one time, allow for exegetic distinctions between present and creative time to be drawn but without any absolute separations since each present human life is originally "found" in an animal body. The transformative series for human subjects is thus;

human body- animal body (including instantiations in country) - human body ad infinitum.

Kolig (1996) recently claimed that the discernible creativity attributed to humans in southern Kimberley Aboriginal cosmology is a result of a recent “apotheosis” in which “historical men, and not divine powers, are being credited with feats of cultural and social achievements of causal relevance” (1996: 277). He believes that in the southern Kimberley where he worked, the “animal component of these culture heroes, the myths’ totemic ingredient, is deliberately played down” (ibid.). However, as I note above, the Ancestral Animals of the neighbouring but quite distinct Ngarinyin people, at least, are believed to have been originally human before their transformation into animal species and subsequent dispersal across the world. The theriomorphic nature of the Ancestors allows both human and animal characteristics to coexist without logical contradiction and their separation to
take place as a constitutive act which is reversible, if not necessary, in the dreaming of human conception spirits found after killing an animal.

Ngarinyin cosmology always allowed human subjects to "find" themselves and their relatives in a shifting but patterned landscape reflecting the lived-in human body. Human experience continues to draw life-blood from, add clarifying detail to, and animate the mythic structures of country. Human emotional investment makes the country "grow big" and the stories of creation visible.

1.2 Methodology and Background to the Research

The analytic object of my thesis is what Levi-Strauss dismissed as "the psycho-organic code" (1988:186-7; Morton 1993:318) as elaborated in a particular lifeworld, that is to say, the needful and desiring human body and its imaginal elaborations, as discoverable through detailed ethnography, phenomenological reflection and psychoanalysis.

Munn was able to draw out the nature of "transformations of subjects into objects" in the Walbiri world by drawing upon theoretical paradigms about the human psyche which had, by 1970, become available in western discourse through the works of Piaget, but also of R.D. Laing, Freud, Winnicott, Melanie Klein and others. As she acknowledged (too modestly given the scope and breadth of her synthesis), the problem of projective practices in desert Aboriginal cosmologies is "merely a recasting in institutionalized form of certain general psychological processes of individual development" (1970:158). Consider, for instance, Munn's characterisation of transformative relationships between ancestral and human world as mediated by the mythic landscape:

A transformation is constituted by a kind of 'double movement': on the one hand a process of separation from the originating subject; on the other, a binding of the object to him in permanent, atemporal identification.

Buttimer (1976:284) used the works of Merleau-Ponty to explore the notion that "each person has a natural place which is considered to be the zero-point of his personal reference system. This natural place is set within a membered spatial surrounding, a series of places which fuse to form meaningful regions each with its appropriate structure and orientation to other regions. Each person is surrounded by concentric layers of lived space".
This statement can be usefully compared to Freud’s analysis of narcissistic subject/object relations:

[A]: the very beginning, all the libido is accumulated in the id, while the ego is still in the process of formation or is still feeble. The id sends part of this libido out into erotic object-cathexes, whereupon the ego, now grown stronger, tries to get hold of this object libido and to force itself onto the id as a love-object. The narcissism of the ego is thus a secondary one, which has been drawn from objects (1960:36).

Munn’s notion of the untrammeled and mobile creativity of the ancestral “originating subject” is remarkably similar to Freud’s originary pool of highly mobile narcissistic energy, the id. Both are brimming with potentiality.

The next step in each schema is the process of projection of this essential energy onto objects; for Munn the object is the totemic landscape which is formed and shaped through the ancestor’s projective practices. For Freud the aim of the instinctual energy is the first love objects, notably the mother and her partial objects, and the acts of projection form the rudimentary ego itself in the process. Munn sees projective ancestral dreams as “incipient acts of self-consciousness”. Freud sees libidinal projections as formative of the ego.

The second phase of Munn’s “bi-directional movement” involves the reintegration of the originary subject with his self-objectification, the “binding of the object to him in permanent atemporal identification”. Freud’s second phase of the movement involves “taking over the libido from them [objects] into itself and binding it to the alteration of the ego produced by means of identification” (1960:35).

Thus, in each schema, freely mobile originary energy (libido) is projected outwards to form the rudimentary shape of the world and then re-introjected in order to transform and shape the original consciousness. Munn’s conception of ancestral creativity which gives the world a determined form through projection and introjection is identical to Freud’s transformation of primary narcissism into secondary narcissism which creates both the ego itself and object relations in the process.

Munn then goes on to describe how, in contrast to this free ancestral creativity, human subjectivity in Aboriginal lifeworlds is, at least initially, seen to be determined by the necessity of “submitting” to this pre-existing objectification of originary creative energy (assimilable to collective representations). I am less inclined
to see a radical distinction between the originary creativity – "the power to create one’s own identity without limitation" (Munn 1970:14) - of ancestors and subsequent human creativity. The process of creating self and world from projection and then re-introjection of narcissistic energy occurs at both levels, that of the living human and the perceived ancestral one which, I argue, continues to be able to be mobilised by living human subjects. This is a fact that also comes out in Munn’s account when she refers to “a constant assimilation of subject to object, whether the ancestral side of the time barrier is referred to, or the human, present day side of it” (1970:150). The process of differentiating structuration of the self is the same for ancestral subject and living human subject. The fact that Aboriginal cosmogonies hypostasise the ancestral creation is a result of the tendency to “split off” primary process thinking with all its manifestations of timelessness from secondary process seriation and organisation of the world. However, this “splitting off” means that the original creative process remains forever present for each human subject, and this fact also tends to emerge in Aboriginal cosmologies, certainly in that of *wanjina* and *wungurr* (chapters 6 and 7 below). That the creative embodiments of ancestors objectified in the landscape remain mobile, rather than a “fixed topological structure”, is a major theme of my materials and interpretation throughout the thesis. The relationship of human subjects to ancestors is thus a highly significant aspect of this work.

Given the focal nature of kinship studies to the anthropology of the 1960s and 1970s, and particularly the structural study of kinship systems, it is hardly surprising that psychologically based approaches to the understanding of the family and the ways in which emotional life is structured by internalisation of familial patterns, should have had a profound influence upon anthropology. R.D.Laing (1960, 1961, 1964, 1970) perhaps more than any other theorist popularised the analysis of the mechanisms of projection and introjection which had been indispensable to psychoanalysis since Freud’s early writings. Laing’s great appeal was due in part to the fact that he attempted to understand the process of interiorisation and projection not through a pathology of the individuated psyche but through the analysis of mobile, reciprocal structures created between living human agents engaged in a temporal as well as spatial dimension (1971:4). Thus human sociality, intensified in the family, “induces” a human subject to “embody” (1971:119) the experiences of others. This process of induction creates the socially distributed person, or in Laing’s analysis, the
“divided self” (1960) (a “normal” as well as pathological formation) with which we are familiar from both kinship studies and clinical psychopathology.

It was Laing’s emphasis upon the analysis of the internalized family as “relations and operations between elements and sets of elements (which) are internalized, not elements in isolation” (1971: 4) which preserved his work from some of the worst excesses of structuralism. There is no reification here of “internalised objects” and “projected subjects”. There is a “co-inherence” of human agents within the collective and largely unconscious “family fantasy” and the relationships between the elements of this co-inherence can theoretically be mapped. My thesis is in agreement with Laing that;

One’s body is of unique significance because it is the range for ‘introjective’ mappings from all domains: and these introjective sets provide a ‘pool’ for projections in turn to any domain...” (1971:117).

Employing a terminology which was contemporaneously introduced into Australian anthropology by W.E.H. Stanner (1965), Laing argues that

[F]amilies are of peculiar significance because, more than any other social set, they are both domain and range7, for projections to outside, introjections from outside, and, they are the range for projections to them from the members of the family itself, as they are the domain of introjections to individuals in the family (1971:117, italics in original).

I will present data throughout the thesis which details how Ngarinyin people “map” kinship relationships onto the human body through the interpretation of muscle flutterings which correspond to specified relatives from the total domain of relatedness. This kind of semantic mapping onto the body of kinship relations is a common-place in Australianist anthropology and simply serves to establish the terms for further analysis (e.g. Schebeck 1978). Heath (1982:58), however, points to the inadequacy of a merely formal semantic mapping between the domains of kinship and the body as static model. In a brief allusion to the fact that focal members of a kinship set are singled out for representation through signs of bodily “behaviours involving physical contact” (ibid.) he hints at the fact that it is in the deployment of the body as a mobile structure actively and affectively engaged with others that these kinship
body-signs become apparent. This is something which I take up in the thesis. I will also present data which shows how visceral body images as well as processes of socialisation are mapped onto country in more or less fragmentary ways, making explicit how it is that “the body’s brachiated and multiply articulated structures render it a uniquely valuable vehicle in the establishment of place” (Casey 1996:21).

The point at which I wish to take up Munn’s work in conjunction with psychoanalysis is that point at which she emphasises the “fundamental mode of orientation” (1970:157-158) of self to country and kin, that is to say, as a mobile network of relatedness through which personhood is created and reproduced as a series of unstable structures. I treat relationships with country and kin in a similar way to which Laing treats the fantasy “family”, not as “a simple set of introjected objects, but more a matrix for dramas, patterns of space-time sequences to be enacted” (1971:17).

1.2.1 The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis begins with a general introduction to the towns and communities in which Ngarinyin people presently live. These towns and communities were my first point of contact with those Ngarinyin people who were to be my teachers over the ensuing years. I lived a town-based life in the Derby home of the late D. Mowaljarlai, a semi-professional Ngarinyin “stranger handler” and indigenous philosopher, for the first eight months of my fieldwork and there became acquainted with members of remote communities before visiting them in situ. I subsequently moved to Dodman community, 350 kilometres east of Derby on the dirt and gravel track known as the Gibb River Road. My initial purpose in choosing Dodnun community as a place in which to focus my research was because it was the home of M.S., the pre-eminent living composer of this cultural world. My focus on local songs as a vehicle for articulation of feeling for country had been propelled by my readings of Lommel’s (1997) account of the Worrorra barnman, Alan Balbungu (cf. also Lommel and

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7 Laing’s use of domain and range is consistent with Stanner’s (1965) territorial usage in that the domain is the wider set from which a range is abstracted. However that is not to say that scale is determining because an entire domain can be re-mapped onto a range.

8 Such a view of kinship is consistent with Devereux’s claim that “for the Unconscious, kinship qua concept does not exist; all that is real is the attitude towards certain persons which provides the affective infrastructure of socially established bonds of kinship and of bonds whose existence society recognizes precisely by seeking to deny or forbid them” (1978:202).
Mowaljarlai, 1994). I recorded this set of songs with the Ngarinyin man, L.G. (who died in August 2000) soon after my arrival in Derby in mid-1994. Having been able to so quickly record the corpus of Balbunnu's songs due to G.L.'s great generosity with his time, I was not quite prepared for the long and drawn out process of getting to know what turned out to be a rather shy by nature composer well enough to discuss his work with him. Of course, in the process of waiting for this opportunity, a great deal more of the Ngarinyin life-world was opened up to me.

I go on to describe the (sometimes appalling) living conditions, local economy and political context of these contemporary settlements of Ngarinyin people. Having thus laid out, etically, the bare bones of the world which Ngarinyin people inhabit I then go on to describe in detail the underlying notions of the person as expressed in kinship, social structures, ceremonial exchanges and everyday engagements.

The following two chapters (Chapters 6 and 7) describe the fundamental cosmographic/cosmogonic concepts of *wanjina* and *wunggurr* which underpin Ngarinyin people's sense of their origins and present place in the world⁹. This material is derived from extensive interviews and observations, principally (but not exclusively) with Ngarinyin people over sixty years of age during the course of my fieldwork.

The final two chapters take up the challenge of using the generalised treatment of Ngarinyin cosmology offered in Chapters 6 and 7 in conjunction with the descriptions of kin structures, social groups and the interaction between them, offered in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, to analyse how one particular genre of stories and songs, and the uses to which these are put, articulate Ngarinyin feeling for country in a way which gives considerable weight to local understandings and investments of the body. By considering very closely a variety of published stories in conjunction with my own source materials and contextualising these materials within the contemporary social world, I have attempted to illuminate the ways in which Ngarinyin people project images of the body onto the country and onto their kin. By utilising the body as the

⁹ When I say "people's sense of their origins" I recognise that there are wide, often generationally specific, variants in this belief system. Dan Sperber has cogently argued against the fundamental assumption in strong forms of cultural relativism which create the illusion of "a homogenous world-view in which, indeed, no epistemological differentiation of belief occurs. This, however, is a fact of ethnography not of culture" (Sperber, 1985: 48).
central interpretive matrix for apprehending country, Ngarinyin people, I argue, partake of a creative interaction which guarantees them a prime role in the regeneration of their world. One of the aspects of this regeneration is the redrawing of the parametres of received myths (Chapter 9).

Rather than viewing a chronologically earlier version of a myth or story as the pristine pre-contact version and a later version as result of historical contamination, I will show how different versions of stories which are themselves “about” creative travelling, move through the landscape with concomitant change, collecting meanings as they travel. As Weiner puts it, such myths “combine with other stories by allowing the resolution of each myth as interpretive whole, rather than through the increment or deletion of individual structural components” (1995:26). As well as local mythopoecia, I utilise dream texts which I and others have collected to show how thoroughly personalised stories about country become. The dream texts and analyses also give an insight into the particular ways in which universal human dramas of self constitution are dealt with by Ngarinyin people.

My methodology, then, inevitably leads to the application to the materials of “ideal-types” which Max Weber described as applying a purely analytical construct created by ourselves...to countless concrete interrelationships which we have fused into an ‘idea’. It is a synthesis which we could not succeed in attaining with consistency without the application of ideal-type concepts (1949:96).

Laing’s method for analysis of what Weber called “concrete inter-relationships” is consistent with Marx’s notion that “the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of social relations” (Marx 1978: 145).

My thesis argues that it is necessary to regard the establishment of relations with the physical world and the the human subjects who appear as significant others within it from both a socio-centric and ego-centric perspective. Rather than reifying social relations so that they assume a status which accords them a unilateral capacity to generate meaning for individuals, these social relations emerge from and come to bear upon psychophysical beings with real needs and desires. These real needs are always mediated through emergent imaginative structures embedded in agents in a social world. Thus meaning is constituted through a dynamic interplay among needful, desiring beings. From the essential indeterminacy pervading these
relationships emerges a cultural patrimony which attempts to assert a "normative"
determinacy in social relationships. This set of "collective representations" acts to
organise affectivity in specific ways as a "libidinal economy", the submersion of
conflict, both among individuals and intra-psychically.

The importance of psychoanalytic theory to the understanding of social
relations has traditionally been perceived to be in its insights into this "libidinal
economy" at the intra-psychic level. In this inherently mechanistic model, the Ego
mediates to establish a dynamic equilibrium in which the highly mobile outpourings
of undifferentiated affect from the Id become attached or invested in a relatively
"fixed" world of objects which serves to give shape and structure to the psyche. It is
the Ego's resistance to undifferentiated outpourings of energy which creates the
person. Ideally this is achieved through the organisation of the flow of cathexes rather
than through a rigid fixity of emotional investment\(^{10}\). This process is subject to all
manner of reversals and plateauing including "counter-cathexes" which attempt to
neutralise a desirable object/subject investment which is dangerous to the libidinal
economy.

For psychoanalysts, the transformations of the mother/child relationship, the
dissolution of total symbiosis, generate the first experiences of the self. These
experiences are mediated through another subjectivity and lay an existential
foundation for the interpretation of future social Gestalten\(^ {11}\) in which a web of
projections and intro-jections constitutes the basis for the subject as that "ensemble of
social relations" referred to by Marx. Thus psychoanalysis transcends the narrow
dichotomies between individual and society which have been inherent to
psychological anthropology. As Weiner, drawing out the significance for
anthropology of Lacan's works on the "mirror phase", puts it, "to perceive the world
as relationally based is to recognize one's own internal relational constitution"
(1995:xvii). This relationality is not restricted to social life considered narrowly but
needs to apply to all the products which intersubjectivity generates and the very
possibility of intersubjectivity itself. Wagner's introduction of the method of symbolic

\(^{10}\) Merleau-Ponty is essentially in agreement with Freud's model where he writes of "activity that is
prior to cognition properly so-called, a function of organising experiences that imposes on certain
totalities the configuration and the kind of equilibrium that are possible under the corporeal and social
conditions of the child himself"(1964:99).

\(^{11}\) Gestalten are "highspots within a sweep of continuous transformations" (Arnheim 1969:182).
obviating whereby symbols “act upon each other in certain contexts so as to reveal....the relative contrast between conventional and idiosyncratic meanings” (Weiner 1995:34) has been most helpful in the later stages of the analyses produced in this thesis.

Both psychoanalysis and the ethnographic project traditionally utilise a similar methodology; participant observation12. The two disciplines have emerged from a similar, and often convergent, historical milieu and it is hardly surprising that much cross-fertilisation between the two disciplines has occurred. This is still true despite an increasingly widening gap between the disciplines in the decades subsequent to the ready acceptance of psychoanalytic notions by the founders of modern anthropology such as Rivers, Malinowski and Seligman (cf. Heald, Deluz and Jacobin 1994; Morton 1993). The clinical and fieldwork situations both involve a confluence of “transcendent” observation and inter-subjective engagement. In psychoanalytic practice this manifests in a phenomenological approach to symptoms and a hermeneutics of meaning. In anthropology we deal phenomenologically with symbols, social formations and customs and engage in a hermeneutic search for meaning through social contextualisation. Both disciplines utilise a relativist method which attempts to make sense of “strange” phenomena; one by aetiological situating symptoms within the originary matrix of an individual’s early experiences and fantasies, the other by locating collective representations within the social field which is seen to simultaneously feed upon and generate them. This relativisation of cultural practices and personal symptoms inevitably has as its goal the uncovering of a form of rationality or explicability of a phenomenon “in its own terms”.

However, the uncovering of these local, or personal, structures of being through ethnography and psychoanalysis can not stop at showing how these structures are interrelated or able to be viewed as transformations of each other. That is the goal of the structuralist endeavour which eschews any analysis of affectivity as “refractory to explanation” (Levi-Strauss 1973:140). By maintaining a focus upon the living, embodied subject in a concrete lifeworld, psychoanalysis and ethnography are able to deal with purpose, affectivity and intentionality. They both have the capacity to offer interpretations of the predominantly inarticulate modes of being human which suffuse

the comparatively organised and articulated expressions emerging more or less continuously from being-in-the-world. Such an approach cannot fail to problematise taken for granted notions of the person. In this regard, Henrietta Moore has discerned in the predominantly liberal tradition of anthropology an understandable reluctance, equally evident in the writings of many feminist theorists...to relinquish the idea that all persons are rational, unified individuals, in favour of a view of the subject and of subjectivity which stresses its shifting, imaginary and conflicting nature...[because it].. could so easily become a pathological characterisation of others (1994:132).

Psychoanalysis and the ethnographic encounter also share a reliance upon attempts to establish an intersubjective engagement which will be heavily inflected with “transference” and “counter-transference” of affect between analyst and subject. In both cases, the analyst cannot achieve their objective without a submersion into the “personal cultures” of their “informants” and thus should expect to be re-constituted by their subjects through the “looking glass” of their subjects’ own historical/social configurations. The common experience, especially in Aboriginal communities, of the anthropologist being heuristically assigned a kinship position is not unlike the transference of the paternal and/or maternal imago onto the analyst. The significant point of difference here is that the Aboriginal assignment of a kinship role can be from a much greater, and more reciprocal, range of possibilities. As well as the greater range of possibilities, a wider array of affective values also come to the fore in the relationships with the long-term fieldwork anthropologist because he/she has relationships with multiple subjects. This allows the ethnographer to continually cross-reference the kinds of affective values emerging from these relationships so that patternings can be discerned across an extensive range of intersubjective engagements, reducing the extent of contingent factors.

1.3 The Country

The area included in this study, shown on Map 1, consists largely of the inland sandstone and basaltic ranges and plateaus which feed the headwaters of several major river systems of the north Kimberley region: the Drysdale, King Edward, Hann, Prince Regent, Roe/Moran, Hunter, Durack, and Chamberlain/Pentecost Rivers. The current European land tenure comprises mainly pastoral leases and vacant crown land.
Several relatively small reserves and a portion of the extensive Prince Regent Nature Reserve are also within the study area.

The wider context of the study area comprises the traditional countries of the Ngarinyin/Wurla, Worrorra, Unggumi, Unggarang and Wunambal peoples which, along with the countries of the Gwini and Gunin peoples of the King George and Forrest River regions, occupy most of the north-west corner of the Australian landmass. This region is a mountainous one, bounded on the south and south east by the crescent of the King Leopold Ranges which run roughly east-west before becoming the north-south running Durack Range, together forming a massive rain catchment area. To the south and east, the King Leopold and Durack Ranges drain into the Fitzroy and Ord River valleys respectively. The flood plains of these two major river systems extend towards the spinifex and sand dune deserts further south, while the northern and western boundaries of the region are the Timor Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Moving from the west to the east of this region, the boundary with the flat pindan country forming the flood plain of the Fitzroy River is first marked out by the 300 million year old Devonian reef known as the Napier Range, 120 kilometres east of Derby. This north-south running limestone and quartzite range is in places less than 100 metres wide and forms a jagged natural barrier, full of caves and tunnels, rising from the black soil plains. The country to the east of this barrier then consists of small conglomerate hills (the gumi from which the local Unggumi people took their name) in which black granite boulders are piled against the sloping pinnacles of volcanically produced outcrops.

These small conglomerate hills occupy a swathe of country on average about 50 kilometres wide between the Devonian reef and the first dramatic rises of the micaceous sandstone escarpments of the King Leopolds which reach 930m in height at Mt. Ord (Petheram and Kok, 1983:2). Having made this rise in elevation the country then levels out to become the desiccated central Kimberley plateau which “can be viewed as a dome” (Blundell, 1975:11) with its highest point at Mt. Hann (Winjagin, the central site in my discussions of mythic materials) which rises to 854 metres in height.

The central plateau, the heartland of the Ngarinyin people, consists largely of low wooded savanna grasslands growing in the shallow valleys between rugged sandstone tablelands. These extend westwards through Worrorra country to the high
sandstone cliffs which rise as high as 250 metres along the deeply indented coastline before dropping away into estuarine tidal mudflats with extensive mangrove systems. High tides along the north-western Kimberley coast run at up to 11 metres so these estuarine inlets, rich in food resources for local Aboriginal people, can extend a considerable distance inland.

The Northern Kimberley supports two major vegetation formations:

1. “open forests in sandstone areas” (CSIRO, 1960 as reported in Blundell 1975:27) with jardi (soft spinifex clumps), drought-evading shrubs and a wide variety of perennial, drought-resisting, avenescent Eucalyptus which suspend growth during the dry season and

2. “grassy Eucalyptus woodlands with sparse shrubs but a good development of grass understorey” (Blundell 1975:27) on the side-spread volcanic soils.

These plant communities are subject to a dry tropics regime in which north-west monsoons bring an annual cyclonic wet season, Winjin, extending from January though to the end of March. This produces between 1000mm of rain on the north-west coast (Petheram and Kok, 1983:3) to “29.07 inches annually at Gibb River” (Slatyer cited in Blundell, 1975:18) in the central part of the plateau. During this period extensive flooding of the tablelands occurs and rivers may rise up to 10 metres.

The monsoon season is followed by a relatively cool dry season, Mawinggi, between May and September when virtually no rain at all occurs. Many of the smaller rivers dry up and the larger rivers retract to a series of deep rock pools which are often fringed by wulun, (Melaleuca paper-barks), gunjan (pandanus), bangin (a species of Ficus), and balmangan (orange-flowering Grevillea species). These rock pools may be linked by underground flows and often occur in the deep gorges which cut through the tablelands. These gorges support very constricted areas of monsoon forest type vegetation. The rocky outcrops in their vicinity support populations of bonjoyi (red-flowering kurrajong) and alwa (yellow flowering Kapok) which flower at the height of the dry season in July. During the dry season the night-time temperatures in the ranges may regularly plummet to 3°C or less, with daytime temperatures sometimes only reaching the low 20°s C. Maximum and minimum temperature ranges in the dry season are 32C and 16C respectively for the whole Kimberley (Petheram and Kok,
The coastal areas are not subject to the same low temperatures which occur in the inland ranges.

In between these clear periods of wet and dry, brief transitional seasons occur:

*Jowad* - November/December when there are high temperatures (over 40°C) and a heavy build up of *cumulo-nimbus* (*gulingi*) coming in from the north and north-west and consequent high humidity with sporadic "first rain".

*Wilgunjirin* – April/May when late occurring cyclonic activity may bring scattered showers, *bowan*, the “knock-em-down rain”, which flattens the tall cane grass as the dry south-east winds begin to blow in from the desert regions.

Human access to most of the study area is only possible by walking, horseback or helicopter. There is one road which traverses the area from west to east, the gravel and clay Gibb River Road which was built on the stock route (the “beef road”) in the early 1970s. This is a seven hundred kilometre long four-wheel drive road linking Derby to Wyndham which is closed for most of wet season due to flooding of its surface and many untraversable river crossings. Most of the stations and permanent communities referred to in this thesis are located within fifty kilometres of the main Gibb River Road. Approximately forty kilometres beyond Gibb River station (400kms east of Derby) a branch of the road runs north to Kalumburu on the far north coast.
1.4 The People

Map 1. Section of McGregor’s map of traditional locations of the main Kimberley languages (1988:93). This version of the map highlights the North Kimberley Language Family.

The people who are the subjects of this study belong to a larger group of Aboriginal people with traditional connections to the country shown in Map 1. This region includes the territories traditionally associated with the Worrorra, Wunambal, Gambere and Ngarinyin languages, and several other closely related dialects: Umida, Unggarrang, and Unggumi from the south-western edge of the study area, Yawijabaya from Montgomery Island and Wurla from the far eastern side of the study area. Other Aboriginal people throughout the Kimberley have identified these language groups as continuing to have their own distinctive, shared body of beliefs, social and cultural traits and language affinities which bind them together and differentiate them from the neighbouring regions. Anthropologists, archaeologists and linguists have long concurred with this view. The very high degree of endogamy which has characterised and continues to characterise these groups acts to perpetuate their distinctiveness.
1.4.1 People, Country and Language

Part of this distinctiveness of the group as a whole and the structurally relative differences through which the larger group is internally differentiated emerges in the domain of language. The members of these groups regard people and language as emanations of a fundamental identity abiding in country (cf. Merlan 1981 and Rumsey 1989, 1993, 1996). Ancestral beings, Wadmana or Andarri, the Ring Tail Possum and Langguman, the Sugar Glider (known in Kriol as the “Flying Squirrel” or “Flying Possum”), are believed to have deposited essences in country which impart a language identity to that country. The fact that both these creatures move about through the upper spaces in the tree-tops, employing serial leaps, seems to lend them a particular advantage in the indigenous figuring of the sense in which they cover vast tracts of country distributing language essences. Only sporadically do they make bodily contact with the ground to deposit bodily substances at those places which come to bear their imprint as names, stories and paintings. In this sense Possum and Flying Squirrel display aerial qualities which are homologous to the way in which wunggurr, the Rainbow Serpent, is believed to be pervasively present under the ground and water but making itself visible only at certain points in country which I call “islands” of presence. This notion is explored at length in Chapter 6 below.

A senior teacher (U.B.) has his conception site, wunggurr, near the place where Wadmana deposited Ngarinyin language in country at Gulemenwawi. His version of the story makes particular reference to both differentiations between adjacent languages and an interconnectedness of a wider (multilingual) community through marriage links. I present his version of the story here:

Walwi, Blue Tongue Lizard was trying to make fire with stick (fire drill). “E talking Unggumi, singing out to her husband, Wadmana, “Hey! Come and help me...my fingers too short, I can’t get fire. I can’t rub this stick fast way, come and turn it for me.” But Wadmana was tie up having bogy (bath).”No you wait I’m washing meself yet”. That Possum was washing his angulu (penis) with hand, he couldn’t turn it (the fire drill) for her. Amud (semen) come out there, ormol, white ochre. Ngarinyin language come up right there.

This story displays what Peter Sutton, referring to Aboriginal theories of language origin generally, calls a stress upon “the cultural valorisation of difference as well as of unity, they attribute local linguistic diversity to acts of interaction rather than to isolation” (Sutton in Merlan, Morton and Rumsey 1997:223). The Unggumi and
Ngarinyin are said to have always engaged in the shared social and ceremonial life which currently exists between them but to have maintained fairly bounded territories which were marked out by the travels of these Ancestral Beings depositing language as some kind of physical substance in country. The story above maintains this sense of language territory distanciation between personages otherwise intimately linked by marriage. Blue Tongue is off in the distance “singing out” to her husband who is hidden from view in his own place, a waterhole, engaged in a creative shedding of inner substance, making, on his own, the bodily friction which his wife desires. His refusal to “make fire” for his wife, the one with whom a husband normally shares “one fire”, is an explicit act of differentiation, stressing Wadmana’s assertion of autonomy against Walwi’s cry of dependence. The importance of Wadmana drawing substances out of his own body will become important to my later analysis of the projective practices by which Ngarinyin people constitute an identity with country.

These bodily substances also become incarnate in human beings which rise from the same ground, contemporary Ngarinyin people\(^{13}\). Thus each person is believed to have a “proper” country and “proper” language irrespective of where the person resides or which language he or she speaks. This is identical to the situation which Merlan and Rumsey (1982) described for the Jawoyn for whom “the mediated link is not between language and country (which are directly linked), but between language and people” (Rumsey 1989:75).

This is particularly observable in the case of those people (usually younger than thirty years of age) who might speak little or none of the indigenous language which is believed to be his or her birthright. This doesn’t prevent their elders from identifying them as a Worrorra or Ngarinyin person, for instance. Sometimes both languages will be ascribed to a person because of their mixed affiliations. The important point here is that country is regarded as the matrix from which language and person is emergent. It follows from this that country is much more than a physical landscape. It is an inhabited domain redolent with the imprint of ancestral beings in the form of language, scents, and the potentialities of all those who are to yet to emerge from it.

\(^{13}\) In the neighbouring Victoria River district of the Northern Territory, Rose was told, “[E]verything come up out of ground – language, people, emu, kangaroo, grass. That’s the Law” (Rose 1992:54).
Older Ngarinyin teachers often stress this issue of the proper language belonging to particular countries. D.J., for instance, has repeatedly told and painted the story concerning the movement, in the larlan (Dreaming) of a group of Waringarri (eastern) people into the Mt. Ord area, just south of his mother’s clan country, Gamaluwa. His painting of the story elaborates upon a cave painting in the Mt. Ord area. The strangers stated that they “wanted to put Kija right up to saltwater”.

D.J.’s retelling of this story makes strong references to the outsiders being of the “wrong language”, Kija speakers. The thrust of this narrative is consistent with that of western Arnhem Land stories reported by Sutton in which “tensions, sometimes extremely violent tensions, 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” (1997:225).
This is a picture of the story of Jun.gun, (the Owlet Nightjar - *Aegotheles cristata*), when he turned back the people who were trying to move into his country from the east. These people (B in the diagram below) came to the Bunuba people living at Mt. Ord and asked for land to live on. The people there said “Who are you? Where do you come from?” “From Waringarri side” they said because they were Kija people. The Bunuba told these people from the East to go to Silent Grove and ask Jun.gun, the boss of that Ngarinyin country there. But Jun.gun, who is a bird totem and a *wanjina* (Rain Spirit) too (A in the diagram) played a trick on them. He told them to leave all their weapons behind and come up to his camp. Once there he said to them “You can’t come to live here because you’re a different people. I’ll have to kill you all”. And he did just that. He then took their bodies to a cave and laid them in there. Their spirits later were born again from eggs near a waterhole back behind Mt. House in their own country, near Texas Downs.

I learnt this story from my mother’s father in my homeland at Gamaluwa in the Silent Grove area (between Yurarl and Dalandi in the painting- see diagram). Since that time the Kija language, what we call Jarag, stops way back there. We don’t know that language and they are different sort of people. They have four skin, we only have two different skins, Wodoy (Spotted Nightjar, *Eurotoposus guttatus*), that’s my skin, and Jun.gun that’s my wife’s skin name. I’ve walked all over that country from Mt. Ord (Galamanda) to Silent Grove (Jun.gun-ya/Dalandi) to Mt. House (Manaliyan) [Ts:29/9/99].
Diagram 1. Schematic version of Plate 1.
The immanence of language within country is also apparent in the Ngarinyin/Wurla man, C. A.’s recounting of the *warda angga* story which is illustrated in a painting site above Kupungarri community. The little boy who had been refused a food forbidden to children, white ant eggs, ran away crying:

[T]his young fella went into the desert. He was changing his language all the way. If he met other people, he talked different language all the time. “How you change your language?” they said. “No you can’t do that”. He was talking Worla (Wurla) to start with (cited in Munro 1996:25).

These indigenous explications of the process of language differentiations are broadly congruent with etic analyses of the same phenomenon. Linguists have regarded the languages in the region as belonging to a single family which has been called the “Worroran” (McGregor 1988) or “North Kimberley” family. The term “Worroran” is merely conventional and doesn’t connote any primacy to this language in relation to the other members of the family. O’Grady, Voegelin and Voegelin (1966) described the same set of languages as the Ungarinjinic family, and Wurm (1972) described both the Wororic and Ngarinyinic groups as “multiple classifying languages with a cross-cutting two gender system” (1966:124). Although many speakers of one of these languages also speak two or three others from the family, the languages, while sharing many grammatical features, have substantially different lexicons and are not mutually intelligible. Rumsey has called the relationship between the languages in the family one of “distinctive affinities as opposed to neighbouring languages and [with] systematic differentiation from each other, that provides strong evidence for their having developed *in situ* for a long period of time” (1999:22).

1.4.2 People, Country and *wanjina*

The region where these languages appear is also where the distinctive *wanjina* cave paintings occur. Briefly, these are usually, but not always, mouthless, anthropomorphic figures identified with ancestral beings in local mythic traditions (see PLATE I). The *wanjina* occur most prolifically as polychromatic paintings in the sandstone caves of the region, but are also identified as certain features of the landscape, as animal and plant species, as pools of fresh and sometimes salt-water and as rain clouds. Aboriginal people of the region identify these beings as central to their sense of group identity and the *wanjina* are regarded by any neighbouring peoples as entirely distinctive to the language countries discussed above, even where a certain
degree of transgressive wandering by sole *wanjina* into neighbouring domains may have occurred. The morphology of the *wanjina* will be addressed at greater length below but for the moment we may say that the *wanjina* are most often represented only with head and shoulders, though occasionally the entire body length also appears, sometimes drawn as a series of parallel lines which are said to represent the falling rain. The head is haloed with radiating lines which are said to represent both feather head decorations and lightning. The head is also drawn showing a horseshoe-shaped red-ochre band which occasionally shows at either or both ends the heads of the Rock Python, an incarnation of *wunggurr*, the local variant of the Rainbow Serpent. Both eyes, with their heavy fringe of dark “eye-lashes” are painted in black and a vertical line bisects the face where a nose might be expected to occur. Only occasionally is a mouth represented. Capell, for instance, remarked that in Wunambal country some people insisted that the absence of a mouth “is not so amongst them” and drew *wanjina* in the sand with a mouth represented (Capell 1972: 4). He remarks (ibid.) that “two old men of the Ngarinyin who knew Wunambal country well” also confirmed that this was indeed the case in Wunambal country. He also (1972:129) says that the two Unggumi men he was able to talk to “spoke of figures complete with mouth”.

1.4.3 People, Country and Social Ideation

Alongside the distinctive language family and complex of beliefs focusing upon *wanjina* and *wunggurr*, the Rock Python and local variant of the Rainbow Serpent, the social structures occurring in the area are also distinctive and have been recognised as such by anthropologists as far back as Elkin who did quite extensive research beginning at Walcott Inlet in Ngarinyin country in 1928. These identifiable structures, which are explicitly remarked upon by people both within the cultural domain and those neighbouring upon it, include a number of partially complementary and partially cross-cutting forms of linkage among persons and between persons and country. These structures can be summarised under the following headings:

a) Patrilateral moieties, in which not only persons but also everything occurring in the known cosmos is ascribed to either of two pre-occurring categories which are held to be interdependent, complementary, and unchanging. A child is ascribed to the opposite category as his or her mother. In Ngarinyin these two moieties are named after contrastive pairs
of natural species, most commonly Wodoy, (the Spotted NightJar) and Jun.gun (the Common Nightjar). Amongst the other pairs of totemic species for the two moieties are Guranggali (Brolga) and Banarr (Bush Turkey/Australian Bustard), and Walamba (Plains Kangaroo) and Yara (Hill Kangaroo) respectively (see Chapter 4).

b) a system of patrilineal clan estates whereby the entire region is composed of fairly loosely bounded adjacent areas identified by one main and several supplementary natural species and associated with one or more wanjina figures. Each person calls each of these clan estates by a specific kin term calculated in reference to an identification with one’s father’s father’s country as one’s own (see Chapter 4).

c) a network of conception sites, most often pools of permanent fresh water, whereby each person has a place which is held to be special to that person because it is from that place that his or her anguma (spirit) emerged as a differentiated fragment of the body of wunggurr, the Rainbow serpent, which has been picked up by one’s actual or putative father and imparted to one’s biological mother (see Chapter 7).

d) A classificatory kinship system through which both clan groups and clan countries are related to each other according to the affinal or actual or putative genealogical links which are prescribed between them (see chapter 3 below). While the Ngarinyin system of marriage bestowal prescribes that a man should marry a classificatory “father’s mother”, there is a further level of specificity introduced at the clan level. Thus a man should marry not just any distant “father’s mother” but a woman from the same clan that his father’s father took his wife. The males of each clan were expected to marry women from a specific pair of opposite moiety clans in alternating generations. The women from this clan were bestowed upon the men of another two clans in alternating generations (see Chapter 4).
e) a ceremonial and economic system of indirect exchange, the *wurnan*, which links partners from adjacent clan estates in a pre-occurring order or rank (see Chapter 5).

f) a system of personal nomenclature which expresses an identity between a person and their actual or classificatory father's father or father's father's sister (see Chapter 3).

g) a system of identifying tracts of country with one or sometimes two of the neighbouring languages and dialects, which also become linked to groups of people according to their relationship of that tract of country (see this chapter).

Members of the larger community of intermarrying Northern Kimberley peoples sharing the *wanjina* cosmology have also shared a long history of co-residency and/or especially close contact with each other in the post-contact era, and have organised themselves in political structures which express a strong sense of shared objectives and inter-dependency. In Chapter 2, which deals with the contemporary communities in which these people live, I will show how the shared history of violent contact with the non-Aboriginal world has worked to fortify the distinctiveness of the social/cultural world, creating enclaves of Ngarinyin, Worrora and Wunambal people living both on country and in refugee communities on the edge of the two major towns of the region.
Chapter 2. The Contemporary Situation

At the present time, the largest single concentration of Ngarinyin and Worrorra people live at Mowanjum Community, ten kilometers outside Derby, at the beginning of the Gibb River Road. Wunambal and Worrorra people (as well as Ngarinyin) have long intermarried with each other and Mowanjum has consequently always had a number of Wunambal people living there also. The majority of Wunambal and Gambere people, however, live at Kalumburu, a settlement which has never shifted far from the far northern location where the original Drysdale River Mission was established in 1908. Some families of the Gandiwal/Marawigona clan live at the Kandiwal settlement at Ungolan on the Mitchell Plateau, having finally abandoned their camp at Mowanjum in order to rationalise their resources and make a firm statement of commitment to the outstation as their first priority. There are presently more than a hundred and fifty Ngarinyin people with their main base at Mowanjum and about twelve hundred people who are identified as Ngarinyin live throughout the North Kimberley.

Very broadly speaking then, the people identified as Worrorra are presently concentrated mainly in Mowanjum (or in Derby nearby), Wunambal-Gambere at Kalumburu and Kandiwal near the opposite end of what I am calling the *wanjina* region. Ngarinyin people dwell in settlements distributed across a region roughly traingular in shape, bounded by the three extremities of Mowanjum, Kalumburu and Wyndham. Notwithstanding this far-flung distribution across a large part the Kimberley, there is a remarkable sense of socio-cultural commonality among the three language groups, fostered by continued inter-visitiation across large distances.

2.1 The Community Vehicle and the Travelling Community

As well as the extended visits that the people pay each other in their various settlements just for social pleasure, there is a strong sense of obligation for specific relatives to attend funerals, initiation ceremonies and other kinds of "law business". With the gradual decline of the constraining authority of non-Aboriginal mission and station managers, and increased access to motor transport, a renewed sense of mobility has come to characterise settlement life within the study area. The constraints on personal movement have become less a matter of direct Euro-Australian administration through agencies of the state and private employers and more and more
a matter of economics. The increased availability of four-wheel drive vehicles and charter flights between towns and remote settlements, although expensive, have allowed many Northern Kimberley Aborigines a space to negotiate amongst themselves about pooling meagre resources to attain access to these modes of transportation. While the number of four-wheel drive vehicles owned by individuals (at least ones which are road-worthy enough to take on long journeys from town or settlement base) is relatively few, the "community truck", a Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) financed four-wheel drive tray-top truck, is ubiquitous throughout Aboriginal northern Australia. It serves the purpose of public transport in a similar way to bus services in the metropolitan centres of the continent, with the patent difference that these latter have been based on the concept of an individual users-pay system.

The community vehicle is indexically identified as the community itself, a condensation of its members on the move, the community itself perceived as a moving body of people. Other Ngarinyin who may be passing on the road or sitting down in a community along the route, quickly identify these vehicles by calling out their speculation, from a distance, of its place of origin, as, for example, "Dodnun" or "Gibb River", or "Prap Prap" (cf. Myers, 1988:63). Given that whole communities regularly travel together in this way, leaving only a few older people back at their settlement, this description of "moving communities" is quite literal. This is intensified once in town where the various community members who have arrived on that vehicle stick to it as though it were an exoskeleton or a second skin which holds them together. The notion of containment is here quite strong, since the travellers are usually forced tightly together on the tray of the truck, wrapped up in various pieces of bedding or clothing to keep out the dust and wind.

Vehicles are often highly personalised, reflecting a high degree of investment of an enclosing body ego. After one long bush trip, myself, my wife and Molly, our elderly woman neighbour, were nearly back in Dodnun when the rear axle of our vehicle disintegrated at the beginning of the long track into the community. Our neighbour, MM, promptly got out, sat herself down in the dirt of the road and began to cry loudly and inconsolably for "that old girl, she bin carry we bella every place, she finish up now praply buggered up". In view of the nature of the Ngarinyin sense of personhood, what the "personalised" vehicle here also implies is that the vehicle comes to be imaged as an object containing a conflation of relationships in the same
way that Myers claims Pintubi "people view 'country'... as the embodiment of kin networks and as a record of social ties that can be carried forward in time" (1988:65).

The ideal trip is regarded as one in which the traveller goes into "knock-out sleep", waking up close to the destination. Adults envy the ability of children to achieve this sense of magical transportation seemingly at will. Travelling in community style, often with not much less implements and personal objects than one might have at home, entails a simultaneous experience of an enclosure and a dispersal across the country. The experience of enclosure is, as I have pointed out, inherent to being closely surrounded by kin within the confines of the vehicle but is intensified by the fact that the Gibb River Road generally follows the valleys between sandstone escarpments which rise up around the road so that the embodied subject is inside the country. Intermittently this enclosure is broken by "jump-ups" which give the traveller a wide view out across the country, allowing the body image to expand to the horizon of the next range. The descent out of the ranges to the flood plains surrounding Derby, foreign country, is an experience of open-endedness and indeterminacy which is in marked contrast to the experience of inwardness invoked by travelling through the ranges. I discuss this expression of bodily scattering through unimpeded vision at greater length in Chapter 8. Vehicles themselves are distinguished in terms of two sets each containing two main types, "open one" (no hard top or canvas tarpaulin top, i.e. tray-tops) and "covered one" (i.e. personnel carrier with hard top or tray-back with frame and tarpaulin) and "private one" (bought form a person's "own" money) and "community or gubmen' one" (provided through a government program).

The collectivised resource of the community vehicle, while in constant use, is also the subject of much ambivalence deriving from local perceptions of the ambiguous status of this icon of state induced communalisation of resources gleaned from the "capital expenditure" component of CDEP schemes. Given that most disputes about community vehicles revolve around competing family and individual needs, the conflict between local notions of ordered distribution of resources through particular pathways of kin networks (see Chapter 3) and a social welfare ethic deriving from European social theories of an imagined "primitive communalism" amongst Aborigines, emerges quite clearly. The pragmatic question for government agencies has been how to provide affordable transport for people on low incomes living in remote settlements serviced by punishing roads and tracks. At a more macro-
economic level, it is possible to view the commonplace disputes over communal vehicles as a product of Kimberley Aborigines, thirty years after first entering (a fairly disused byway) of the mainstream Australian economy, attempting to sustain local notions of specific exchange and the reciprocity of demand sharing within the generalising and unidirectional modality of the contemporary welfare based economy.

The ambivalence with which Ngarinyin people view “community” property such as vehicles is intensified, I suggest, by local attempts to interpret the value produced by their own often alienating, menial and poorly-paid labour. The people who live in Ngarinyin settlements are aware that ultimate ownership of the community truck is held by a gardiya (white) legal entity, the body corporate represented by the community council because their work on CDEP schemes is what pays for these vehicles, which are distinguished as “no more private one, gubmin’ one that one” (cf. Myers, 1988:60). Who owns and has the right to use and grant use of the vehicle is never quite clear. The question of who should “hold the key” to community vehicles is often a vexed one because it involves control of resources which are supposedly paid for by collective labour but emanate from government procedures. This is in conflict with the clear “right to be asked” about things belonging unequivocally in the Aboriginal sphere where “to own something is to have the right to be asked about it” (Myers, 1986:99). The practical outcome of most of these dilemmas is that the community chairman came to be regarded as the “holder” of the vehicle and he often delegated driving duties to one of his “sensible” (non-drinking) kinsmen. While there are many traditional precursors to the situation of pooling labour for common benefit (e.g. in kangaroo fire drives and collective fishing enterprises), Ngarinyin people remained aware that there is a third party to be answered to in the case of such contemporary pooled resources – “the gubmin” (government) or ATSIC.

In one remote Ngarinyin community the chairman and his politically allied non-Aboriginal administrator decided that no one could be trusted with community-owned vehicles any longer and they were locked up in a machinery shed when the white administrator wasn’t using them. This was regarded as an outrage by many residents of the settlement who voted with their feet by going to live elsewhere, severely “shamed” by this instance of paternalism and the denial of relatedness which the chairman had acted out.
CDEP workers received the equivalent to unemployment benefits, or a small "top up" (about $AU40 per fortnight), from which a portion (varying between communities) was automatically garnisheed for what I call here "collectivised resources" such as housing and transport. Local notions of specific exchange relationships were confronted by this state-enacted distribution of value. Since everybody (and therefore nobody) is regarded as having at some point contributed to the purchase of the truck, there was no real possibility of individuals accumulating social credit or reciprocity by acceding to requests for use of that vehicle (cf. Myers, 1988:57). Providing the service of driving someone somewhere was, on the other hand, a way of eliciting reciprocity, demonstrating that the visible investment of personal energy in other kin was a more highly valued modality of expressing relatedness than control over objects themselves. Indeed, many appointed drivers would, on coming to Derby, leave their vehicles with a trusted white consocie in order to avoid the endless and irrefutable requests for their services from relatives to take them to various parts of town where they would not feel comfortable walking.

Laing (1969) has pointed to experiences of bodily "emptiness" when a subject is immersed into relationships which deny reciprocity which constitutes, in the Aboriginal world, "a moment in the reproduction of the shared identity (people who 'help each other') that is the foundation of band organization" (Myers, 1988:58). The work contributed by CDEP employed individuals on garbage collection, fencing, building, for example, is not immediately apparent to the participants as producing the vehicle or housing, which instead seemed to emerge according to bureaucratic time-tableing, from grant submissions made by non-Aboriginal professionals. The local perception that ownership and generation of resources which were actually produced through the CDEP "work-for-the-dole" schemes ultimately resided with the "gubmin", falsely presented these items as a "gift" from an outside sphere with which no basis for reciprocity existed, and therefore subjected the receivers to a subordinate, unmediated, dependent position. The community truck was imaged not only as a single gift, but one of a series of standardised, replaceable gifts which emerged from a massive accumulation of other such gifts somewhere "langa Perth or Canberra might

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14 Not to mention the fact that CDEP "capital expenditure" obfuscates the fact that public housing and transport have been traditionally provided to other citizens of the state on a basis of need rather than labour contribution.

15 CDEP schemes have operated in Aboriginal communities for thirty odd years, since 1972.
be”. This interpretation of the source of value condensed in such objects led to a cultural prototype, shared by Aborigines and non-Aborigines (who perceive themselves to be the put upon “giver”) alike, of the other [Europeans] as giver but not receiver, unresponsive or impervious, [which] tends to generate in self a sense of failure......It is on this basis, real in imagination or phantasy, that angry destructive attacks in phantasy on a self-sufficient ‘good’ breast are intensified in envy and spite....The unresponsive or impervious other induces a sense of emptiness and impotence in self (Laing, 1961: 84).

This situation became very clear to me in the instance in which a disaffected and politically militant middle-aged Ngarinyin man, who refused to be “induced” into the cycle of gratitude to government agencies for “providing” communal resources, was cajoled at the last possible moment into signing the paperwork to take possession of a vehicle which otherwise was “going back to Canberra”, according to the local ATSIC representative. Prior to this he had made the “ambulatory concept of native title” explicit by walking everywhere, pointedly refusing lifts from others, asserting a self-conscious autonomy which even his close relatives regarded as threatening. Shortly after his taking possession of it, the vehicle was destroyed in a road accident and he went to jail on charges related to the accident, putting a temporary end to the ambulatory career which he resumed afterwards.

On a purely pragmatic basis, which Ngarinyin people themselves also endorse as part and parcel of their concerns with objectifying relatedness, these collectivised transport resources have enabled people at Dodnun and Gibb River, for example, to visit relatives at Kalumburu, Wyndham, Mt. Barnett and Imintji much more often and in larger numbers. This has had one effect in intensifying the inter-marrying patterns between residents of these settlements. Motorised transport has also given them the option of packing up and leaving a place where they are visiting when the mood seizes them, rather than camping for weeks at a time with relatives whom they used to have to walk for weeks to visit. This ability to express their autonomy as a group travelling together is constantly exercised amidst the cycle of visiting for ceremony and funerals. In recent times, this strong sense of reciprocal sociality and obligation has become an important basis for concerted political action.
2.2 The Drysdale Crossing meetings of 1983-4

For example in June 1983, Ngarinyin, Worrorda, Wunambal/Gambera and Miwa people met at Drysdale River crossing to form their first combined corporate body, Kamali Land Council, in order to deal collectively with what they regarded as unauthorised new prospecting in their traditional lands (van de Ruit 1997). At a subsequent meeting the following year one of the first priorities for the senior people present was to arrange themselves in their relative positions within the wurnan traditional exchange network (see Sec. 6.1) in order for each group's voice to be heard according to local traditional protocols (van de Ruit 1997). The combined members of these clan groups put forward their ideas and aspirations for access to their traditional countries to the ultimately disappointing Seaman Land Inquiry through this new body¹⁶. In 1987 a further organisation known as Gulingi Nungga ("People belonging to Rain") was established to collectively deal with cultural and political concerns shared by the three language groups. In a single coordinated effort, starting well before the Mabo decision¹⁷ was handed down, they worked for many years on the common-law Uttemorah land claim for recognition of their title to the whole of their joint territory in the Northern Kimberley. The Ngarinyin people’s Wilinggin claim, founded on the same principles of common identity and traditions, represents the first phase of their continuing efforts in that direction under the post-Mabo native title regime.

The following Section presents an overview of the socio-historical and political setting in which Ngarinyin people currently dwell.

2.3 The Service Towns

2.3.1 Derby

Derby (pop. 5000) is situated on the mouth of the Fitzroy River on a narrow red pindan isthmus which juts out across marshlands into the King Sound. Surrounded by mangroves on three sides, the town is situated amidst tropical savanna vegetation of mainly acacia bush interspersed with giant boab (Adansonia gregorii) trees and

¹⁶ Western Australia is the only mainland Australian state to not have statutory land rights legislation which grants lands for use by indigenous people following a process of authentication of their claims.

¹⁷ The land mark 1992 ruling by the High Court of Australia that the doctrine of terra nullius by which Australia was originally colonised has no basis in law.
river gums (*Eucalyptus*). Its position providing access to the salt-water, Derby, founded in 1883, began as a colonial police outpost and developed into a deep-water port which came to be serviced by the state shipping company. However, because of massive siltation build-up at the mouth of the Fitzroy River caused by cattle-hoof degradation of the surrounding flood plains, the wharf can now only be used by flat-bottomed barges which carry lead-sulphide ore to ships twenty-five kilometers out in the Sound. The old cattle shipping facilities and abattoirs have been closed since the late 1970s.

Even with the movement of some Ngarinyin families (and they still number very few) from Mowanjum settlement and the outlying cattle stations into Derby, the socio-cultural differences between Ngarinyin people and the Nyikina and Warrwa people, who predominately live on the Derby Reserve\(^\text{18}\), are drawn rather clearly. This is most blatant at certain times of the year, particularly as the wet season and associated “law business” draw close, when the young people of these two communities often engage in a series of semi-organised fights and haranguing matches on the marsh lands surrounding the town (cf. Povinelli 1993:162). These battles are said to have occurred throughout living memory and show no signs of abating despite various forms of police intervention. These fights and the anxiety they provoke have acted to contain movement into Derby town, and to sustain marked cultural differences between the groups from the *wanjina/wunggurr* region and the Nyikina and Warrwa groups who are traditionally associated with the lands in and around Derby township.

On a day-to-day basis most mobile members of the community at Mowanjum will, nevertheless, travel into Derby town at least several times a week, filling up any available tray-back Toyota to which they can gain access in the intricate networks of obligation and avoidance (see Chapter 5) which prevail. If enough people have the cash to “chuck in”, a taxi will be ordered from Derby to pick them up and take them back with their shopping. This costs about $15 each way. Derby is the main service town for the region, containing the only retail outlets (supermarkets, hotels, take-away food outlets, fuel outlets, video stores) and government service offices outside of Broome (210 kms to the southwest) and Fitzroy Crossing (256 kms to the southeast).

\(^{18}\) Some Bardi people from the Dampier peninsula also live here and they have historically had much more contact with Worrorra and Ngarinyin people.
The Derby/West Kimberley Shire services a sparsely populated (7,249 according to the 1996 ABS census)) area of nearly 103,000 square kilometers. The regional offices for Western Australian State and Australian Commonwealth agencies are situated in town. These include, Centrelink (formerly the Department of Social Security and Commonwealth Employment Service), Family and Children Services (a.k.a. "[native] welfare office"), ATSIC, Derby Regional Hospital, Australia Post, Skillshare and the WA Department Aboriginal Affairs. There is also the large State school (Derby District) combining infants and high school on the same site, and the Catholic school, Holy Rosary, which educates children from kindergarten up to junior high school level. After this, aspiring scholars from the Catholic school need to either go to a boarding school in Perth or attend the State High School. Other offices in Derby which may require regular visits for Northern Kimberley Aborigines are the regional offices for the Kimberley Land Council and the Kamali Land Council which now focuses almost exclusively on Ngarinyin issues. It may be necessary to attend the District Court, the host organisations for town based CDEP (Winunngarri Resource Agency and Emama Gnuda), the Ngunga Women’s Group which runs a preschool child care centre and several other smaller Aboriginal organisations which are CDEP based.

Since Mowanjum community runs its own kindergarten and CDEP, contact with these latter groups are only maintained by those who in general are spending a lot of time with friends or relatives who are living in State (Homeswest) housing in the “back streets” of Derby. These relatives tend to be those who have had an unresolved dispute with another family at Mowanjum and have shifted to their own “camp” here. The families who do make the move to town housing usually live in the same two or three streets on the southern side of town. These households tend to become the base for relatives visiting from the outlying station settlements and there may be twenty or more people camping at these fibre-board clad, corrugated iron roofed, houses during a busy week in town. For this reason, keeping the power bills paid and Homeswest satisfied that the rent is being paid and the house maintained is a constant struggle and families often make the move back to Mowanjum after a period struggling in the back streets. The move back is often preceded by a period of living in the dark after the power has been cut off and notices of eviction served by Homeswest.
Derby is a place where people from Mowanjum like to stick together and seldom move around on their own. They cluster in groups at the shopping centres and sit together visiting relatives at the hospital and have their own drinking spots dotted along the surrounding marshlands. As is the case with other Aboriginal groups who are “just visiting” Derby, such as people from the Noonkanbah or Looma settlements to the south of Derby, large groups are to be seen walking along the footpaths keeping a fairly vigilant if loose formation. Advance knowledge is spread quite quickly as to which groups are in town or what trouble might be brewing and where. Whistles and hand gestures direct those with vehicles to those who want lifts to somewhere else or to communicate where friends and relatives are headed. At night Mowanjum people seldom allow themselves to become stranded alone in town without first exhausting every resource (“humbugging for lift”) to get home or to a safe house of known consociates to spend the night. Despite many people (especially women) who grew up on the outlying cattle-stations since the 1960s having had experience living at one of the two now defunct Aboriginal student hostels in Derby (the Catholic St. Joseph’s and the Protestant United Aborigines Mission) when they were school aged, a strong perception persists that Derby is still “out of place” for many Mowanjum and station community people. Many less robust members of these communities will avoid the town apart from sitting in trusted people’s motor-cars while someone does their shopping for them. They declare town to be “too mad, too much humbug”. The concept of “mad” among Ngarinyin people is almost identical to that described for the Pintubi by Myers (1976:151) in that it is derived from the Ngarinyin term for “having no ears” oru wangulambarr. The ear is regarded as the source of wisdom. One who can “hear” properly is one who takes his or her role in life with proper restraint and responsibility. In Chapter 5 below, I discuss the nature of Rock Devils, agula, which are always represented as having enlarged ears from which strings often emanate, an indication of their ability to lead others astray by suggesting things in their ears. This can drive a man gowad, (senseless). Of course, this judgement is applied at least as strongly to some of their own relatives who will display “no shame” and demand things from them in town which they wouldn’t do back in Mowanjum (which has a reasonably well enforced “no grog” rule in the community itself). The regular card schools which spring up in shady public places in Derby attract Aboriginal people of different ethnic affiliation but these are mainly spaces for business transactions which Mowanjum and other Ngarinyin station people enter with their supporters on hand.
This distinctiveness is also maintained through the local world of organised sport in which Mowanjum Hawks (AFL football code) and the Larinyuwa Sharks (basketball) are pitted against other teams from the region usually based upon community affiliation for Aboriginal teams and place of work or pub of choice for non-Aboriginal teams.

Another regular place of meeting for some Mowanjum people in town is at the local churches. Whether it be the occasional attendance for a funeral or regular visits as a member of the congregation picked up by bus on Sunday mornings for services, these church spaces tend to be ethnically mixed (or at least a mix of Aboriginal ethnicities). Only the Catholic Church (which has few Mowanjum people as members of its congregation) tends to be multi-racial. The Catholic Church has its main constituency amongst Aboriginal people living at Mt. Elizabeth and Gibb River Stations. Most Aboriginal churchgoers attend at one of the two evangelical churches in Derby. The People’s Church is a fundamentalist evangelical church which is linked to the United Aboriginal Mission, a Protestant organisation, which has operated in the Kimberley since the 1930s and is housed in an old “fibro” building near the Post Office. The Country Gospel Church (Assemblies of God), is presided over by an Aboriginal pastor from Looma community on the Fitzroy River and specialises in worship through country gospel singing with an electric country band, confessional “witnessing” and speaking in tongues, and is attended by mostly Aboriginal people. Once again though, most Mowanjum people have been born into a long relationship of patronage from the Presbyterian Church and its contemporary version, the Uniting Church. Most funerals for Mowanjum community people are conducted by a visiting Uniting Church pastor in Mowanjum itself at the bough-shed space which serves as the church. A small number of Mowanjum people act as lay ministers and organise the services there on a weekly basis. They have been without the benefit of a professional minister since about 1996. There is some resentment about what is locally perceived to be this “abandonment” by the General Synod of the Uniting Church. The Uniting Church hierarchy meanwhile, which has had a strongly enunciated mission of promoting social justice for the last two decades and which turned ownership of the station lease over to the local Mowanjum Council in the mid-1970s, insist that this “abandonment” is part and parcel of their belief in self-determination. This is just one instance where local and non-local notions of human
inter-dependency and the sustaining of relationships in the midst of the inevitable ambivalence of power imbalances is held up in sharp relief.

2.3.2 The Politics of Funerals

It is remarkable how often ideological battles are waged in Mowanjum between the different denominations of the Christian churches. These divisions, normally quite muted because the different denominations have little other interaction, become manifest at the all too frequent funerals. Funerals usually take place two to three (sometimes four weeks) after death. This time lapse allows relatives who are handling the arrangements (usually actual or classificatory sons, daughters and mothers) to notify all the right people in the station settlements so that they can attend. In the meantime, the family decides on the appropriate form of service with the main criterion being the particular denominational allegiance of the deceased or of his or her family. These arrangements can often be complicated by tussles between either the various ministers who wish to maximise their exposure by attending at large funerals for well known persons or the families themselves disagreeing on which minister should be called in. If the Aboriginal lay preachers feel they have been slighted by not being offered to take a service first then much grumbling might ensue. This “battle of the churches” which Mowanjum families engage in could be interpreted as being a displacement of the long tradition of airing grievances before public ceremonies, particularly mortuary and initiation ceremonies. Since close relatives are at their most emotionally and socially vulnerable, and therefore volatile, at such a time, it is hardly surprising that arguments sometimes develop under these circumstances. It is not uncommon for someone to refuse to attend a funeral because they are still “feeling hot” (nursing a grievance) from events at a previous funeral. There is a strong element of critical social and aesthetic appraisal among community members as to the arrangements and satisfactory performance of the funeral itself. The most salient elements which are judged are: numbers of people attending, numbers of “right people” attending, (i.e. close relatives who are not in the category of wife, in-law, sister and brother who must remain out of sight), the volume and degree of abandonment in “crying” (wailing and threats of self-harm), the correct rendering of the deceased person’s biography (which should include their clan affiliation, mother’s country, language group, work and marriage history), the number and choice of singers of the hymns and the number and fullness of the community
vehicles following the coffin to the cemetery. Quite apart from the particular styles of preaching which the different churches (and Land Councils and other interested parties) bring to the funeral services, the nature of the arrangements between relatives means that every Aboriginal funeral in the Kimberley is a “political funeral”. For my purposes here, though, it is just necessary to note that Mowanjum funerals, despite occurring only ten kilometers from Derby, are encapsulated sites of contestation and negotiation between external agencies which draw upon local socio-political tensions. In Chapter 4 I discuss the ideation and practices associated with local Aboriginal funerary ceremonies.

Whereas I have pointed out the movement of some Mowanjum people towards Derby, there has also been increased mobility in another direction. More people from Mowanjum are now living at least part of the time on outstations and at smaller, more remote settlements within wanjina-wunggurr country. Donny Woolagooja and his family, for example, have a community at Larinyuwa on Cone Bay and various young Worrorra men move between Mowanjum, Larinyuwa and the seasonal work on the pearl farms at Cone Bay. Pantijan Station, being on the boundary of Ngarinyin and Worrorra country, also attracts many younger Worrorra men and women during the dry season. Paddy Neowarra and his family travel back and forth in the dry season to Maranbabidingarri community 550 kms away by gravel road to the northeast. Dodnun, Nyalanggunda, Kupungarri and Imintji residents usually take some of their relatives from Mowanjum back with them to their remote settlements following a visit. There is also a regular flow of people from Mowanjum making their way out to Yulumbu community on Tablelands Station 450 kms away in Kija country or to Tirralantji community on the same route.

2.3.3 Wyndham

At the eastern edge of the study area, there is a strongly identified group of Ngarinyin/Wurla people now living in the small town of Wyndham on the Cambridge Gulf. This group comprises mainly the families of those who had been resident on Karunjie and Durack River stations up until the mid-nineteen seventies (see Map 1). When the station changed hands at that time, the effects of the Pastoral Award equal
pay amendments\textsuperscript{19} on Aboriginal employment in the industry were felt locally after having been delayed for several years in comparison to other parts of the Kimberley. The resident Aboriginal workers, most of whom have strong traditional links to that country, moved either to Wyndham or Gibb River Station. A smaller group moved to Kalumburu on the north coast. In Wyndham these Ngarinyin/Wurla people form a residential enclave, distinct from those whose connections run out to Mirriwung/Gagerong country to the east and south or to Forrest River in the north. As in the situation with regard to Derby, the distinctiveness of this cultural/ethnic group continues to be marked by the eruption of family feuds and fights with those whose principal focus is the country in the Forrest River region. Various approaches to policing these regular fights have been attempted over the years but the fights themselves continue, emerging most regularly in the aftermath of funerals and the accompanying public grieving. The Ngarinyin people living in Wyndham pointedly articulate the fact that their cultural background is with the \textit{wanjina} traditions and its accompanying social structures. In 1999 this group of people with the assistance of the Indigenous Land Corporation purchased the Durack River, Pentecost Downs and Home Valley stations on which their homelands lie and began the process of planning the building of new outstations on these lands.

In 2001, the time of writing, there persisted a strong sense of Worrorra, Wunambal-Gambere and Ngarinyin people continuing to share in common a distinctive cultural world. Despite the distances involved (700 kms by gravel road or 1000 kms by bitumen from Mowanjum to Wyndham and over 680 kms by gravel road to Kalumburu), there is a constant social ceremonial interchange between the settlements. While Mowanjum, by reason of the demographic makeup of the transported population, is the focus of the connections between Ngarinyin and Worrorra people, Wyndham hosts at least as much social and ceremonial interplay between Ngarinyin and Wunambal people. The long history of Mowanjum people working in the Gibb River Rd pastoral industry has meant that even Worrorra families, such as the Barunga, Ngerdu and Woolagooja families whose lands are far to the west, are well known and often related to the families in Wyndham who moved in from the Karunjie area.

\textsuperscript{19} Applied to Aborigines generally in 1968 but not implemented in the Kimberley until several years afterwards (cf. Jebb 1998).
2.4 Major issues facing Aboriginal settlements within the study area

There are presently ten Aboriginal communities within the wider cultural domain which is the subject of this study: Mowanjum, Pantijan, Winjingare, Imintji, Kupungarri, Dodnan, Nyalanggunda, Mejerrin, Munja and Maranbabidingarri. Of these, Winjingare, Mejerrin, Maranbabidingarri and Munja are dry season camps only due to difficulty of access following the rains of the cyclone season (December through till March). During the Wet, members of these four communities return to the larger settlements on the stations or to the community of Mowanjum, ten kilometers from Derby.

In addition to these modern settlements which now exist semi-autonomously of the stations upon which most of them are located (others are reserves on formerly vacant crown land), each of the stations in the study area once had quite large Aboriginal camps on them for the workers and their families. Some of the settlements are based on what are officially classed as “Aboriginal Lands” but whose status is actually more ambiguous. The Commonwealth, for example, acquired Pantijan, in 1972 as an annex to the adjacent military training reserve. Since then it has become the primary training ground for stock and horse work for most of the younger generation of Ngarinyin who today work on cattle stations and settlements throughout the region. Gibb River pastoral lease has been held by ATSIC “on behalf” of Aboriginal people generally since 1993. Mt. Barnett pastoral lease, Kupungarri Community Council holds another component of the local “Aboriginal lands”, but as a lease only with no more security of tenure than any other non-Aboriginal owned pastoral lease.

The non Aboriginal-owned station camps in the area continued to be occupied by Ngarinyin people at least up until the early 1970s (e.g., Mitchell River station, Doongan station) and often into the 1980s (e.g., Drysdale River station, Beverley Springs station). A Department of Community Welfare worker, Rein Van de Ruit, wrote that in 1981 "the biggest numbers of people were living at Mt. House, Mt. Barnett, Gibb River and Mt. Elizabeth Stations, with smaller groups at Tablelands (150 km. by rough road to the east of Mt. House), Drysdale, Mt. Hart, and Beverley Springs" (1997). In some instances these old camps are still occupied today during the mustering season (e.g., Mt. House and Mt. Elizabeth stations). Stations in the study area where Ngarinyin people have lived include: Napier Downs, Mt. Hart, Beverley
Springs and “Old” Silent Grove (now part of Mt. Hart), Mt. House, Drysdale River, Doongan, Mitchell River, Karunjie, Ellenbrae, Durack River (worked from the base camp at Karunjie), Moonlight Valley, Marion Downs and Mt. Elizabeth.

The Presbyterian Church which had acquired Mowanjum station for this specific purpose, established Mowanjum Aboriginal Community, situated on a pastoral lease ten kilometers from the service town of Derby in 1956. This station of 50,000 hectares comprises mostly flat or slightly undulating pindan, wattle scrub and tidal creeks, a type of country which the people who had come in from the ranges and river country were quick to remark upon as being alien and inferior, often referred to as “scrub”.

The community was moved in 1976 from its original position adjacent to the town airport (an excision from Mowanjum pastoral lease) and now occupies a block at the very beginning of the Gibb River Road. This position means that the settlement is spatially oriented towards Ngarinyin, Wororra and Wunambal country if compared to any other of the Aboriginal housing areas near Derby. In the local card playing parlance the number six is known as “Mowanjum”, being six miles out of town. To the east beyond Mowanjum, there is the uninterrupted stretch (i.e. no other Aboriginal communities) of the Gibb River Road which eventually leads into Ngarinyin country, and the outstation settlements some 150 kilometers later. The first seventy kilometers of this “beef road”, built on the stock route in the early 1970s, are bitumen and from there on there is a wide but heavily corrugated gravel and dirt surface which is closed for three to four months of the year during the Wet. Even though various white station owners, contractors, tradesmen and bureaucrats regularly use this road it is generally considered to be the road to Ngarinyin country and the traffic upon it is closely scrutinised by those sitting at the drinking camp at Mowanjum gate and the people aboard community vehicles travelling back and forth to Mowanjum. In a sense, then, once one is out of town and beyond the bitumen of the Gibb River Road, one is considered to be en route to, and by extension “in” the Ngarinyin domain. Mowanjum is thus the first stop or last stop (depending on which way one is travelling) on the “Ngarinyin” road.

The history of Mowanjum community is itself one of displacement, discontent and frustrated if often valiant attempts by community elders to create a livable environment for their children. Its origins lie in the coastal Presbyterian mission
settlements of Kunmunya, just south of the Prince Regent River mouth and later Wotjalam, 100 kms north of Derby on the peninsula which comprises the northern landmass of the King Sound.

I will render here a brief history of the settlements which preceded Mowanjum because a knowledge of its history is indispensable to understanding the present sense of identity not just in Mowanjum but in the remote settlements which have both fed into and re-emerged from Mowanjum over more than four decades.

2.4.1 A Short History of Mowanjum

In 1912 the Western Australian state government, concerned to be seen to be taking measures to encourage European occupation of the remote north-west, issued the Presbyterian Church with a lease to establish a mission at Port George IV (moved some kilometers further south in 1916 to Camden Harbour and renamed Kunmunya). This was the first sustained contact between Worrorra and Ngarinyin people and Europeans. Prior to this Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Wunambal people had had a sustained contact with Macassan fishermen (dated archaeological proofs running back to about 1720). Since the mid-nineteenth century brief contacts had been experienced with government appointed survey teams, pearlers and an unsuccessful group attempting a pastoral-based settlement at Camden Harbour in 1864-66, destined to fail within a year of its commencement.

In 1927, the Rev. J.R.B. Love returned to the mission (having been there briefly in 1916 before leaving for the war in Europe) with his wife and son. Love had, according to the reports of older people who were resident there at the time, a profound effect upon the people living at Kunmunya, encouraging the maintenance of many traditional cultural practices (though frowning on others which met with his liberal Christian disapproval, such as the betrothal of promised wives, a core component of the local social system). Love was an enthusiastic amateur ethnographer and linguist, contributing several papers to the journals of the time and completing a grammar of the Worrorra language (1934). His thirteen years of residency was probably the most sustained and intimate enquiry which has been conducted to date into this cultural world.

Kunmunya mission became a focus for medical interventions in the northern Kimberley, with regular inspections beginning in 1935 for leprosy, granuloma and venereal diseases (McKenzie, 1969). The local population was induced to settle semi-
permanently, though continuing to utilise the country's natural resources for sustenance. Over the ensuing decade, Ngarinyin and Wunambal groups visiting the area were also introduced to the notion of this permanent camp in Worrorra country, with its small scale horticulture and agriculture, rations as a supplement to the bush diet, dormitory accommodation for single girls and western work and education practices. In the context of the violent frontier conflicts which were occurring in the newly opened pastoral country in the surrounding areas of the Kimberley, Kunmunya came to be regarded by many local Aborigines as something of a sanctuary, even though it had its own outbreaks of violence and social disruption (cf. Love 1936).

By the end of the Second World War, Kunmunya had already declined considerably. Scores of Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wunambal people had been incarcerated in the Derby Leprosarium, Bungarun. In 1948 the Commissioner of Public Health stated that "leprosy now has such a heavy incidence in the North that it compares with the highest endemic areas in the world" (Bateman 1948:20). The birth rate was nearly zero, influenza had claimed many victims, hookworm had become endemic and government support was not forthcoming to counteract the shortages of building materials which had occurred during the war years. The declining population of able-bodied labourers also meant that the mission's infrastructure was in serious disrepair. Many middle-aged men had moved back into bush camps or, radicalised by their contact with US and Australian servicemen, were seeking paying jobs in town or with fencing, mustering or dogging contractors on other stations. The Presbyterian Church was offered an opportunity to rationalise the mission settlement resources in the west Kimberley by being granted control of the plant and population from Munja government station on Walcott Inlet 115 kms. to the south – another social disaster facing the state government. The church decided to merge the two settlements into one. Because of reluctance on the part of the three groups involved, Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Wunambal, to settle permanently on any one of the group’s particular territories, a site was chosen which was off country for all three groups- Wotjalum on the Yampi peninsula. This is the traditional country of the Unggarang people, a closely related group which shares in the wanjina cultural complex and is intermarried into the other three groups. The site was chosen partly because it was opposite Koolan and Cockatoo Islands where iron-ore mining was in progress and it was assumed that the new mission could support itself by supplying vegetables grown by the mission population to the mine. This was an economic failure if it was ever intended to be
anything more than the pointless “famine wall” type of labour activity which British administrators imposed in Ireland in the mid-nineteenth to prevent the natives thinking they could get “fed for nothing”.

The move to Wotjalam was made in 1951 and the population did begin to increase. By 1956 there were 150 people in the settlement, but the ground was found to be too stony for cattle production and young people were starting to focus on Derby as a site of future possibilities.

Since Government support for remote settlements had evaporated by 1948, a decision was taken, after months of debate amongst the population at Wotjalam, to move to just outside Derby in 1956. This eventually became Mowanjum Aboriginal Community. Intense negotiations were held between the Presbyterian Church and the state government. A delegation of people from Wotjalam negotiated rights of use of the country with Nyikina and Warrwa people in the vicinity of Derby. Two different sites were tried over the ensuing two decades and the present community has been located there since 1978. Mowanjum is a Worrorra word meaning “settled at last” though it is sometimes glossed in a more ambivalent way as “final resting place”. One senior man, D.M. now deceased, was fond of saying that the settlement should have been known as Rulug-ba-nungga, “forever shifting”.

2.4.2 Local Popular Music

In the contemporary context, the shared world of the three language groups of the wanjina region has been captured in the music of several local singer/songwriters. These include the late B.H. (d. 1996) whose parents are of mixed Worrorra and Ngarinyin affiliation and the late O.C. (d. 1997), whose parents have similar affiliations with an additional link to his late father’s birth country in the Nerima station region in the southern Kimberley. Mowanjum people respond with great enthusiasm to any performance of Burgu’s anthem, “The Three Tribes”, which celebrates the shared history and cultural distinctiveness of Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wunambal people. Old and young alike attended the performances of the three bands which have arisen in the last decade out of this distinctive domain: the Larinyuwa Band whose members were orientated towards Cone Bay, the Mowanjum based Oobagooma brothers’ Gulingi Nungga (“Rain Mob”) and the Mt. Elizabeth Bushfire Band, from the central Ngarinyin pastoral region. While each had its own core identifying members, constant exchanges of personnel took place between the three
groups and on any occasion for community celebrations one, two or sometimes all three bands were contracted to perform. Each of the bands has a number of original compositions which celebrate the figure of *wanjina* as creator and emblem of their unique cultural heritage. There is seldom any suggestion that bands from outside the community be contracted to perform.

As well as their regular performances in the community hall at Mowanjum, the *wanjina* region's bands would perform regularly in Derby at the Boab Inn the back bar of which was patronised entirely by an Aboriginal clientele. Particularly in "pension week" a large crowd could be guaranteed and a forceful representation of Mowanjum people would attend to sing along with and dance to the mixture of country and western and country/rock in the Nashville vein tinged with a touch of blues and reggae.

Gulingi Nungga in particular could be relied upon to produce a strong outpouring of local sentiment reworked through these musical genres. Like the other Mowanjum bands, Gulingi Nungga’s sound took as its point of departure (and constant return) the country gospel guitar playing and singing which young people were encouraged to learn in order to assist at religious services in the community. The rudiments of playing instruments were in many instances learned from the St. John of God nuns while resident at Derby Leprosarium (Bungarun) which had its own inmate orchestra. Mowanjum people thus began to play cover versions of the popular music of the time. The music of Hank Williams, Jim Reeves, Roy Rogers, George Jones and Johnny Cash is still widely admired and listened to by the younger generation but gradually, over the ensuing years, has given way to the influence of the new wave of American country/rock such as Alan Parsons and Bob Seeger.

Meanwhile, a strong tradition of virtuoso guitar playing had become established amongst Aboriginal musicians living in Derby. In this tradition, the music of the Shadows and the soundtracks to sixties and seventies Western movies such as "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" and "The Magnificent Seven" were expertly covered by people such as Eric Benning and the Russ brothers who owned Gibb River Station at the time. The surf classic "Wipe Out" is still probably the most widely played dance tune in the West Kimberley. These influences combined with chance encounters with various European Australian and Aboriginal musicians touring the area from interstate and sporadic contact with other white non-professional musicians have all contributed significantly to the subsequent development of a distinctive
“Mowanjum sound”. A travelling Englishman, for instance, introduced C. O. to blues scales in the mid-1980s and he subsequently invented his own chords (of which he was most protective) to work into his own musical corpus. In his fifteen years as a musical force in the region to be reckoned with, C.O. became the “guitar legend” whom other musicians and members of the audience would cluster around to watch play. As a shy, non-drinking family man with five sons he lived for music, fishing and crocodile hunting, and was known as the gentle giant of West Kimberley music, dressed in dark blue and purple satin shirts, cowboy hat and boots and a studded strap from which hung his famously battered Fender Telecaster. His younger brother, Ashley, was the charismatic singer fronting the band and younger brother Derek drove a hard rhythm on the drums. Another close relative, Alphonse “Cat” B. was the regular bass player.

Perhaps the greatest exposure these bands achieved was through the Derby Country Music Festival which was staged annually during “rodeo time” in early July. Thousands of the people living on the remote station settlements come to Derby for this week or two of rodeo riding, country music and making merry. The population of Derby would at least treble with all the ringers in town as well as the caravans of tourist traffic camping in every available space en route to the Gibb River Rd. and its surrounding tourist areas. At the Country Music Festival up to fifty different Aboriginal bands from the region would compete with the various local and visiting non-Aboriginal bands for attention and the chance to win a trip to the annual Gympie Muster Country and Western Music Festival in far away Queensland. Gulingi Nungga always drew large local crowds who danced only for their own local “countrymen” and then retired to the back of the rodeo ground.

2.4.3 Contemporary wanjina Art

The shared world which is celebrated in these performances is made evident also in the community mural which until recently was the central focus of the Mowanjum hall (it was removed in 1997 following the death of one of the painters).

The scenes depicted in this triptych mural were iconic places from the

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20 Gulingi Nungga's professional studio recordings were few ("Pantijan" and "Living in Australia") but their live performances have often been captured on tape and video over the years.
countries of each of the three “tribes”: the twin peaks of Mejerrin, near the headwaters of the Prince Regent River in Ngarinyin country; Gandiwal on the Mitchell Plateau (Wunambal); and Ngayanggananyi, Mt. Trafalgar on the west coast (Worrora). The mural was painted by young men of mixed Worrora and Ngarinyin affiliation, nephews of the renowned Worrora composer, Wattie Ngerdu, who died in the late 1970s after completing or “dreaming” a major song cycle which linked together these countries in very explicit ways.

In 1997, after ten years in which collective artistic endeavours had been dormant, a move to recreate *wanjina* imagery at Mowanjum and in the neighbouring station settlements emerged in response to particular historic circumstances. While there had been a deep reluctance expressed by many older people to produce portable *wanjina* imagery because they regarded *wanjina* as quintessentially ”spirits of place, the late D.Mowaljarlai, in the last few months of his life (as it turned out) encouraged his countrymen and women to look seriously at the possibility of funding their own legal struggles for land rights through art sales. He had been engaged in this activity for some years himself, working in partnership with metropolitan galleries in southeast Australia. Drawing upon a widely expressed local desire for autonomy from regional funding bodies, Mowaljarlai, as a principal of the Kamali Land Council, suggested that painting might be one way in which the Ngarinyin people might fund their own Native Title claim process without having to broker a deal with the regional Kimberley Land Council, with whom relations were in a very conflicted state.

Committing stories and images to canvas and paper and exhibiting them in national and international galleries became one more wave in the decades long assertion of cultural identity vis à vis other Aborigines of the region and also part of an ongoing attempt to convince non-Aboriginal Australia to recognise and value the importance of a distinctive cultural identity. Ngarinyin adults across a wide age-span and in many remote settlements began to participate. Special care has been taken to ensure that only people with specific attachments to specific images and countries paint and narrate these stories. Ochres were collected from Ngarinyin country and via the traditional trade routes which have long supplied particular colours. A strong emphasis on cultural continuity was fostered and older Ngarinyin people saw this as an opportunity to teach the younger generation the stories of the *wanjina* pertaining to their own particular countries and how to gather and prepare ochres. An objective was
expressed to ultimately (approaching the subject with great caution) teach the younger generation how to maintain the imagery of their local *wanjina* cave painting galleries.

In the following year, a parallel painting project was initiated at Mowanjum through a local TAFE teacher. This project concentrated on teaching various European painting and etching techniques but utilising traditional *wanjina* imagery. The two initiatives have largely kept to their own areas of expertise in the ensuing three years with a dedicated core of participants developing their own particular strengths to wide acclaim and interest in the wider art community. The TAFE sponsored initiative, using watercolours on canvas, has exhibited in Melbourne, Perth and Sydney in 1998/99 and looks set to engage in the international arena in 2001. The original Ngarinyin Aboriginal Corporation project has exhibited work in Melbourne and Perth, concentrating on curated exhibitions and sales to large personal and corporate collections rather than commercial galleries.

Much community discussion precedes and follows the production of images by Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wunambal people. In the course of these discussions the affiliations of individuals and their rights in country are highly focal and contribute to the ongoing maintenance of a traditional knowledge in a shifting social-economic context. The arrival of rain storms following exhibitions or strong spurts of production of works in the communities is inevitably attributed to the power of *wanjina* and the traditional belief that evoking the *wanjina* image instrumentally evokes rain and storms.

### 2.4.4 The Local Political Economy

Mowanjum, and the other Ngarinyin settlements on the Gibb River Road, are sites of radical change in economic and social life. The “equalisation” of the majority population of young adults with senior people in terms of the now almost entirely external source of community resources (mostly pensions and CDEP payments) allows young people the option of ignoring older people’s vestigial authority in most socio-economic matters with little fear of immediate consequences. This newfound ability to avoid the secular authority of seniors creates a radical gulf between the demeanour of young adults in the course of “Law time” (the annual cycle of initiation ceremonies in which nearly all participate) when the elders authority is explicit (cf. Strehlow 1947:99) and the normal course of everyday life when everybody, regardless of age, lines up either to receive their pay at the community office or at the town bank.
to withdraw their benefits. The sanctions and punishments available to older people are weak in this era of almost universal welfare dependency in which they no longer control the ritual production and reproduction of food, other goods and networks of distribution (cf. Myers 1986:264). It is important to distinguish here between control over material resources and control over the processes which older men previously used to manage the distribution of authority. While in the precolonial era there would seem to have been little distinction between the ability to control access to hunting grounds, to ritual interaction and to the attainment of marriage and children, these areas of social life are now largely distinct with almost all material resources coming from an external source. It is unlikely that a male gerontocracy ever directly controlled the access to food, for example, but it is equally clear that older males dominated ritual life which was the arena of interdependency between people and the fertility of country which provided the conditions of existence. The post-contact fracturing of the cohesive bonds between ritual and economic life has shown its potential to empty out the content of local structures of authority. This is clearly the case in the introduction of a whole new basis of organising community decisions in the era of self-determination. The transformation of political values occurring with the advent of the Aboriginal Councils and Corporation Act (1975) is one example of an equalisation of impoverishment which threatens to juvenilise and undermine the basis of the local political economy (cf. Myers 1980b:324-325).

In some instances, local young people have been able to gain private employment, which makes them a privileged source of family resources and therefore in a position to attain the autonomy which previously was only accessible through following through the full range of Law. At present, surprisingly enough, there have as yet been very few instances in which the persistence of the authority of older men has been unable to contain the movement towards a radical autonomy of young men with access to independent resources. This is largely a result of the fact that these younger men, usually with no experience of Anglo-Australian work practices, only get such jobs because their elders are being induced to participate in the mineral resources economy. For example, some of the younger men of Winjingare community have been able to gain quite well paid seasonal employment with diamond exploration companies in the area, working on soil washing and grading plants. The wages which can be obtained here are at least six times what a person receives through a CDEP program. Most of these positions, though, are created through what the exploration
companies term "good will" programs which aim to build a compliant relationship with local traditional land owners. Though having no rights to veto exploration and mining, these senior native title claimants are, since the introduction of the Future Acts procedural regime of the Native Title Tribunal in 1993, customarily invited to conduct "work clearance programs" which are aimed at protecting "cultural heritage and native title" rights in the areas where the explorers wish to operate. These jobs for young men then often derive from negotiations which are actually directed at their parents or grandparents, people who are locally recognised as having local political leverage concerning the lands in question.

Some elder men, recognising their increasingly marginal positions in the welfare based economy, have managed to maintain their leading positions in local bodies-politic by attaining positions such as head of a community CDEP scheme, head stockman on a station, a well-known artist or a community land rights activist with access to material and moral resources.

Winjingare community, for example, is a small living area which was officially excised from Napier Downs pastoral lease, 150 km. northeast of Derby, in 1990 and is occupied by twenty to thirty persons. Mostly younger men and women, they work on CDEP schemes under the direction of a senior Ngarinyin/Unggumi man, D.J., who is the traditional custodian for this part of Unggumi country. The six square kilometers under lease are insufficient to run any stock other than a few horses. D.J. is skilled in both local social negotiations and securing state agency patronage which allows him to maintain a large extended family in a remote settlement. However, the welfare economics of such settlements avails him of very little opportunity to manage a path towards his goal of self-sufficiency. Constant cash shortages mean that the settlement, and his town base, are constantly under threat of disintegrating. The occasional cash supplements which come from exploration clearances and donkey culling contracts for CALM go to repaying local debts accumulated to fend off hunger amongst his extended family. Credit is generally not available to Aborigines of the region from banks and finance companies so major acquisitions such as motor vehicles, fridges, video machines are possible only through the perilous cash economy surrounding card playing.

The role played by such charismatic senior men is a double-edged sword for many of them since they then need to spend an inordinate amount of time and energy negotiating with non-Aboriginal administrators who, bound by their own set of work
rules, might attempt to withhold payments from those of the group who are not attending to their CDEP chores visibly enough, thus decreasing from household income. The young people who are identified as a particular elder Aborigine’s “workers” or “mob” often live in and around his household and, while nominally upholding the power and prestige of his position in the community, constantly look to this “boss” as the one to, for example, organise a loan, get their pay on time, keep them out of jail, negotiate the end to a punishing conflict or organise transport from some place where they feel stranded. With a combination of both pathos for his young relatives and self-interest (a “boss” will usually demand that his “boys” contribute, however sporadically and meagrely, to the costs of keeping the household) the “boss” is often remarkably indulgent and feels obliged to chase resources on their behalf. This may mean spending much time cultivating his non-Aboriginal or non-local “workers”, if he has them, (usually linguistic or anthropological researchers, legal staff and community project officers) in order to access funding for various projects which bring cash or goods into the Aboriginal economy. In these cross-cultural transactions, the senior’s local knowledge and endorsement of one or another of a set of competing projects becomes that which the non-Aboriginal “workers” are bartering for.

Older Ngarinyin people say that nowadays young people “have no fear” of consequences and reprisals for what they characterise as “mad” behaviour. This is interpreted as lack of a sense of self-preservation and is regarded as extremely dangerous for the young people themselves as well as making older people feel vulnerable to their superior physical strength and agility. While an older man or woman with “workers” can generally still feel invulnerable to actual attacks from disgruntled younger people within the community he or she might still attract verbal abuse and threats in the course of an argument with a drunk. This is usually shrugged off as mere posturing because, in my experience, when the “crunch” comes a younger person (even a drunken one) is likely to remain at least vaguely conscious of the position of the elder and his ability to demand or personally enact retaliation. In some instances the elder himself will meet out physical punishment to the attacker if he feels one of his “boys” has been, in his view, unfairly targeted. The young person

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21 Myers noted that “[M]en who are desirous of enhancing their reputation and esteem do all they can to ‘help’ others. Typically, the arena for such activity is in white-Aboriginal relations” (1980a: 209).
being physically punished in this way, although of superior physical strength, will usually take the blows with head down and without retaliating.

Young people are nevertheless regarded as the life-blood of the community and great effort is exerted by older people to make life enjoyable and meaningful for them within the parameters in which older Ngarinyin people understand this to be: “look em round country”, “plenty tucker”, “big mob to make camp lively”, “not too much work”, “don’t growl ‘em young ones”. Personal freedom and lively engagement with country and kin are the most positive values which older Ngarinyin people put on the experience of living in bush camps. Labouring on long term projects such as fencing, building or gardening is the least valued. Povinelli has pointed to the fact that “without people free of work commitments to camp in country, an integral part of the natural productive order itself is unraveled” (1993:149). As one might expect, the conditions in bush camps don’t always meet the desires of the youngsters who not infrequently sport the demeanour of white teenagers forced to go on a family outing. That is not to say that adolescents and pre-adolescents, in particular, wont leave a camp at the slightest notice, jumping aboard a vehicle headed off for two or three weeks without so much as a shirt, let alone a swag and supplies. This quietly infuriates station trained older people who then have to supply them with everything they need, including food, blankets and tobacco even though they have just come out from town where these things can be purchased. The extreme confidence (or foolhardiness) of younger people heading off 600 kms from town with nothing except their shorts and a faith in their relatives’ benevolence was constantly amazing to me and a source of chagrin to older people.

This attitude of “tomorrow will take care of itself” reached its ultimate absurdity when town-based young people, just prior to departure from a remote settlement to Mowanjum, would grab armloads of community stores which had been transported all the way out there, for their use back in Mowanjum, ten kilometers from the shops of Derby. Even young people from station settlements found this a frustrating situation and frequently shook their heads in disbelief. In this respect, the children of Mowanjum-based families were often seen as lacking the skills, savvy and work ethic of those who have grown up “in the cattle”. Nevertheless, older people loved to see large groups of youngsters in their bush camps and were extremely indulgent of them. Peterson (1997) writes that this indulgence (particularly of boys) is
widespread throughout Australian Aboriginal societies and is a feature of an economy based upon demand sharing (cf. also Myers 1980a, 1986, 1988);

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 as in the guise of concern and nurturance (Peterson 1997:188).

In some important respects, the younger’s attitude of “all will be provided” was consistent with how these older people, on one level, idealised the world also. Those older men whose strongest sense of identity was not (or no longer) derived from the cowboy world of station work, and these number a great many, also placed a high value on “having fun”. These older men and women complained that during their own youth they often had “too much work lang gardiya” and had missed out upon some of the infusion of the vitality of country into their bodies which required free time, as well as missing out upon close instruction from their elders about various sites because of work commitments. They were keen that their children should not experience the world in this way and that the best possible result of having them in country was the production of “big mob kid”. In this respect, Lommel had already noted during his visit to Ngarinyin country in 1938 that local people attributed the population decline to an inability to dream child spirits due to the intense anxiety and focus upon the strangers in their country (1996: 29).

When travelling, a fishing line, a gun and a swag (but at least one’s own tobacco supply, mainly for chewing) were regarded by older people as quite enough to get by on for a few weeks. Their indifference about potential events on the road meant that truckloads of people often spent nights by the side of the road because they either had no spare tyres or no wheel brace to mend a puncture: “might be I gave it to ‘nother bloke”. The women of the camp were expected to carry tea and flour for damper as almost part of their person so that some bare essentials were often present in emergency situations. Older men regarded everything after these basics as an indulgence if not a burden. These older men have many times pointed out to me the absurdity of the gardiya obsession with horticulture when there was such an abundance of food in the bush. It was explained to me that “we don’t have to carry water to get a feed”. Thus the oldest men, who were more than glad to have put cattle work behind them, and the teenagers shared some common attitudes as to personal freedom and what constituted a rewarding life. As Myers has noted for the Pintupi,
personal autonomy, encompassed by inevitable interdependency, is a central aspect of this sense of a satisfying life where "the logic of their particular system has made personal autonomy the goal of their lives" (Myers 1986:18). These older men were usually full of good humour when in "company" and even the non-drinkers amongst them could often be seen dancing in stunningly bright Western style shirts in the town discos surrounded by teenagers. They also kept company with teenagers on the backs of trucks on bush expeditions, cracking jokes while calling out the bush names of places along the road.

Once out bush, the teenagers also constituted their own society to a degree (cf. Myers 1980a: 207). Daytime hours were spent in or along the waterholes. Improvised toys were constructed from basic station materials such as fuel drums. Such toys included pontoons made from drums tied together with fencing wire. The same materials were used to construct a rough and ready "rodeo machine". Fencing wire was stretched between two trees and threaded laterally through the ends of a fuel drum which had had its "belly" flattened. This became the body of the "horse", which when rocked by the wires stretched out tautly to the anchoring trees, bucked and rolled wildly. It was quite a feat to stay on board through a vigorous shaking. Evening times were taken up with banter, card games and the popular game of Hangman, a guessing-the-word game drawn in the dust in which every failure to fill in a blank slot adds one more member to the gallows. Because of the limited spelling ability of most youngsters, the solution to these word-puzzles was usually something very familiar like "Chicago Bulls" (the most basketball popular team in the Kimberley at least as much, I suspect, because of the red and white colours (local moiety emblems see Chapter 4) of the uniforms and the high social value placed on bulls as the fact that it is a powerful black team) or the name of a local community. Occasionally an old and dust filled video player was coaxed into playing. While older people would prefer to watch endless reruns of community produced videos of themselves in dance performances, youngsters, while not averse to watching and laughing at their friends and relatives in such productions, would generally prefer martial arts adventures and monster movies such as "Predator" (#1, #2 and #3). Basketball films (of the Chicago Bulls) were also much admired.
2.4.5 The body under intense stress

Years of impoverishment has led to Mowanjum, and to a lesser extent the other more isolated Aboriginal settlements in the West Kimberley, being sites of severe and chronic health crises, endemic alcohol and tobacco related damage and deep-seated alienation from the mainstream Euro-Australian socio-economic system. Violent encounters between community members (cf. Hunter, 1993:166-199) often result in permanent physical impairment and occasionally death. The western educational levels of Mowanjum children are, on average, behind that of the Derby average, which is, in turn, generally behind that of the metropolitan centers of WA. Absenteeism is a major (but not sole) contributing factor to this. The Kimberley has a road mortality rate 41/2 times higher than the State average and Kimberley Aboriginal deaths account for the majority of this disproportionate death rate. Between 1982 and 1986 the death rate from motor vehicle accidents amongst this group was 102 males and 60 females per 100,000 compared to the state average of 23 males and 8 females per 100,000 (ABS statistics quoted in Hunter, 1993:85). Deaths from external causes were 21% of all deaths of Kimberley Aboriginal males and 13% of all deaths of Kimberley Aboriginal females. This is more than double the rate for males and triple the rate for females across the state (ABS figures quoted by Hunter, 1993:84). Further to this, “roughly four-fifths of male and female deaths for both Kimberley and Western Australian Aborigines in the age-range 15-24 years were

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22 In the sample of Kimberley Aborigines in Hunter, Hall and Spargo’s research (1993:112), “14 per cent of the sample were in paid employment... the median monthly income (cash in hand) was larger for women than for men ($522 and $462 respectively), and for those of mixed descent compared to full descent ($543 and $469). The difference by descent reflected not only higher rates of employment (28 per cent versus 6 per cent), but also higher incomes for those working ($1130 for mixed descent and $520 for full-descent”).

23 In the research group, “74 percent of episodic drinkers, 84 percent of intermittent drinkers and 94 per cent of constant drinkers were shown to be consuming alcohol at ‘harmful’ levels” (1993:116).

24 Deaths per 100,000 from violence inflicted by others was 25 for Kimberley Aboriginal males (as compared to 3 for the State’s male population) and 33 for Kimberley Aboriginal females (as compared to 1 for the State’s female population) (ABS figures for 1982-86/1984 in Hunter, 1993:85).

25 According to Hunter “[T]he 1987 absentee rate at the Catholic primary school (90 per cent Aboriginal), was about 30 per cent. The high school had an Aboriginal absentee rate for years one to seven of 28 per cent, compared to the white rate of 6 per cent”(1993:236). These figures are for the Derby population generally. The rate for Mowanjum children (who attend school in Derby) seemed to be higher, based on statements from local bus drivers and community administrators.

26 The proportion of non-Aboriginal people to Aboriginal across the Kimberley in 1996 was about 2:1 (21,865: 11,163) in the West Kimberley the proportion was more like 1:1 (3509: 3,920). (ABS 1996 census figures).

27 The category of “deaths from external causes” includes deaths from motor accidents, other accidents, suicide and injury purposefully inflicted by other persons (Hunter, 1993:80).
due to external causes” (ibid. 84). The imprisonment rate of Mowanjum teenagers\(^{28}\) is extremely high and at least three young adults from Mowanjum have died in custody since 1996. Young and middle-aged adults experience an extremely high rate of non-insulin dependant diabetes (O’Dea, Spargo and Akerman, 1980) which considerably increases the probability of premature death. The rate of children born with somatic damage from mothers using alcohol (Roberts, Gracey and Spargo, 1988) and tobacco during pregnancy is disproportionately high.

2.4.6 Housing and Infrastructure

Although some new, larger and more robust houses have been constructed at Ngarinyin settlements such as Mowanjum and Imintji since 1998, a severe accommodation crisis affects these communities, the township of Derby and all its satellite settlements. It is not unusual for fifteen people to be living in and around a single dwelling with three bedrooms. As a consequence of the need to share usually well-worn foam mattresses and bedding, skin sores and head lice are re-transmitted in a ruthless cycle. Because people take their swags with them when they travel they also transport these social diseases. “Cold sick” (common cold), influenza and chronic respiratory diseases afflict a high proportion of children in the settlements, leading to the common malady of early hearing loss from ear infections and consequent learning difficulties. Most of the expensive to build but poorly constructed fibre-board dwellings at Mowanjum and other settlements have not been able to withstand the pressures put upon them by this high level of usage\(^{29}\). Large numbers of children in most households mean that the buildings sustain constant structural damage. A single bathroom with poor drainage in each dwelling means that floors are constantly covered with pools of water. Kitchens are rudimentary and though much cooking is still done outdoors on open fires, the build up of animal fat and damper flour on bench tops and stoves means that cockroaches infest most homes in numbers that only the tropics can sustain. Massive infestations of mosquitoes, propagating in the tidal creeks

\(^{28}\)“Approximately half of the [Kimberley Aboriginal] males under 50 years of age have been in prison. For those in the sample reporting incarceration, it was often a frequent event, with 92 per cent indicating they had been in the police lock-up within the last year, and nearly 20 per cent within the last month” (Hunter, 1993:123).

\(^{29}\)Alan Rumsey noted that the houses built in Mowanjum cost $75,000 to be built at a time when a house in Sydney, Australia’s most expensive capital city, could be bought for $20,000 (Rumsey pers. com. 2001).
and the thousands of hectares of long grass surrounding the community, occur after the first rains of the Wet season. This has dramatically increased the risks of infections of Ross River virus and Australian Encephalitis. Mowanjum in particular, being off-country, and the central exchange point which all remote community based people utilise has all the hallmarks of the “refugee camp” which many of its residents consider to be its real nature.

The facilities at Maranbabidi, 570 kilometers northeast of Derby, are extremely basic and improvisation is the guiding principle of community development. Two four room “dongers” (second-hand transportable single men’s work-site accommodation) are placed on steel girders beneath a corrugated galvanised iron roof. The plywood linings of these dongers have bent, buckled and torn away from the steel walls. Except for the very cold nights in the middle of the Dry Season, most people sleep outside in swags on the ground or on the tray-backs of the community vehicles. Various wire bed frames are also scattered around the living area.

An amenities block with two showers, two toilets and a laundry area are situated 200 meters from the living area. An open air cooking area has been constructed of river stones midway between the two dongers. A microwave phone has been installed since 1997. This is generally useable but may fall out of service after heavy rain, leaving the community reliant upon HF radio contact in emergencies. An unmuffled diesel generator, housed in a steel shed, supplies 240V power for lights and stereo players as well as operating the electric pump which brings water for every purpose straight from the waterhole. A septic system disposes of the sewerage. The camp is situated immediately next to a large waterhole of the King Edward River which regularly floods in the Wet Season, bringing water up to the edge of the living area. Following a heavy wet it is often impossible to cross the river until late July. Despite all these impediments to occupation though, there is a constant stream of residents and visitors in and out of Maranbabidingarri. It is not at all uncommon for a truck to drive back to Derby through the night for young people to get to a community football game and then to return the following evening, a total of 1100 kilometers.

Pantijan station on the Sale River, 400 km. northeast of Derby, is probably the least accessible of all the permanent communities in the study area, situated as it is twelve hours drive from Derby along extremely rough tracks and black soil plains. It now has relatively modern housing and infrastructure which have made permanent
occupation a much more desirable prospect for younger people. It is occupied by Ngarinyin and Worrorra people many of whom also maintain a town base at Mowanjum community just outside of Derby. During the working season, this cattle station, which is administered through Mowanjum community (the lease having being acquired by the Commonwealth government in 1972 as a proposed annex to the adjacent Commonwealth Military Reserve) is occupied by thirty to forty workers and their families. A minimal staff maintains the plant and equipment during the wet season when access is by air only.

To the south of Pantijan is Munja, a dry season only settlement situated on the north banks of the Walcott Inlet, near the mouth of the Calder river, sixteen hours drive from Derby. It is totally inaccessible by road for five months of the year, due to black soil plains and the need to cross the Charnley and Calder rivers. In the early 1990s a bush fire swept through the area, destroying the community's tin huts and plant and equipment. The process of rebuilding has been slow and painful due to the difficulty of access. At present water pumps and a radio transmitter have been re-established as a minimum requirement for occupation. The airstrip next to the old settlement is still in serviceable condition.

Imintji community, 220km. Northeast of Derby on the Gibb River Rd. is the first community coming from the direction of Derby which is inside Ngarinyin country proper. It is situated in Wargali *dambun*, (Winjingare, as noted above, is in Unggumi country) and is home to approximately fifty to seventy people. Some of these are aged pensioners while others work in CDEP programs supplemented by seasonal mustering work on Mt. House or other neighbouring stations. Since 1997, the school-aged children at Imintji have traveled by bus each day to the state Wananami School at Kupungarri community, seventy-five kilometers to the east. Prior to this the School of the Air service emanating from Derby was the only possible alternative to Imintji children being billeted with relatives at Kupungarri during the school week. A small roadhouse and store at the community now provides access to affordable and nutritious foods and is a source of external income from the passing tourist trade. When I first visited in 1994, and for the preceding ten years of its existence, Imintji community members needed to travel an extremely rough road 45 kilometers to Mt. House homestead in order to purchase stores. Their pension cheques were posted to this station and, as is the common practice even now on other station settlements, deductions were made from these cheques for however much "book up" of foodstuffs
had been made in the previous two weeks. A small handwritten exercise book constituted the sole form of book-keeping at these station stores, at least as far as members of the community were able to see. Having arrived at the station on the open tray of a truck, the community members were then obliged to wait until a convenient time for the station owners to open the "shop". This might be several hours later if it was a busy day for tourists at the station. The price of goods was always 30-50% higher than the cost of these goods at Derby Woolworths; three hours drive away, from whence they came. The range of available goods was always extremely limited and lacking in nutritional value. The basic station rations of flour, tinned corn beef, sugar, soap, cordial drinks, porridge, tea and tobacco had not changed on these stations since the inception of station rations half a century before.

Since taking over the lease in 1993, CALM, as part of its eradication program, have allowed Imintji community members to supplement their diet by killing and butchering any cattle that wandered over the nearby sectors of Mt. Hart pastoral lease. Most people were paying high prices\textsuperscript{30} for staples from a very basic income derived from welfare payments (aged pensions, supporting parent pensions or an equivalent amount in CDEP\textsuperscript{31}). A fatalistic attitude towards prices prevailed at the time but the situation improved dramatically when the Imintji roadhouse was opened. The savings in fuel alone were considerable. Interestingly, once the community members were no longer collecting their cheques or shopping at Mt. House store, it ceased trading as a tourist farm-stay location and concentrated exclusively on cattle business as its source of income. A semi-permanent tourist camp has recently negotiated a sub-lease with Imintji community some half a kilometer away on the major watercourse, Saddler's Creek. This is an additional, if small, source of income for the community.

Established in 1984 on a small living area excised (after much negotiation) from Mt. House pastoral lease, the community is situated on a thin strip of land

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\textsuperscript{30} I recorded the following prices at Mt. House store in March 1995:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hamper Corned Beef 340g</td>
<td>$4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmolive Soap 250g</td>
<td>$3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold Power washing detergent 1 kg.</td>
<td>$8.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cordial 1 litre</td>
<td>$7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCormick Salt 190g</td>
<td>$4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diesel fuel 1 litre</td>
<td>$1.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{31} The ABS census for 1996 showed the median individual weekly income for the West Kimberley region to be $213. This figure includes all portions of the population. Most non-Indigenous people in the West Kimberley earn considerably more than this amount, raising the median considerably (ABS Website).
sandwiched between the main Gibb River Rd. and the cliffs of the Leopold Range. According to the Community Welfare worker van de Ruit (1997), he was approached in December 1982 to assist people who had decided not to return to Mt. House station following the wet-season camp at Saddler's Springs where they had met for ceremonies. They "wanted help in staying where they were and with getting back some of their traditional lands for themselves" (ibid.). These people made do with canvas tarpaulins as their principal shelters at Saddler's Springs for the next two years, eventually gaining sufficient resources for the first unwalled galvanised shelters to be erected. These shelters were enclosed several years later and more modern housing erected in 1999. This last effort was principally as a result of major health concerns which caused the camp to be evacuated in the wet season of 1998 when the settlement's illegal plastic septic sewerage tanks ruptured causing the water supply in Saddlers Springs to become contaminated with salmonella.

Imintji continues to define itself as the local community which was the first outstation in the region and is characterised by a robust sense of autonomy, quite independent of non-Aboriginal administrators, teachers or much bureaucratic intervention. In some respects this has delayed the delivery of modern services but has preserved Imintji from the regimentation which continues to afflict other communities with entrenched white administrations. The presence of a lively population of huge hand-reared wild pigs from the local spring country, pet brolga and kangaroos, and large numbers of camp dogs and cats, gives Imintji an eccentric air compared to some larger but quieter settlements. While this "air of eccentricity" in no sense diminishes the severity of the human suffering from the health and social problems afflicting this settlement, the residents' priorities are derived from both an indigenous sense of being "in place" 32 conditioned by the local violent frontier background. The local political process is saturated with ideas about social organisation (see Chapter 2) and deployment of force in social relationships which derive from both these backgrounds.

Kupungarri community, 300 kilometers from Derby on Mt. Barnett station, also maintains a much-frequented roadhouse and store along the Gibb River Road, on

32 I say that residents place a high priority on being “in place” because many of the senior members of the community have traditional associations to nearby Beverley Springs, Mt. Hart and Mt. House stations on which many of them have also spent their working lives.
the opposite side of the main road to the community. This is the local store for settlement residents as well as a good source of income for the community, as a large tourist camping ground is situated eight kilometers away at the popular Manning Gorge. This camping ground is run and maintained by community members. There is a state government school, Wananami, with four teachers for the children who live in at Kupungarri as well as some of those who live at Imintji, Dodnun and Tirralantji. This school’s curriculum is supplemented by language and cultural studies conducted by older people from the community.

Together with well-furbished mechanical workshops and a regular visiting clinic, the housing and infrastructure of Kupungarri has become the envy of many communities in the Kimberley. However, its residents also complain of the lack of a rich and “lively” social life at Kupungarri because of a perceived lack of autonomy in the creation of rules and by-laws in the community. It is true that many of the relatively high quality homes in the community are empty and that the population attending the school has often been nowhere near its capacity. While administrators and some residents claim that this is solely a result of the strictly enforced “no grog” rule in the community, even non-drinkers continue to decry the lack of youthful energy in the settlement. At mustering season there is an influx of younger workers from Mowanjum and this change is generally regarded as highly desirable. There is little doubt that the present administration’s insistence on excluding CDEP programs from Kupungarri (because of their “fudging of the unemployment problem”\(^{33}\)), and the strict controls on use of community infrastructure, is locally perceived to be a policy of benevolent paternalism and demoralises those who would otherwise make Kupungarri home. These attitudes have been described to me as “make Aborigine bloke look silly- can’t run’em own place, what for?”

The situation is somewhat different again at Nyalanggunda community, 400-km. northeast of Derby on Gibb River Station. Nyalanggunda is home to about one hundred people who are either aged pensioners or employed through CDEP on this ATSIC owned cattle station (leased back to the community). The present community,

\(^{33}\) It is true that CDEP “work-for-the dole” schemes hide the high levels of underemployment and the resulting low incomes. The ABS census of 1996 showed only 817 people out of a total population of 33,028 in the Kimberley region as unemployed in 1996. However more than 90% of working Aboriginal people are on CDEP programs which pay participants about $AU1 per hour on top of the dole (ABS 1996 Census of Population and Housing, Kimberley (Statistical Division).
which was supplied with modern buildings and facilities in 1993, emerged from the former workers’ camp.

The Wanalirri Catholic School, with its iconic mural depicting the Wanalirri *wanjina* story, is one of the prominent social features of the contemporary community. The presence of the school entails house parenting of school-age children from neighbouring settlements. Thus there has arisen a core of married couples who run households made up of many children during the school week. The education program at Wanalirri School includes an education in Ngarinyin language and cultural matters provided by senior members of the community. A full time medical clinic now operates at Nyalanggunda and people also attend this from the neighbouring settlements on a roster basis.

2.4.7 Fishing, Hunting and Collecting

Frequent use is made by Ngarinyin people in all their settlements of bush foods available from hunting, fishing and to much lesser extent, gathering of vegetable foods. These bush foods continue to provide a substantial supplement to local diets and have a high prestige as "good tucker" across a wide generation span. The children of Kupungarri community, for example, often make walking forays of their own into the bush surrounding the settlement to hunt goanna with *barnamarr* (heavy clubs) and fish. They also carry shanghais with which birds can be taken. Their parents and grandparents always carry a rifle, when one is available, in their vehicles for opportunistic hunting of kangaroo and turkey, and groups of women spend as much of their day as other chores allow at local fishing holes. The relatively traversable country to the north of Pantijan station has allowed for long trips with motor vehicles to the Glenelg River and into the Aboriginal Reserve area beyond it. With the availability of four-wheel drive vehicles, there were more frequent visits to the settlements at Mejerrin and to Munja on the Walcott Inlet, where the most prized fish, barramundi, are plentiful, are much more possible. These journeys were taken in company with the older people who know this country well through having walked it extensively in their younger days. There was considerable demand for and negotiating over the knowledge of these older people by those engaged in opening up roads and tracks linking existing settlements with emergent ones such as that being re-established at Kunmunya on the north coast.
Mowanjum people constantly utilised the rich fishing resources on the tidal creeks in the area around Derby and hunted goanna along the flooded banks of local rivers during the wet season. Dodnun and Kupungarri residents hunted kangaroo in the stony range country and caught fresh-water crocodile, goanna, black bream and turtle in the rivers near to the settlements. Maranbabidi residents took turkey and emu on a regular basis, particularly after these species had recovered their numbers throughout the wet season when the black soil country is inaccessible. These trips were made nearly daily at certain times of the year when mustering was not in full swing.

Kupungarri residents supplemented their incomes with artifact production using local ochres and timbers. The white ochre of the area was also traded with other communities as far afield as Kununurra and Turkey Creek.

2.4.8 Cultural Protection and Tourism Programs

Pantijan has also been a base for cultural heritage education and protection programs as there are many significant wanjina painting and stone image sites both on the lease area itself and in the surrounding country. The stories which accompany these painting sites have been taught to a younger generation by those who grew up in the bush-dwelling era and several small reserves have been subsequently declared around the painting galleries. The now deceased Worrorra man, Wati Ngerdu, was a driving force behind Pantijan before his death in the early 1980s. His knowledge of the cattle industry, community politics and the cultural detail of the country allowed him to exert a major influence in this domain. His role as composer within the local tradition of junba drew considerably on all these roles and is explored at some length in the final chapter of this work.

Maranbabidingarri is the site of a cultural tourism joint enterprise being run by Ngarinyin Aboriginal Corporation (the "Bush University") in which non-Aboriginal people visit for between seven and ten days and are escorted by local custodians around accessible Ngarinyin country, visiting wanjina sites, being taught bush skills, and watching performances of public song cycles. Public ceremonies, including initiation of young adult men, have been conducted regularly at the community. The community's prestige, already wide-spread because of the concentration on cultural renewal programs which allow old and young to access remote country with knowledgeable seniors, has been further augmented by the presence of ritual objects
in the *wurnan*, the traditional exchange network linking together settlements across the Kimberley (see Sec. 3.2.4).

Extensive site protection work has been undertaken by members of the Winjingare settlement group under the supervision of D.J., who became senior traditional custodian following the death of his adoptive father, Morndi Munro, in 1993. Fencing off of painting sites along the Napier Range to protect them from cattle damage and work program surveys for heritage protection has been a regular feature of community work projects over at least the last seven years. This work has been undertaken following an incident in 1988 in which a sacred men's site in the Winjingare environs was disturbed. The custodians were extremely distressed by the affair and it resulted in one of only two successful prosecutions of a mining company under the Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972). D.J.'s stepfather, though, was widely regarded as having never recovered from the "shame" and sense of personal injury of this incident.

Residents of Imintji settlement continue to monitor the *wanjina* paintings in the vicinity and frequently perform the songs and dances derived from dreamt experiences of the surrounding landscape. I was fortunate in being able to record at Imintji in May 1997 the last performances of the song cycle *Ilije* before the composer, a woman who was regarded as having strong visionary and healing powers, a *barnman*, by the name of W.F. passed away a few months later. W.F. was the sister of the most senior resident of Imintji, J.J., who continued to perform as a dancer in this song cycle into his late eighties.

Near the Imintji community is an excellent source of particularly fine white ochre which is much sought after by other Ngarinyin people for body-painting and the production of painted canvasses and artifacts. This is collected from the eroded banks of creeks after the wet season rains and either traded with neighbouring communities or used in performances and the production of art works in the community itself.

People from Imintji have attempted, with varying success, to negotiate access and site protection programs with CALM, which purchased the neighbouring pastoral lease of Mt. Hart in 1995. The locations of some of the tourist camping facilities have been a cause of concern for community members. The Bell Creek region in particular includes some extremely sensitive sites which community members have been anxious to protect from potential damage.
The central *wanjina* painting complex, Wanalirri, is situated in a rock gallery not far from Gibb River and Nyalanggunda community members care for the well being of this important mythic site, insisting on permissions to visit being obtained via local protocols. The stories associated with Wanalirri provide the wellspring of many of the localised emanations of *wanjina* right through to the Worrorra coastal country and this makes Nyalanggunda a focal reference point for all three language groups. Performances of the Wanalirri Junba are regular features of Nyalanggunda community life and at times the dancers are requested to take this sung story to cultural festivals and performances up and down the Gibb River Road or to the towns of Derby and Broome. Other important sites nearby the community include Nyalanggunda, Anggurrman, Morndol and Budba Nyoningarri. Each of these sites has been regularly, at least until very recently, repainted to maintain their brightness and therefore their efficacy in the ritual reproduction of natural species for hunting and also the constant re-supply of spirit children.

It is envisaged that Mejerrin settlement will become financially independent through joint enterprise tourism since it is located on the main access route from Mt. Elizabeth to Munja. Mejerrin is the source for significant imagery in traditional songs and their associated dance cycles composed by the late Wati Ngerdu. It has also been the source of many new songs by young composers celebrating the persistence of traditional associations to country.

Every dry season, groups of people from Dodnun, Mowanjum, Mejerrin and Nyalanggunda make the journey out to Munja to fish for the much-desired and plentiful estuarine barramundi available in the Inlet. A large barramundi dreaming site, *Nowala*, and a bush-potato increase site, *Jarrgun*, lie within the area and these are ritually cleaned and "smoked" by older people in order to increase the species (See Map 4). These same people also regularly accompany groups of tourists and fishermen who are transported to the area by tourist operators working out of the stations. The yellow and white ochres which are found in the area are also much sought after for ceremonial life and the painting of traditional imagery for sale.

### 2.4.9 Associations with Neighbouring Cultural Groups

J.J. and his now deceased sister, the composer I have referred to above, belong to the Gumularwurru clan group whose country is situated at the headwaters of the Durack River. This group borders upon the Kija language group's country and has
always maintained a strong relationship with the Ban.gurr and Balba groups which
neighbour them. The Gumarawurru people have a part time residence at Imintji but
operate their own outstation at Tirralantji community, quite distinct from Yulumbu
community on Tableland Station where the Ban.gurr and Balba, who identify as Kija,
groups live.

Winjingare community members maintain close associations with the Bunuba
settlements at the now Aboriginal-owned Fairfield and Leopold Downs stations
between which communities there is intermarriage and a shared ceremonial life. D.J.
operates as something of a cultural broker between the Ngarinyin and Bunuba groups
because of his unique position of holding country at which the two language groups
interface. The fact that he is also married to and has children with a Bunuba woman,
Rita Leley, has served to further this role of cultural broker. Constant visits to the
Bunuba community of Junjuwa near Fitzroy Crossing have become part of D.J.’s
modus operandi in this work. The organisation of traditional affairs such as initiation
ceremonies, funerals and public dance events is quite seamlessly combined with
political activities focussing on land claims, ecological management and social justice
issues. Because Winjingare is situated on the western side of the Napier Range it is in
close proximity to the Kimberley Downs pastoral lease where a large Aboriginal
community was situated up till the 1980s. This lease takes in Bunuba country to the
south and Warrwa to the northwest. The major wurnan trade centre of Balmaninggara
is located in a hill (Mt. Marmion) where a major encampment of Ngarinyin and
Unggumi people was situated. The area between Winjingare and this centre is thus
well-traversed country and alternative routes into Winjingare are possible across this
plain.

Because of its proximity to Kalumburu, one hundred and fifty kilometers to
the north, and Kandiwal community, about the same distance to the northwest, visits
from Wunambal people are a fairly frequent occurrence at Maranbabidi. The long
standing relationships of Wunambal clans to Galarungarri, Brrelalngga, Brrejirad,
Bararungarri and Dilangarri Ngarinyin clans continue to find contemporary
expression in family relationships and visiting despite the death, over the last decade,
of the great “foot-walkers” across these countries.

In the data above it is possible to see that a person’s range of activities might
extend beyond the country to which he/she is identified by way of language but that
such extensions are usually highly mediated by way of affinal connections. Such
expansions of one's presence and influence into different language countries, and other domains defined according to other relative scales\textsuperscript{34}, are usually temporary and premised upon the expectation of people from those countries that this person "properly belong" elsewhere and that he will eventually "contract" his presence to that particular sphere.

2.5 Containing and Scattering

I have described above the continuous travelling of Ngarinyin people back and forth among contemporary settlements. From what can be learned from previous commentators and from contemporary Ngarinyin people, this sort of travelling to visit and attend ceremony has always been a highly valued aspect of the local life-world. Early accounts by ethnographers in the region (Love 1936, Elkin 1933, Lommel 1996), noting the constant round of visiting, have attempted to account for it in terms of social obligation resulting from the indirect marriage exchanges between clans, annual cycles of natural resource use patterned by these same factors, or dislocation and social disruption as a result of the pastoral incursions beginning in the early decades of the twentieth century. Blundell (1975) conducted ethno-archaeological studies in the early 1970s which attempted to show, through reconstruction of the previous hunter-gather lifestyle of Ngarinyin and Worrorra people already settled at Mowanjum, how W.E.H. Stanner's (1965) concepts of clan estate, band range and ecological domain might have operated. Later, in conjunction with Robert Layton (Blundell and Layton 1978), she published an account of how the local organisation intertwined with cultural institutions such as care of \textit{wanjina} sites and the \textit{wurnan} exchange network, to allow joint exploitation of different ecological zones through annual migrations between inland and coastal groups. Blundell and Layton (1978) convincingly used the concepts of clan, patrilineal groups holding estates centered around \textit{wanjina} totemic sites, and band, a loosely bounded residential and economic group consisting of core members of the clan estate but also including affines and other relatives using a range of country which included the estates of affines. The notion of clan estate, with accompanying totemic \textit{wanjina} gallery, is here a centripetal one of containment as opposed to the centrifugal notion of band range. The \textit{wurnan} (see Chapter 5), in this interpretation, was conceived of as the institution which allows

\textsuperscript{34} Such as other patrilineal estates, other settlements or other cultural zones.
for systematic mediation between clans to create a wide range within the encompassing domain.

Within contemporary Ngarinyin communities there is constant discussion of why someone should "stop in one place" or not. While this moral injunction needs to be firmly situated in the context of pastoralism and the pastoralists' need to maintain the fixed address and availability of Aboriginal workers and consumers, this is far from being the only strand to the tethering rope of permanency. Widows (baran), in particular, are expected to remain in or near their own camps and look after their own needs until a period of mourning is over. This period might be as short as a month or two or may last for a couple of years. The variable factors are partly dependent on the woman's age and whether her deceased husband is likely to be her last life-partner. Because they have to largely satisfy their own needs widows are known as "hunting women". Recently widowed women often make a visible show of personal virtue out of this constraint and become focal reference points of the local moral order. Since they are unable to either directly approach or be approached by others apart from young children and their actual and classificatory daughters and sisters, non-specific (unnamed) personal criticisms and complaints that no-one "think about me", are projected across the camp in loud, pained voices for anyone who might be inclined to take it to heart. Long term widows (and, to a lesser extent, very old widowers as well), if entreated to take an outing, will usually offer up as the reason for staying home that they have to "look after dogs". The companionship which they share with these camp dogs does patently offset the loneliness of this period of life. Widows, then, represent a point of marked social boundedness and stasis within contemporary communities.

At the other extreme, children over the age of about six are some of the most mobile members of these communities. They are often bundled aboard vehicles to visit relatives at other settlements for weeks and months at a time. Since many grandmothers (MM) are also widows who are expected to remain at the place where they have gone to live since their husband died, it is the grandchildren who must visit them. These children are transported back and forth between their grandmother's and their mother's camp, which is often enough in the settlement where her husband lives since he must avoid all contact with his rambarr, his wife's mother. The children thus move back and forth between the mother's camp, where she may be struggling to cope with younger infants, and their mother's mothers camp, where they are received with a delight often qualified by oblique or direct criticism of the mother's quality of
care. Constant phone calls between distant communities keep all the relatives informed that a child has safely arrived aboard such-and-such a truck and is being properly cared for. Promises from the mother of sending money to the grandmother "for tucker" are accepted at face value. The child then spends much of the day with her age-mates and gets fed at a variety of houses by different relatives before going home to sleep with the grandmother. Only young unmarried men, teenagers, move about with anything like the frequency of these younger children. The parents and grandparents strongly resist the pressure of welfare and school authorities to keep the child in one place so they can go regularly go to school. Being in the right social situation, one in which the primary carer has the time and interest in the child, takes precedence. If there are the slightest indications that the settlement where the child is attending school is in a volatile mood or containing any unsympathetic sentiments towards the child or members of his close family, then the child will usually be kept at home with the grandmother or mother.

In the description above of movement within contemporary settlements, it could be said the contemporary Ngarinyin person, has a "range", constituted in childhood, extending principally between the patrilocal camp (quite often in a settlement orientated towards the father's clan estate - see Chapter 4) and the mother's mother's camp, which is itself often orientated towards either her second husband's country, or if she is an older single widow, towards her late husband's estate. The country in between forms part of the range according to the presence of close relatives in the settlements which lie in between but most of a child's life activities take place in the environs of these two dwelling spaces.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I explore this notion of oscillation between the poles of containment and scattering as it presents itself as a powerful thematic strand in the local cosmology and cosmography of wanjina and wunggurr. I then go on to show how this oscillation which is discoverable as a distinct quality in Ngarinyin mythopoeic elaboration of the origin and meaning of the lifeworld also manifests itself in current local social ideation and practices. My approach to the ethnographic data, then, is consistent with what Stanner called the "embeddedness" of Aboriginal concepts: "some kind of intuitive fitting together of the primary conceptions" (Stanner 1966:15; cf. Myers 1980a:211). The uncovering of a principle of oscillation between containment and scattering inherent to two different relational modalities, myth and social life, is what James Weiner calls the "interpretative" work proper, as opposed to
the laying out of the sequences of data themselves. What is interpretive for both ethnographer and indigenous subject, he suggests, is “narrowing down the extensive implications of a particular [mythic] sequence to this or that particular social effect, which is always a pragmatic issue.....” (Weiner 1995:50).

2.6 Race and Transitional Political Structures

Many of the people resident at settlements located on cattle stations in the region have worked for the owners over several generations and members of these same families have continued to play a major role in the newly independent settlements. In the case of Gibb River pastoral lease, for example, which was acquired by ATSIC in 1990, members of the family which used to own it, took up newly salaried positions there as managers and book-keepers.

This transitional role of the former owners has been largely in keeping with a Ngarinyin modality of politicking with non-Aborigines whereby, unless pushed to a point of exasperation, a gradual relinquishing of control and management roles by non-Aborigines seems to have been preferred by many of the residents of the settlement, partly in order to contain the demands which would inevitably fall upon kin networks if “outsiders” no longer held jurisdiction over community resources. Given the long associations between the former owners of Gibb River and its Ngarinyin residents, it is hardly surprising that Ngarinyin people here have chosen to cling to those non-Aboriginal personnel with whom they are familiar way beyond the expiry of their contractual obligation with them. Some members of these families were held in very high regard by Ngarinyin people, notwithstanding the fact that some of these same Ngarinyin people say that they observed their own relatives being shot at on Gibb River station as late as 1957 by the father of the current generation of salaried managers. Rather than describing these attitudes as a result of a simple hegemonic process, I take it that Ngarinyin people here perceived the need to firstly accommodate to a seemingly unchangeable situation. Having invested the effort of two or three generations in instituting stable, if sometimes irksome, relationships with a particular group of outsiders, and survived the period of explicit force, they are now loathe to begin transactions with a completely new set of bosses who have not been incorporated, even peripherally, into the network of relatedness. Since conditions in many other parts of the post 1920 Kimberley frontier were even more predictably lethal, Ngarinyin people in this region have tried to influence outcomes by allying themselves with the least dangerous
elements in this environment (cf. Jebb 1998). In the cases of Mt. Elizabeth and Gibb River, this has meant enduring alliances with white men who had Aboriginal wives from outside the local group (Yawuru and Jaru respectively). Thus, the sons and daughters of such unions could be prevailed upon by local Ngarinyin people to act “like family” without incurring the wrath of local men deprived of their promised wives (cf. Elkin 1951:168). Men who had a white father but a local Ngarinyin mother, such as the founding chairmen of Imintji and Kupungarri settlements, were in a quite different situation. They tended to attract the animosity of their age-mates and their promised father’s family for whom these “half-castes” were an embodiment of their loss, as well as their white father’s deep, and often violent, ambivalence. Both these men became famous fighters under these circumstances and came to hold positions as head-stockman and later community chairman, never succeeding to the role of pastoral lease holders because their white father’s position of stockman or contractor was an unlanded one.

Even given the limited sample available for testing the proposition that white pastoralists made sure that none of their Ngarinyin offspring took up the lease, it is empirically true that the children of a European father and a Ngarinyin mother have never been individual lease holders in the Ngarinyin area but the children of a European father and a non-Ngarinyin mother often have been. This may have been a result of a conscious strategy on the part of lease-holders to avoid claims by children of Ngarinyin women to inherit the lease or, more generally, to avoid becoming too implicated in the local network of obligations and responsibilities to kin. Equally it may be the result of strategies by Ngarinyin men to avoid losing promised wives to outsiders. In the following Sec. I explore how these relationships with non-Ngarinyin people in positions of relative power have been figured in terms of local kinship ideologies.

2.6.1 Mutualities and Dependencies

In Chapter 3, I will show how Ngarinyin people experience kinship relationships in both centripetal and centrifugal modalities, marking explicit sites of introjection of significant others onto the body in the process of constituting the self, and extending the kinship web indefinitely outwards towards the boundaries of the known world to make relative strangers into what we might call “strange relatives”. Nowhere is this more visible than in the process through which relationships with
non-Ngarinyin people, the "strangest relatives" of all, are set in place. This extension of the imagery of kinship to consociates outside the cultural domain is the focus of this Sec. Although, at the present time, there are no more than thirty-five non-Aboriginal\textsuperscript{35} people living in the whole of the 70,000 odd square kilometers of Ngarinyin country, their impact upon and encompassment of contemporary relationships has been, as one might expect, disproportionately great. This Section. will explore the tenor of some of these relationships not just for their own sake but also because they provide a highly elaborated field against which crucial features of local notions of intersubjectivity become articulated.

There has been a long long-standing relationship of mutual dependency between the station owners, pastoralists, and members of the local community. Each of these parties, of course, has construed the degree and direction of this dependency rather differently. The family holding the pastoral lease on which Dornaun is situated, for example, have been running the station since it was founded in 1947 by the present owner's father, and have grown up alongside of, but in a position of considerable power over, the resident Aboriginal work-force. The present owner is the son of a New Zealander and a mixed-descent Aboriginal woman from the Broome region, 500 kilometers to the southwest. Local Aboriginal people had thus grown up well aware that the first boss's son was an Aboriginal person but of a different kind to themselves; "same but different" in the local idiom. His mother was regarded affectionately but lived "longa house", still a strictly demarcated sphere of white influence and generally off limits to local Ngarinyin people unless brought there for domestic duties such as cleaning and cooking. Once or twice a year various community members might be invited up to the verandah for a special occasion, such as the boss'ss or one of his family's birthdays. The station owners' daughter and son were teenagers who were reaching the end of their high school years at boarding school in Perth and spending more and more time at home. They each had "bush names", as did the station owner himself, given to them by older Ngarinyin people resident at the station. These referred to places in the vicinity of the station where they were considered to have their \textit{wunggur} places\textsuperscript{36}. The station owner's wife, who had

\textsuperscript{35} The distinction between non-Ngarinyin and non-Aboriginal people is focal or not depending upon contexts such as those discussed in this section.

\textsuperscript{36} Povinelli, who studied this process in considerable detail, noted that the people of Belyuen considered that "over time, even foreign bodies sink into the countryside" (1993:167).
come up from Perth, had married the present owner after being there for some time as a governess when she was a young woman. She was, like nearly all white women in the area, known by local Aboriginal people simply as "missus", reflecting the use of the Anglo-Australian term "the missus" (Mrs.) employed by white Australians until quite recently to refer to their wives.

After two generations of co-residency in the same region, the demarcation of areas of normal operation and mutual avoidance had been completely naturalised amongst all the parties living on the station. Ngarinyin workers and their families had, until the 1980s, lived in tin huts a few hundred meters behind the station. Fifteen years after having secured their own small living area, about twenty kilometers away from the station house, they continued to occupy these tin huts during the mustering season. From their living area, a truck trip would be made to the station house every second day or so to get rations from the station store, which "missus" would open in the afternoons. Stores consisting mainly of flour, sugar, tea, tinned meat and fish, cordial, toiletries, and biscuits were brought out for sale by "missus" from Derby after her monthly shopping trips, when the weather and roads allowed. Pension cheques and all correspondence were delivered to the station by the fortnightly "mail plane". "Missus" kept, like the dwindling number of other stations with an Aboriginal workforce, an exercise book with a running tally of any "book-up" from the previous fortnight and deducted this from the pension cheques or CDEP payments (which were also administered through the station). Many of the community residents were quite good with mental arithmetic despite their introduction into the cash economy only having occurred in the 1960s. They would take note of the cost of everything and then draw some "blanket money" for social card playing in the community and leave a portion "with missus" for contingencies during the coming fortnight. In general they tended to owe a significant part of their next pension cheque by the time it came around.

During the mustering season, which might last from two to three or four months, the men of the community worked with the "boss" mustering, droving, and preparing cattle to be trucked out to meatworks in Broome, Port Hedland or Perth. The women worked as camp cooks, travelling with the rations, their children and some household effects and bedding on the back of an ex-Army four wheel drive truck which also towed a trailer with the "portable yard" which needs to be assembled each evening to contain the newly mustered cattle. The mustering crew might be away
from their homes and the station for three weeks at a time when they began mustering from the most remote boundaries of the station, which often included mustering "clean skins" (unbranded cattle) from the vacant crown land surrounding the pastoral lease. Only a few of the very old people remained at the settlement to look after the camp dogs and keep an eye on other people's camps. Thus the station owner, his son and the working community members spent long periods of time in one another's company. The lines of social demarcation were always present though. The station owner, his teenaged son and any other white people who might be accompanying them, ate, slept and excreted in a different direction from the Aboriginal work force.

The boss gave orders to an Aboriginal head-stockman who was often in his late middle-age and was expected, it appeared, to transmit these orders to his countrymen. This was more of a formality though since the modality for exercising authority between the male Ngarinyin relatives was largely kin- and age-based and thus largely prevented the head-stockman giving orders to older men or being too overbearing with those men's sons who might be working with them (cf. Elkin 1951:168). Consequently the boss, and his teenage son, often directly gave orders to older Ngarinyin men working on the muster. The boss was well aware that the act of giving direct orders was potentially shame inducing, and thus counter-productive, and would attempt to achieve the desired effect in an as understated way as possible, drawing upon the long and honoured tradition of rural white Australian laconicism which local Aboriginal people, serendipitously, seemed to find culturally appropriate. This entailed much looking at the ground or into the middle distance by the boss, rubbing the toe of the boot into the dust and quiet speech. His teenage son was more likely to be abrasive and this would at times cause some embarrassment to the Ngarinyin workers.

To a large degree, most of the experienced Ngarinyin stock-men seemed well aware of what was required of them though, and organised themselves without much potentially embarrassing explicit assertion of authority throughout the long work day facing them (up to 16 hours, many of which were in the saddle). In this respect, cattle mustering seemed to emulate the earlier situation of fire-driving kangaroo where groups of men were invited to conduct burning of a neighbouring clan's country (cf. Blundell and Layton, 1978:239, Love 1936:85-87) in order to drive kangaroo into a narrow pass between the ranges where the spears of the local land holding group
awaited them. Thomson noted that in Arnhem Land, where similar practices took place, that

the actual procedure follows so closely a traditional pattern that little actual leadership is required and this is generally accepted as the responsibility of the most senior and experienced of the older men who stand in the correct kinship status to the group in whose territory the hunting drive is carried out (1949:20).

During the cattle muster, and the subsequent intense period of work around the stockyards, a temporary suspension occurred of the otherwise fairly affectionate relations between local Aborigines and their boss.

These bonds, imposed by force and intense anxiety only a generation before, by the late 1990s were locally treated as though they had been forged through living within such close proximity to each other, watching each other grow up and grow old, sharing knowledge of each other's indiscretions, and being perceived, albeit to very different degrees, as emergent from the fulcrum of the same country, and a shared identification as "ranges people" vis a vis all others, which counted for a great deal as far as the local Ngarinyin people were concerned. It seemed to be the case that the initial explicit violence of the colonial encounter had become implicit over two generations, internalising relationships of authority so that local people now relied upon the stability of relationships with local whites which internalisation figured through idioms of relatedness offered.

However, during the most intense work period of the year (July-August), a situation of overt authority obtained between boss and workers which each party seemed to accept as "natural". Although this situation was somewhat variable according to the generational difference between the boss and particular workers, this period was generally marked by the issuing of the "shouted commands" and "belligerency" which Myers (1980a: 205-207) ascribes to the period of hierarchical domination inherent to the period of induction of young men into Law. Certainly there were some powerful similarities pertaining to these two arenas of social action. The analogy between the newly mustered cattle, waiting in yards for their fate, and secluded pre-initiation novices, was formulated in the local idiom by both groups being referred to as "clean skins" (unbranded). The fact that these cattle, mostly young bulls, had previously led a free ranging life with hardly a glimpse of a human up until the muster, added to the strength of this analogy. The most exaggerated
escalation of the analogy occurred in the sudden intensity of the encounter with violence, in which the newly mustered but still wild cattle were locked by the neck into a medieval-looking holding brace, then castrated, de-horned, detailed, ear-tagged and branded with a hot iron - all within the space of about ten minutes. The dust of the branding yard would be caked with blood spurting from horn stumps and groin, ringing with the clashes of metal gates, stock whips and the frightful, tongue-protruding squeals of the victims while the acrid smell of bitumen caulking compound and burning hide and hair filled the air. The man with the knife, usually the head stockman, stoically proceeded with his work beneath the body of the young bull, slashing a neat incision, grabbing the two handfuls of fatty white testicular matter from each bull, calmly placing them on a corner-post to be roasted for morning “smoko”, then returning to the next beast. This dramatic scene was treated with a certain gallows humour by all involved, the hundreds of repetitions seeming to gradually dull the empathy which Ngarinyin people generally seemed to extend to all animal life. My main point here though is that this period of intense violence was one in which the boss’s explicit domination was accepted, unlike other periods when he worked rather hard to fit in to local expectations of being a “good boss”.

Ngarinyin men and women living at Dodnun plainly asserted that it was themselves who had “grown up” the boss, made a “good bloke, good worker” out of him, and the women regarded themselves as having “settled that missus properly” into her role as the boss’s wife and station manageress37. They unabashedly recounted their central role in having constructed the station gardens, doing “all the cooky’s job”, looking after the boss’s children, “showing touris’ round my country”, and generally “looking out” for the welfare of the boss and his family.

The station owners, on the other hand, much as they expressed a strong affection for various characters in terms of them being “cheeky old buggers”, and “lovely old blokes/girls”, regarded the presence of this community of Ngarinyin people still on traditional country as solely an effect of their family’s patronage of a dependent population. They believed that without their “assistance” these people would have been living the refugee life on the fringe of Derby, notwithstanding the

37 Myers has written with perspicacity on the Pintupi usage of the notion of bosses. He notes that “seeking a boss serves their own internal requirements for an outside realm on which to objectify the broader community and sustain their own autonomy. Because a ‘boss’ is usually someone outside the community, his decisions are similarly beyond the system of kinship” (1986:285).
fact that there are large groups of Ngarinyin people who have been living continuously on several of the surrounding pastoral leases. This psychological blind-spot prevented the pastoralists from acknowledging their own dependence on local Ngarinyin people as:

- a labour force;
- a source of additional income from station administration of CDEP schemes attached to the settlement;
- the real source of the now significant income from cultural tourism;
- the social milieu which was, in this remote region, the family’s main source of human intimacy, companionship and conversation amongst themselves;
- consumers of foods from the station store which subsidised the cost of transporting food from Derby for themselves;
- community purchasing of second-hand goods, such as vehicles, which become available as (tax deductible) up-grades were made by the station owners.

Before these present relationships of dependency became entrenched, the father of the present owner had been totally dependent on the local knowledge of Ngarinyin people for the locating of reliable water sources, good range lands, routes for crossing through rocky terrain, the building of yards, fences and sheds and the establishment of the station generally (cf. Elkin 1951:168).

This enumeration of the largely unacknowledged kinds of dependencies emanating from, but not acknowledged by the pastoralists, puts into perspective what are projected by them as the dependency of the Aboriginal population. It is true that the local Aboriginal population has been largely dependent upon whites generally for attaining the governmental administrative and institutional support which was required once they had been coerced into settlements and the cash economy. Once child endowment became available to remote Aborigines in the 1960s, for example, a literate person was required to fill in the necessary forms. The establishment of a community clinic likewise requires administrative planning by people with a western education. It should be remembered, though, that many of these benefits became available to remote Aborigines only through particularly driven individuals working for Native (later Community) Welfare agencies throughout the 1960s-1980s. Station

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38 This putting the cart before the horse brings to mind Malcolm de Chazal’s comment that “religion is to console humanity for all the harm that priests have done to it”. 
owners in this region often stubbornly resisted the intervention by government agencies in the status quo of the pastoral regime of labour exchanges for boots, blankets and rations.

How to decipher, then, the sentiments of dependence towards the boss and his family which are often expressed by Ngarinyin people living on remote European-owned stations? Firstly, the point must be repeated that interdependency, while having its moments of being obviously experienced as oppressive, is not generally experienced as a negative form of intersubjectivity by Ngarinyin people\[39\]. As I show in my discussion of demand sharing practices in Chapter 5 (above), the local kinship modality means that many different categories of relatives can be expected to contribute in different ways to the maintenance of not just a person’s physical body but to their overall emotional well-being. Relations with more distant kin, though, became the model through which exchanges with Europeans were conducted\[40\]. At this more formalised level of exchange obligations, which Merlan (1997) has usefully distinguished from familial ones of generalised mutuality, the principle of indirect reciprocity which animates the wurnan sharing system also meant that any “shame”\[41\] which might be expected to be induced by dependence was socially submerged by the mechanism of one person’s dependence being offset by their role as a potential benefactor in relation to someone else (cf. Macdonald 2001:92). Keeping an “open liyan” (literally “open guts”, an open hearted attitude) is regarded as the optimal path towards personal and social health. Having a “hard chest feeling” is regarded as the opposite: the precursor of deep unhappiness and illness.

These idealities, as expected patterns of behaviour, didn’t always translate clearly into practice but the expectation that they would create a protective screen around ambivalent self-seeking behaviour which was only torn down by openly aggressive attacks against someone failing to be generous (cf. Myers 1980a: 210). Such attacks usually only occurred after someone’s blatant failures in social

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\[39\] Gaynor Macdonald succinctly notes that “Aboriginal moral codes and kinship frameworks are more concerned [than those developed through western socialisation processes] with how to be uniquely oneself in the contexts of obligations and concerns which involve a deep relatedness to significant others” (2001:102)

\[40\] Thomson, writing of Arnhem Landers, wrote that strangers, including whites, were treated as “‘one with whom I have no bond, towards whom I have an established pattern of behaviour, that is, one whose reactions there is no means of predicting’” (1949:50).

\[41\] Myers, writing of the Pintupi, noted that “people will not ask a stranger or distant kin for food, because they are ‘embarrassed’, afraid that such a request will be too pushy” (1976:143)
reciprocity caused a supplicant’s feeling of offense to reach critical mass. In between these two potentialities, the ideal of sharing and the public wrenching open (the relativising) of them in a fight, were various mechanisms for slippage.

2.6.2 Projection of the body-ego as a means of inducing reciprocity

In the next chapter (Chapter 3), I show how the imago of mother and mother’s brother are located as bodily sites in the Ngarinyin body-image. The reciprocal relationship of a person to their actual or classificatory mother’s brother/sister’s son is one in which reciprocal exchanges and gifts can always be expected. The persons in this relationship must treat one another like a mother, feeding on demand, with the emphasis being on the older member of the dyad being the provider until the point where age reverses the capacity to provide. It is not considered shameful for an older child or even an adult to “cry for something” from those in this relationship. Euro-Australians are often shocked by what they see as either a demeaning entreaty by a grown person towards another, or an outright rude demand (“no please, no thank-you”), for food, a lift, a cigarette or for something bigger such as an article of clothing or even a car. For example, I was asked several times, “give me that car when you finished with it”. An older adult man demanding an immediate gift from his son’s wife is also not at all unusual since she is his classificatory mother also and is expected to respond to him a such. These intimate dependencies, born of the fractal sociality of “dividuals” (Strathern 1988), translate very poorly to the schizmogenic ideology of a capitalist economy.

Laing, as I noted in the introduction, wrote of the way in which a person can “induce” another subject to embody themselves. The station owner here, as at the neighbouring station, was the son of a non-local Aboriginal woman and a non-Aboriginal man. The Aboriginality of this woman (regardless of her stranger status in every other respect), the pastoral clan matriarch if you like, provided an element of sameness with local people as well as a significant factor of difference. Despite her different local identification, her Aboriginality provided a mirror for her to identify with local Aboriginal people which allowed them to induce her (subject to her social
distancing) to embody the maternal qualities they expected to find in a mature Aboriginal woman. When she produced her sons, then, local Aborigines were able to identify with a woman whom many men local men called “older sister” because of the social distanciation her position demanded. They thus adopted the sons, and particularly the one who remained at home to take over the station, in a very avuncular manner (cf. Myers 1986:283). The very social distance which marked out his mother as “same but different” allowed her to take this induced relationship into the heart of the non-Aboriginal (or non-Ngarinyin more accurately) household where it also affected, over time, the men of the household. Laing asserts that

one way to get someone to *do* what one wants, is to give an order. To get someone to *be* what one wants them to be, or supposes he is or is afraid he is (whether or not this is what one wants), that is, to get him to embody one’s projections, is another matter...Such attributions, in context, are many times more powerful than orders (or other forms of coercion or persuasion) (1971:78).

As the garndingi/marlangi (mother’s brother/sister’s son) relationship is one of the critically reciprocal relationships, the present station owner could be induced to continue to embody a maternal (or matronising) attitude towards his workers because they continued to act towards him like avuncular/maternal figures. His white wife was another matter and she generally maintained a much greater emotional distance which her husband could never enact because he had been born into an induced set of relationships. Indeed, it was only the presence of his wife, this woman from the outside world, which circumvented the boss, and then his son, becoming permanently, biologically implicated in the indigenous “family romance” (cf. Elkin 1951:168).

No relationship of perceived dependency is without its ambivalence though and this was evoked as soon as the “family romance” ceased to be embodied in just one of the characters in this elaborate human drama. The imagined family, Laing writes, “comes to serve as a defence or bulwark against total collapse, disintegration, emptiness, despair, guilt and other terrors” (1971:14). As one would expect, there

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42 Several of the pioneering families in this region were of Scottish descent, some of them veterans of the Light Horse Brigade in WW1 which seems to have imparted to them a great ability with horses and a strong stomach for violence.

43 Myers noted that in the “patron-client conception of rights and duties surrounding authority” among the Pintupi, the definition of someone who was regarded as a “boss” was predicated on the assumption that “‘bosses’ should look after their charges” (1986:262; also Myers 1980a: 203).
have been periods of deep alienation between the station owner and his family and members of the community. The Ngarinyin workers moving off to their own private living space, after the widespread local agitation for such areas which gave rise to the Seaman Enquiry of 1984, was seen by the owner as a kind of abandonment, a denial of what he perceived to have been his largesse. The separation, traumatic as it was, was rationalised as a “stirring up” of the imaginary family by external forces. None of this succeeded in puncturing the illusion of the Ngarinyin’s unilateral dependency upon him and his family.

This inability to acknowledge his own dependency had the effect of creating dissonance within the entire relationship with the Ngarinyin community which worked for him. No matter how distorted his image of unilateral Ngarinyin dependency was, the relationship was beset by an ambivalence emerging from the Ngarinyin perception that there was a degree to which the pastoralist might gradually become one of those “people who manage their affairs so as not to have to ask others for anything [and] may become too independent” (Macdonald 2001:100). His expressed desire to retire to live outside the region in the not too distant future and his son’s insistence that he was unlikely to want to take over the running of the property only increased this perception. This ambivalence was expressed, for example, in a persistent ambiguity about whether the “killer” that was one of the main staples of the settlement diet was costed to the community, as it had been under the pastoralist’s father, or was a “gift” which the boss allowed the settlement residents to take. Certainly meat from the station freezer was charged for but it was never entirely clear what the situation was in regard to “killer” which was slaughtered and butchered by community members themselves after receiving permission from the boss, much as, in earlier times, visitors from a distant clan estate might be given the “all clear” to hunt. The centrality to all social relationships of the provision of meat meant that this issue of permissions to get “killer” (freshly killed beef) and how it might be charged for was continually ambiguous. The station boss seemed to be well aware of this and made a point of periodically bringing kangaroo which he had shot near the station into the settlement where it was avidly received. His actions in bringing bush meat into the settlement served to re-affirm his status as the “good boy” who had been raised up “proper way” by the older people as well as the nurturant boss who “looks after his subordinates” (Myers 1980a: 203). A complex generational asymmetry was at work here. Most of those now living in the settlement had been younger than the present
owner's deceased father who had originally established the station with the sort of unmodulated authoritarianism typical of the frontier (Jebb 1998). Older people informed me that they had been subject to considerable abuse and threats from "cheeky" (dangerously violent) owners/managers who often went about armed with pistols and whips. As the family became assimilated by local people, the older generation of Ngarinyin people who continued to come and go by foot gradually passed away as did the present owner's parents. The "boy" became the boss and though younger than many of the present residents of the settlement assimilated to himself the authority of his father but in a way which was markedly modulated by the sense in which he was still regarded as a "kid". As far as these older Ngarinyin were concerned, his manner of being the boss was quite different from his father's. They had "grown him up from kid" and were considerably more confident of their ability to regularly induce reciprocity in him. Having laboriously achieved this relatively stable situation over two generations, most of the Ngarinyin residents found the prospect of having to deal with a new boss was quite daunting.

Another example of "too independent" people within this small social world was the fundamentalist Christian minister\textsuperscript{44} and his family who moved into the settlement at about the same time as I began to visit. With the assistance of fellow church members, mainly Americans, he built a house for his family on the edge of the settlement but felt it would be morally wrong to connect to the community electric power grid, thus maintaining a marked distancing from use of community resources. His services were nevertheless put to use by the settlement members maintaining the very generator which he would not use. His strong desire for autonomy from local kin networks kept himself and his family noticeably separate from settlement life. His children attended "School of the Air" from home rather than use the State government school at Mt. Barnett and only played with local children when the family took their walks of edification around the settlement every few days and especially on Sundays. Nevertheless, local people treated the family with a polite respect and attempted to "talk up" to him when he made visits to their camps despite the fact that they themselves very seldom made such visits themselves and were obviously "shamed"

\textsuperscript{44} A proselytizer from the New Tribes Mission. The NTM is a fundamentalist Christian, US-based organization which began operations amongst indigenous Indians in Paraguay in 1942 under invitation from the military dictator, General Alfredo Stroessner. NTM expanded during the height of the Cold War to India (1945), Venezuela (1946), Brazil, New Guinea and Japan (1949) (Lewis 1988).
by being confronted by a whole family of neatly dressed gardiya on their own doorsteps. Most showed a polite interest when he talked about the Bible but also maintained privately that “we all Cat’lic here, eh.”

By the time I came out to stay more regularly in Dodnm in the dry season of 1995, the pastoralists (and probably some of the community members too but to different effect) plainly believed me to be playing a role which continued on from that of “Native Welfare”: the external force which had re-arrived to unsettle the “family” relationship. My by-passing of the station owners to seek permission to camp there and my bringing of unvetted information about funding and land issues into the settlement was regarded, I suspect, as rather threatening despite the fact that relations were nearly always cordial. My independent organising of the purchase of a cheap second-hand commercial refrigerator (from community funds for communal use) in order to lessen the amount of time and resources spent driving to and from the station store clearly put issues of consumption and dependence at the centre of the coming disagreements which were to be played out with the station owners. As it turned out, this particular purchase did turn out to be a rather pointless exercise since I had been naively assuming that people would respond enthusiastically to having a place to keep a collective store of meat. Of course, the opposite was true. Most household refrigerators had a padlock on them to prevent unauthorised access. Giving food on request and receiving social credit is one thing. Taking it as needed from either someone’s “private one” fridge or this communal one was quite another. Once “killer” (freshly butchered beef) was distributed from the back of the community truck, it went in huge chunks into pots for immediate use or into private storage places. The huge three-door fridge ended up as a storage space for the head and hooves of cattle carcasses, secreting pools of blood along the verandah of the clinic.

I also gradually came to realise that these trips back and forth to the station represented, among other things, a local source of entertainment, an opportunity to look out for bush foods such as kangaroo along the way and even a chance to get away from someone whom one might be finding particularly annoying that day. Given the intense surveillance which community members come under in the pastoral regime (which in itself led to the move away from the station houses), having a legitimate excuse to be out on the road was quite important. Going to the station store, paradoxically, could be “hunting round for tucker” in both senses. Povinelli has pointed out in this regard that it is
only when people have the choice to hunt or not to hunt that putting one’s body into the countryside to be acted upon becomes a powerful discourse of cultural work (1993:143).

In the light of my Laingian analysis above, I suggest that these repetitious trips were also a continuing act of re-assurance for all concerned that the family romance with the pastoralists was still intact. What then are the exact dimensions of the “family romance” for the Ngarinyin? How are local notions of kinship, which we have seen are available to the application of innovative situations, expressed and embodied? The following chapter addresses these ideas in a presentation and analysis of Ngarinyin kinship modalities.

3.1 Introduction

Given the focus of this thesis upon the intersubjective milieus, in which images of the body become prominent, I now turn to a discussion of Ngarinyin kinship. I note that while there are a variety of anthropological approaches to understanding the centrality of kinship and kin categorisation in Australian Aboriginal societies, the fact of this centrality has been a subject of enduring interest and debate. In his book “Australian Kin Classification” Scheffler (1978) has made an extensive and useful study of the formal characteristics of eight types of Australian kinship systems, including the Ngarinyin system, in order to argue that “Australian social categories are, virtually exhaustively, kinship categories – meaning by ‘kinship’ egocentric relations of genealogical connection” (1978:1). In this work, Scheffler aimed to extend the evidence for this hypothesis, first proposed, but insufﬁciently substantiated by Radcliffe-Brown (1931). Scheffler’s intention was explicitly to counter claims (citing as examples Spencer and Gillen 1889,1927; Levi-Strauss 1969) that the fundamental forms of social organisation in Australian societies consisted either of socio-centric categories such as moieties, section systems and clans (which afforded primacy to relationships between social groups) or a combination of egocentric and socio-centric relationships (citing Meggit 1972). This argument assumes a fundamental dichotomy between society and individual which is deeply rooted in the intellectual tradition of the Enlightenment which shaped anthropology through a discursive tension between Durkheimian emphases upon processes of social integration and opposing Anglo-American emphases upon the sovereignty of a well-bounded self, the Cartesian cogito. The debates about kinship and its indigenous meaning structures thus implicate the entire corpus of anthropological and western knowledge generally concerning the nature of subjectivity.

The philosophical “dual organization” of modernist anthropology has been challenged in some more recent ethnographic works which began by confronting the notion of a bounded self and of determining social orders (Marriot 1976; Wagner 1991; Strathern 1988) without, however, relinquishing the idea of sociality and of the subject’s reproduction of and through it. In these latter works we are no longer required to choose between mutually exclusive interpretations of kinship structures as being either
dependent upon rules of kin-class which define the individual in order to make possible the binary oppositions necessary to “bisexual reproduction” (Scheffler 1978:525) or resulting from finer grades of differentiation ultimately dependent upon social categories which exist in order to promote social solidarity so that the “rules of kinship and marriage are not made necessary by the social state. They are the social state itself...reshaping biological relationships and natural sentiments...” (Levi-Strauss 1969:490).

In this chapter I aim to show that it is possible, in light of my overall emphasis on the expanding and contracting body imagery induced through social interaction, to speak of what Scheffler would call a “superclass” of kinship rationale, in which socio-centric categories and ego-centric kinship are equally manifestations of a splitting of the self which is constitutive of subjectivity at multiple levels. In order to explore this notion, I begin with an overview of the quite extensive literature on Ngarinyin kin relationships.

Elkin, in his first period of fieldwork with Ngarinyin people (at Munja government station in 1927-28), quickly discerned some features which were similar to other Australian kin classification types such as the existence of Aranda-like “four lines of descent (or patrilineal clans) for EGO (F.F., F.M.B., M.F., M.M.B.)” (1964:81). Elkin also noted an unusual tendency towards generation merging, not just of alternate generations which is common to many Aboriginal societies, but of all people agnatically related in each of these “lines of descent” so that “it applies the same term to people of succeeding generations, whereas no other types do this” (Elkin 1964:79).

The next important difference from expected patterns which he discerned in the Ngarinyin system was a prescriptive marriage type whereby a male ego marries FMBSD, or a woman of that same clan but of the next descending generation, FMBSSD. Elkin found, however, that, rather than being thought of exactly in these ego-centric terms marriage was conceived of “from the point of view of the reciprocal duties of local groups” (Elkin 1964:80), that is to say, in socio-centric terms

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45 Heath, contra Scheffler, has expressed his “skepticism towards the possibility of isolating a level of genealogical meaning (relations based on ascribed parent-child links) from a distinct ‘sociological’ level of kinship in which behavioural and affective norms are assigned on the basis of a prior genealogical network” (1982:60; cf. Schneider 1984).
between clans. Radcliffe-Brown described this tendency towards generation merging of people in adjacent generations as an extension of the general Australian principle of grouping together “all the members of a clan other than his own and to regard his relationship to them as being determined by his genealogically close relationship to one member of the clan” (1930-31:453). In the Ngarinyin case, said Radcliffe-Brown, this structural principle had been extended so that “the clan constitutes a unity within which distinctions of generations are oblitered” (1952:83). This same principle was shared with the neighbouring Worrorra and Wunambal groups (Love 1936: Lommel 1996; Lucich 1968).

Rumsey, conducting fieldwork with Ngarinyin people at Mowanjum in 1975, found that the degree to which Ngarinyin people applied generation merging terms in kinship reckoning was something which varied according to the context of discourse. He cited the example of a man who spoke of proper marriage relationships with a group whom he called “mothers”. Rumsey’s investigations uncovered the fact that the usage of the term “mothers” in “this special “widened sense....was the context of discourse in which it had been used” (1981:184, italics in original). The man in question was referring to the opposite moiety group to which both his wife and mother properly belonged. Duly alerted to this problem, Rumsey reconsidered Elkin’s claim that all the men and all the women of one particular clan were referred to by the one (or sometimes two gender specific) term(s) and found, for instance, that while Elkin claimed that all the men of the MB clan were called KANDINGI (garndingi), this was only true in contexts where inter-clan “rather than intra-clan or inter-personal” (ibid.185) contexts were the topic of discussion. In the latter case the term mamingi was used to distinguish MF from MB. Thus he found Elkin and Radcliffe-Brown to be generally correct but that they had erred in the extent of their claims of generation merging. In order to avoid such accidental obfuscation of specificity, Rumsey advised that kinship researchers should extend their investigations beyond the usual elicitation of referential terms “with singular referent and first person singular propositus” (ibid.) to include such forms as the vocative, which has much less applicability to “widened” context usage, serving “to enforce a certain relationship between speaker and hearer” and plural referential terms which, being used for “summing up’ groups” (ibid.186) have much more applicability in contextually-based widening (cf. Merlan 1982).
These discoveries led Rumsey to reconsider the forms of “super-classes” which had been proposed by Scheffler (1978) based on formal analyses of Ngarinyin kinship terminology. Scheffler’s proposed super-classes were based upon the fact the terms ngadjji (M), garndingi (MB) and mamingi (MF) all had “the same reciprocal term marlangi ‘woman’s child’ ” (1978:392). His covert super-class diagram thus looked like this:

![Scheffler's mother super-class diagram](attachment://image.png)

**Fig. 1 Scheffler’s mother super-class**

Rumsey noted that Scheffler, having found the term mamingi (MF) in Lucich (1968) and Jolly and Rose (1966), had been able to show from formal analysis of the common reciprocal term what he, Rumsey, had discovered through contextually based discourse analysis, namely that “ngadjji (M) is the most inclusive class, and mamingi is a specially designated subclass” (Rumsey 1981:188).

But Rumsey then went on to propose that the superclassing which is evident for the contextual analysis is different from what Scheffler found in that there are two superclasses; the first being the ngadjji superclass which included actual mother and the “mothers” referred to in inter-moieties contexts and the second that was used in intra-clan and inter-personal contexts. This second super-class, according to Rumsey, should be further broken down into two sexually differentiated components, ngadjji (M) and garndingi (MB), because there was “no contextual evidence” (ibid:188) for a third ngadjji superclass in which all mother’s male and female agnates were referred to by the same “widened” term. Rumsey thus proposed the differentiated super-classes (below) in which the dotted line shows “their relatedness as male and female categories within a possible higher-level superclass…” which, however, he found to be unviable (ibid: 188).
There does, however, seem to be one kind of contextual evidence for a category of the type rejected by Rumsey, even though it may be argued, as Rumsey does against the third superclass, that "these contexts are quite distinct from and unrelated to those which condition the use of NGAJI," (1981:189). I am referring to what would amount to a distinct, cross-cutting category in which there is a symbolic "widening" of the term ngadji to include males of the WB category from whom the initiate is "reborn" during walungarri ceremonies (see Chapter 8 below). The local indicator for this is statements such as a man from clan X saying that he calls the men of clan Y "half of them my uncles (MB) and half my waya (WB)". At the clan level where generation merging can occur, these male relatives of one's potential wives can be called garndingi. As we will see below, the sibling pair of maternal relatives (M and MB) is also presented in the body-image at the same location, the buttocks, indicating an eclipsing of the otherwise crucial difference between cross-sex and same-sex sibling relationships.

The important distinction which Rumsey and Scheffler discerned in the separation of the B and Z pair ngaji and garndingi is the tension of cross-sex sibling differentiation. This differentiation is always on the point of collapse because at some important levels these categories are not differentiated, a fact which is reflected in the gender-neutral term, mamingi. I will discuss some similar features in my treatment of the gaja (MM)/rambarr (WM) nexus below. With respect to this latter issue, my data seem to be in inconsistent with Rumsey's when he states that the "mother's mother's line does indeed get classified in a generation-merging way, regardless of context" (1981:189). My data show, contra Elkin and Scheffler, that the alternate generations in the mother's mother's line are highly differentiated (pp.95 below), again as a result of the separation instituted at the level of the cross-sex sibling pair, in this case MMB and MM, the latter member of the pair giving birth to the mother (the most affectionate of relationships) and the former producing the wife's mother (the most distant of all relationships). Local expressions such as "that mob gayingi for me, rambarr" point to this contextually based conflation of generation levels in the MM line. This example may shed some further light upon Lucich's listing of "two separate subsystems of affinal terminology" (Scheffler 1978:541) which Scheffler claimed was unjustified because the alternative forms given by Lucich must only represent "alternative designations for a person who happens to be related to ego in that way"
(ibid.). I believe that more than happenstance is at work here. While it seems to be true that Ngarinyin people do not themselves express marriage prescription in terms of the wife being a MMBDD, they do, as the example I show below, recognise that the offspring of the cross-sex sibling pair in a clan in the MM category also provides a man's wife's mother. If this is the case, the Ngarinyin system of marriage betrothal is assimilable to the Aranda type in which "it is the mother's mother's brother who gives his daughter to be a mother-in-law for his sister's son" (Radcliffe-Brown 1930-1: 450-1). The two discernable modalities of kinship classification here involve an oscillation between what Weiner, following Wagner, called "tropes of collectivization" and "tropes of differentiation" in which "the collectivising trope is a label for a certain moment in the perception of meaning rather than a tool for the building of normative orders" (Weiner 1995:52). 46

In order to follow the arguments which are put forth below on the nature of Ngarinyin kin relationships, it is now appropriate to reproduce a chart of all the kinship terms. This chart is taken from Elkin (1964:81). Throughout this chapter, I shall note additional or conflicting information which has been gathered in the course of my research.

46 Morton has noted that as a general cosmological principle in Aboriginal societies "[P]eople who are distinct and opposed (such as spouses, or clans of different moieties) cannot cohere or lose identity, but must nevertheless associate in mutuality" (1985:159).
Diagram 2. Elkin’s Ngarinyin kinship table (1964:80)

Each of the kin terms listed here, as Rumsey has noted, are from the point of view of a first person singular propositus and thus constitute “ego-centric” as opposed to “alter centric” terms of reference (Merlan 1982:125–6). Each of the terms forms the basis of terms of reference between dyadic pairs of kin. While every kin term applies equally to a group of classificatory relatives, these groups are formed around a focal member of the group and the affective values of this relationship are extended in a gradated manner so that someone of the *gaja* category, a mother’s mother’s sister, will often be treated and felt about in a very similar way, but probably not identically, to one’s actual mother’s mother. There are as many types of dyadic relationships as there are categories of kin and these mutual forms of regard compose the set of a person’s social identity. Marilyn Strathern’s use of a notion of sociality (amongst certain
Melanesian societies) constituted in and through "dividuals" is pertinent to the Ngarinyin case. She writes that Melanesian kinship delineate[s] the impact which interaction has on the inner person. The body’s features are a register, a site of that interaction. Consequently, what is drawn out of the person are the social relationships of which it is composed: *it is a microcosm of relations* (1988:131, italics in original).

That such a constitution of the person is also indicated in the Ngarinyin case is made most clear in the Ngarinyin notion of *lunggun* (or *dambaj ngama*, “I twitch”), almost imperceptible pulses or flutterings in various muscle groups corresponding to a crypto-sensory contact with a codified order of relatives. These muscle twitchings are widely experienced and readily interpreted by older Ngarinyin people as the appearance in their own bodies of a signal that a particular relative is either in trouble or coming to visit. The same sites on the body are used in Ngarinyin sign language to communicate in socially difficult circumstances (cf. Warner 1958:515 where many of the body sites are associated with the same kin relationship as in Ngarinyin sign language; Kendon 1988). The correlation of muscle spasms in body parts to kin groups is as follows [V.3: 4]:

| ngamun   | breast       | marlangi   | nephew (ZS) |
| emandi   | shoulder     | idja       | son/father  |
| mandu    | stomach      | marlangi   | woman’s child |
| oyen.gu  | calf         | abi        | brother/Z/FF |
| alanggu  | knee         | gavingi    | mother’s mother |
|          |              |            | MMB/ZDS/ZDD |

| malanban | armpit       | rambarr    | wife’s mother |
| wambur   | back         | “          | “            |
| amala    | buttocks     | ngadji     | mother/mother’s brother |
| umbarran | hip          | marringi/gurndi/wuningi | wife/wife’s brother/ husband/ sister’s husband |

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47 The term comes from Marriott (1976) and refers to the notion that "persons—single actors—are not thought in South Asia to be ‘individual’, that is, indivisible, bounded units, as they are in much of Western social and psychological theory as well as in common sense. Instead it appears that persons are generally thought by South Asians to be ‘dividual’ or divisible. To exist, dividual persons absorb heterogeneous material influences. They must also give out from themselves particles of their own coded substances—essences, residues, or other active influences—that they then reproduce in others something of the nature of the persons in whom they have originated" (cited in Strathern, 1988:348n).
These sites of embodiment of kin relatedness operate in two distinct modalities. In the case of muscle flutterings, they operate as *internal* signs for the consciousness of the perceiver, whose body must then be interpreted as a container of his diverse and composite social relationships, all of which are spatially distributed in relation to each other throughout his/her body. It would seem to be the case, then, that these muscle flutterings are always interpreted through what it is tempting to call an “ego-centric” modality. However, a closer scrutiny of the kin terms above and what they denote, immediately alerts us to the fact that the “ego” in this lifeworld is not isomorphic with Euro-centric notions of the ego which equate it with a bounded notion of the autonomous individual, quite contrary to the specifically “dividual” idea of personhood with which I began this chapter. It was Freud who first pointed out that “the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface” (1960: 16). Here, the “surface” is the skin and the muscles lying just below it. In this case of muscle twitchings, I am referring to the way in which the signals are projected *into* the body. This is particularly evident in the self-reciprocal terms such as *idja* (“my father/my son”) and *rambarr* or *wolmingi* (“wife’s mother/daughter’s husband”). When a man experiences, for example, a muscle flutter in his shoulder, he is simultaneously experiencing a bodily sensation in that part of the body where his father carried him as a child (in which case we should say that the experience is alter- rather than ego-centric). However, the shoulder is also the part of his own body where he might carry his own son, *who is also his own father* (of which we can then accurately say that the experience is “ego-centric”). It would be more accurate then to call muscle twitchings *centripetal* rather than alter- or ego-centric, since they consistently operate as received signals for the multiply constituted subject. Analogous to the findings of Strathern but from another angle, Schilder’s research into the body image has alerted us to the fact that

a body image is in some way always the sum of the body-images of the community according to the various relations in the community.....There is a social image of the body. These processes between individuals may make them in parts identical. But they are still processes between individuals. When an individual has socialized his postural image it still remains his postural image. There does not exist a postural image of the community, or a ‘WE’ “

(1964:302).
In the case of Ngarinyin sign language the same body sites operate as *external* signs to be communicated to another, whom in turn must be perceived as also containing this composite kin identity, albeit in regard to another group of people filling those same kinship “slots”. Sign language, then, uses these body sites in a way that could not exactly be described as an alter-centric usage, since they may refer to the relative of the signer as much as to the relative of one signed to (cf. Merlan 1982). Maintaining a consistency of terminology requires that body signing be described as centrifugal; emanating from the body of the signer. It is also the case in spoken communications to or about kin, so that when a person says, for example, that “abi is sick” the *abi* (brother) is most often assumed to be the brother of the person being addressed unless specifically stated otherwise by a possessive pronominal suffix such as is the case in discourse conducted fully in Ungarinyin (cf. Rumsey 1982:46). In this centrifugal communication, the body of the communicator is used to make the relationships of the other visible, and is thus construed as being contained within the other’s frame of reference, a mirror for his or her body. In this sense the Ngarinyin kinship system is similar to that of the Mungin (Yolngu) of which Warner commented that

> the whole kinship system...is made up of fundamental kinship reciprocals, such as brother and sister, father and son, maternal uncles and sister’s son. Every individual term represents a complex nexus of social behavior which creates a well-defined social personality (1958:60).

All adults and even quite young children are normally addressed by the relevant kin term. Sometimes this is followed by their surname, first name or a nickname in order to make clear which person is being referred to. Thus constructions such as Uncle (MB) Ninja, Aunty (FZ) Daisy, Gaja (MM) Mildred or Mum (M, MZ, mSW) Jessie. If the context is clear enough nothing other than the kin term will be employed. Children are chastised for using someone’s name without the accompanying kin term and it is assumed that adults know better and would seldom break such etiquette.
3.2 Kinship Dyads

Below I list the most focal of the reciprocal pairs of terms of the Ngarinyin kinship system\(^48\) and a brief description of the affective values attaching to each of the paired categories of kin. In following this schema, which is modeled upon Warner’s (1958:60-74), I nonetheless remain mindful of Merlan’s useful comment that the larger social field encompassing such dyads is itself organised around more “general ‘types’ of dimensions in social relationship, one characterised by the conjunction of familiarity/demand, the other by distance/obligation” (1997:115).

**CAPITALISED = VOCATIVE CASE (i.e. form of direct address)**

**Lower case = first person singular propositus**

ngolingi NGOLA – margingi MARGA

\((B^+, FF, FFB)\) – \((B^-, wZ^-, SS)\)

- ABI\(^49\) \((B, Z, FF, FFB)\)
- lalingi, LALA \((Z, FFZ, SSZ)\)

The relationship of a man or woman to a FF(B) is expressed ego’s “older brother”, ngolingi just as the actual eB relationship is expressed. The younger brother/older brother relationship, though essentially one of equivalence in that there is no fixed hierarchical qualities to the relationship, is nevertheless tinged with the pervasive senior/junior dichotomy which is much more apparent and formalised between adjacent generations. There is a strong expectation that an older brother will “look out for” the junior sibling and take up his battles regardless of the merits of the case. An attitude of tolerance towards the junior’s foibles is clearly expected. Ngarinyin boys, including right through adolescence, delight in carrying around baby siblings, showing a strongly nurturant interest in them, rather than the shame which attaches to such things among most Anglo-Australian boys. As the younger sibling grows up he is expected to show a certain deference to his older brother, who may hit him as a last

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\(^48\) Most of these terms are applicable to both genders but some are from the point of view of a male EGO only. Most terms can be used in a reciprocal way; e.g. both father and son can address each other as irra.

\(^49\) This was originally a Worrora term for eB but now has widespread currency amongst Ngarinyin people-designating B in general. Rumsey notes (pers. com. 2001) that it was only beginning to come into use among younger Ngarinyin people in the mid-1970s when he did his first fieldwork.
resort but generally avoids such extreme action. For opposite sex classificatory siblings of the alternate generation type, a relationship of avoidance comes into being from quite a young age just as it does with all of a girl’s actual or classificatory same-generation brothers. A woman’s relationship to a classificatory FFZ, whose name she may bear, is the equivalent of her brother’s relationship of consubstantiality to one particular classificatory FF. This consubstantial relationship is expressed particularly vividly in mythic terms when a person speaks of their wanjina, usually identified through this relationship, in the first person (cf. Munn 1970:146). The relationship of brothers has also been important until the recent past for the transmission of widows to a younger actual or classificatory brother. The social equivalence of brothers (and their classificatory equivalents in alternate generations) is particularly marked in funeral ceremonies where the deceased’s abi should not attend since he is regarded as mayngarri (literally “one who goes without [food]”) as a result of his being “too close up” to the dead man and thus likely to cause pain to the other relatives. At the end of funeral ceremonies when others are enjoying a communal meal, the brother has to eat in his own space from a separate cache of food.

idja, IRRA – idja, IRRA
(self-reciprocal term for F,S, FB, BS, MBDH, WZS)

The mirroring of kin relationships is highly pronounced at the kin juncture where ego is the prism through which his father and his son, categorically identical personages in the local kin system, are reproduced. The relationship of F to S is, strictly speaking, the first intersubjective encounter since the act of conception is believed to be accomplished by the father “finding” his son or daughter in a dream (see Chapter 4) before the child essence is transmitted to the mother. The father/son relationship is thus based upon reciprocity, since each continues to serially reproduce the other.

amalngi, AMALA - amalngi, AMALA
(FZ, BD, WZD)- (BD, mD)
This relationship is based upon an equivalence between a man and his sister (in relation to his children), who thus transform a lateral relationship characterised by avoidance into a lineal one marked by a somewhat reserved affection. In most respects a person’s relationship to a father’s sister is similar to that pertaining between a person and their father and his brothers. A woman calls her brother’s daughter and son by the same terms as her brother does. A man’s children are able to relate freely to and move about within the domestic domain of their father’s sister. The strong patrilocal links inherent to this relationship mean that a woman displays a strong and affectionate interest in her brother’s children (cf. also Warner, 1958:73). This relationship is glossed as “aunt” in Aboriginal English. Amalngi attend quite prominently at their brother’s sons’ and brother’s daughter’s sons initiation ceremonies. This role seemed to be enhanced if her brother has already died.

rambarr, wolmingi – rambarr/wolmingi
(self-reciprocal; WM, WMB, WMF, WFM, wDH, wDHB)

This relationship is characterised by strong avoidance (cf. also Hiatt 1984 and Warner 1958:132,101-102), though varying degrees of avoidance exist according to how “close up” or “far off” the affinal relationship is. As Schilder has noted, “[r]elations to the body-images of others are determined by the factor of nearness and farness and by the factor of emotional nearness and farness” (1964:302).

A man and his actual wife’s mother should not usually approach within about twenty meters of each other. Nor should they look directly at each other or address each other directly or call each other’s names. In camp, implements which have been used by one, such as a cup, should never be used knowingly by the other and anger will ensue if one finds that one has been passed something contaminated in this way. In travelling it is permissible for one to ride up front and the other in the back of a vehicle as long as the two don’t have to touch in order to position themselves within it (cf. Merlan 1997). People entering a public gathering will first of all scan the gathering for the presence of rambarr and then either surreptitiously divert along another track or position themselves behind other relatives facing away from their rambarr. In doing so, they are utilising other relatives as a “bough screen”, which is one of the alternative senses of this polysemous word. Older people with poor eyesight will ask a younger person “Who there? Any rambarr?”. Some older people
will refuse to attend meetings at which a *rambarr* is likely to be present. Some kind of screening is necessary if both parties are required to be present. Persons who might, in a state of intoxication for example, transgress the avoidance rules are bitterly chastised for their lack of "shame" and sometimes threatened with physical attack. I will return to the theme of the nature of *rambarr* relationships at some length at the end of this section as it illuminates some very distinctive features of Ngarinyin kinship. The nature of these relationships is also centrally implicated in the mythic materials discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

Marringi, MAGA - Wuningi, GURNDI
(BW, FM, W, WBD) - (H, ZH, FZH, mDH)

Wardu (ZH, DH; probably an exogenous term which has entered the language as a lingua franca term).

The wife-husband relationship is expected to be a hierarchical one intermingled with deep affection. The authority of the husband is often emphasised but his deep dependency upon his wife is also recognised. The wife is expected to cook, clean and do most of the child-care duties. A husband seems to be regarded as within his rights to beat his wife if she fails to fulfill these duties or is perceived to be making the husband jealous by looking at another man or talking to him publicly when her husband is absent. "Jealousing" seems to be the most common cause of physical fights between husband and wife and between a man’s wife and other women. Husband and wife retain quite distinct socio-centric identities and a woman does not cease to be regarded as an heir to her father’s country once she is married.

It was said, for example, that the sisters belonging to Manyarrngarri, a clan country to the north east of Dodnun, should "follow Barurrungarri", an adjacent same moiety clan, in the assertion of rights over country. Because there were no senior Manyarrngarri males living in the region, it was asserted that the young Manyarrngarri women should work as a single unit with the males of neighbouring same moiety clan whom they call "brother and father". It was never assumed that these young women would remain only as a kind of "women’s auxiliary" for their husband’s land holding group. These girls’ mother (their fathers were deceased) would strongly assert her daughter’s rights and interests in Manyarrngarri country and there was no question of these interests being overshadowed in any way by their husbands'
land interests in the Mejerrin area. In this regard, a woman's rights to her father's land were expressed as being quite independent of her marital status.

There is quite a degree of independence in a woman's movements as she will often choose to visit her mother, the husband's *rambarr*, especially if there are young children from the marriage. She often seems to make these visits alone while her husband is engaged in stockwork or spending time with same-sex age-mates. While visiting them she re-enters the natal family with an elevated status in comparison to the one she had before she married, and often receives assistance from her mother in looking after the young children.

The desire of men to return to the group of same-sex age-mates appears to be strong and older people will remark upon the necessity of newly married couples moving off to a camp of their own for a time while the husband becomes used to his new social role. This period of separation is intended to refashion the bonds of affection between young men into strong bonds between husband and wife. The young married man's cohorts, with whom he may have spent the previous ten or twelve years living in one sort of "single men's camp" or another (ranging from jail to stock camps), are discouraged from interfering in this process.

Wayingi, WAYA — wuningi, GURNDI
(WF, WB, FMB, WBS) — (DH, DHZ, ZH, ZHZ)

This is a relationship characterised by the service made by the son-in-law to the father-in-law\(^{50}\), and to a lesser extent to the brother-in-law, in return for providing him with a wife. The dynamics of this relationship, founded in the process of being promised a wife by his father-in-law, are entrenched in the course of *Walungarri* initiation ceremonies where the brother-in-law plays the role of "nurse" to the neophyte, caring for him, feeding him and calming his fears in a similar way that his wife will be expected to do later in life. Indeed, there seems to have been in the past a possibility for the brother-in-law to serve as a substitute sexual partner until his sister came of age\(^{51}\). At a critical juncture in the *Walungarri* ceremonies the brother-in-law

\(^{50}\) Rumsey noted that Waya was being glossed as "boss" by Ngarinyin people in the 1970s (1982:47).

\(^{51}\) Devereux argued that all kinship systems, based as they are on the exchange of women with the effect of obviating incest, display "the close relationship between the barter of women and the latent homosexual urges of the men who exchange them" (1978:208).
metaphorically gives birth to the “new man” whom will potentially be his sister’s husband.

Ngadji, NGARRA - Marlangi, MARLA
(M, MZ, mSW) - (wC, wDc, ZC)
-Waragu (probably exogenous origin but with same referents).

The mother-child relationship is founded upon notions and practices of “feeding on demand” and constant touching, holding and carrying. The child will often be addressed as “Mum” indicating the degree of reciprocity in this relationship of oscillating identity. As the mother ages there is a strong expectation that her children will provide meat for her and arrange for her transportation to visit relatives in neighbouring communities.

The senior woman, M.M., for example, expects and receives meat, and the provision of firewood, from her deceased sister’s sons, D.T and R.T, themselves both senior men, one of whom lives in the same settlement. The other, younger brother, arrives in his community vehicle whenever there has been a bullock killed and gives her a slab of the butchered meat. This is another source of social anchoring for her in this community which complements her status as one of the retired workers from the station. She is also actively participating in attempts to secure a land base for her sons back in their father’s country. If these attempts are ultimately successful she has indicated her desire to “follow” her son, D., to live in a new settlement in his country. D. for his part is apparently comfortable visiting his “mother” in her camp and helping himself to food and small items like cassette tapes which he “borrows” for months on end, barely heedful of the string of half-hearted complaints of M.

Amongst the older generation of present day Ngarinyin, there are many who have been suckled and raised by their mother’s younger sisters if the birth mother became ill or died. Both women are strongly claimed as “mother” in such circumstances. Sometimes there is a persistent sibling rivalry observable amongst children of two sisters who have both suckled from “one nyamana (endearment term for breast)” or “one ngamun (breast)”. While mothers frequently threaten to smack annoying children this is seldom followed up by actual physical punishment, at least partly because others would remonstrate with the mother for “make em kid cry, poor fella”.
While there is marked preference for male children among all Ngarinyin people\(^{52}\) (cf. Warner 1958:96), daughters are regarded as a good companion to mothers who will continue to share the same social space and assist each other in domestic chores for many years.

Garndingi GARNDL/ "uncle" - Marlangi, MALA
(MB, ZS)
- (mDC, mZC)
-Waragu (probably exogenous origin but with same referents).

Although there are distinct terms available for this garndingi MB/ marlangi ZS dyad, the general practice is to treat the terms as being reciprocal at least in the vocative case (garndi). The MB relationship is one in which the exercise of authority, which is inhibited in the mother by the presence of the father, finds a political/culturally approved expression. The MB is probably the strongest socialising influence upon the developing child.

It is worth noting here, in advance of the discussion of marriage relationships (Chapter 4), that the MB/ZS relationship is also the relationship, for male ego, of his father’s, waya, WB (WF). While this may appear too obvious to be worth pointing out, it in fact has some quite profound consequences on the tenor of the relationship between MB/ZS. Each male ego’s F is obliged to render ongoing services to his wife’s (ego’s M) brother and father (and mother) in return for the promised wife, and the children which she produces. The F’s waya (ego’s MB), then, comes to see his ZS as a product of this rendered service, someone who must be nurtured and socialised into male society by his actions. This is made most explicit in the fact that a man’s WB is the one who will “nurse” his brother-in-law through male initiation ceremonies, creating the future possibility of him having sons of his own whom the WB will also nurture as his ZS. Furthermore his ZS’s son, like his ZH (given the identity of FF/SS), will also be his wunungi (or gurndi), a man to whom he may give a wife (his Z or D), in which case there is an ongoing cycle of reciprocal obligation between adjacent generations of kinsmen. A man’s ZS thus embodies a form of “abiding obligation”, generating the potential “shame” of failure to meet expectations,

\(^{52}\) When my own first child was born a girl I was somewhat deflated to hear many Ngarinyin people commented to the effect that “Oh she so fat ...good enough to be a boy...next time might be better (fn. Continues o.p.)
which gives added impetus to the marked avoidance relationships between B and Z (see below). This need to live up to expectations is what Merlan (1997:119-120) identified as being characteristic of the abiding obligation-cum-avoidance in the mother-in-law/son-in-law relationship across Aboriginal Australia. This necessarily rather circuitous route has taken us back to the identity, as far as male ego is concerned, of his mother and his mother’s brother, both relationships in which nurturance and expectation are focal.

Mamingi, BABA, “grandpa” – marlangi/marningi\(^53\), BABA, “grandkid”

\[(MF, MFZ, MBc) \rightarrow (mDc, FZc, wBDc)\]

This relationship draws upon the nurturant qualities of all matrilineal relationships and elicits “open liyan”, an open heartedness and uncalculating generalised exchange of small presents, foodstuffs, and minor services to each other, though somewhat conditioned by the actual age difference which demands a certain amount of deference from the younger member of the dyad. As Rumsey (1981) has pointed out, the terms for MB and MF are distinguished in interpersonal contexts but may be conflated in clan contexts when both groups of relatives might be referred to as “uncle” or “mother” (cf. Elkin 1964:79).

Gayangi, GAJA, “granny” – gayangi, GAJA

\[(MM, MMB) \rightarrow (wDD, ZDC, MBSW, MBW, WMM)\]

The gaja relationship is one of the freest of all social relationships, particularly between same-sex relatives in this relationship type (e.g. MMB-ZDS). This variant is a typical instance of the well known anthropological category of “joking relationships” (cf. Thomson 1935, 1949:55 and Warner 1958:75,307) in which both parties are at liberty to tease, speak of sexual matters and generally impinge upon the other’s dignity\(^54\). In addition to the fact that this joking relationship is most

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\(^{53}\) Elkin noted only marlangi as being the reciprocal term for mamingi. Both now seem to be used but with a tendency towards use of self-reciprocal vocative form BABA.

\(^{54}\) “The ‘joking relationship’, which serves to stress and to give point and contrast to, the behaviour between relatives in which the pattern is very restrained and austere, often takes the form of organised license with exchange of obscene jokes and taunts which under other circumstances would inevitably (fn. Continues o.p.)
pronounced between the same-sex relatives of this type, Merlan (1997) has pointed out that a free referencing of sexual matters between those in this relationship type is most pronounced between those who are more distantly related. Those who are closely related in this way, actual MMB and ZDS for example, tend to relate to each other through “a more sedate relation of mutual concern” (1997:268 fn.) or as Thomson puts it in the Arnhem Land case, “great circumspection and austerity” (1949:55). For Ngarinyin people, both mutual concern and an animated sociality are involved in the strong recognition of rights in land and resources belonging to the gaja, including country.

For example, an older man admired a new penknife belonging to his only slightly younger gayingi, (classificatory ZDS). When no offer of being given it was forthcoming, he asked for it outright, leaving open the possibility of an oblique refusal by his light and jocular manner, a feature of this relationship type. The one being asked put his head down and mumbled “Alright, but with long way liyan”. The other man dropped the subject immediately and no transmission took place. There was no visible resentment on the part of the person refused but the one who had been asked later expressed regret that he had pulled out the knife in company and thus had to go through the ritual of making light of the fact that he had had to make a painful refusal and nearly lost his new knife. This is an instance in which, as Weiner succinctly puts it, “convention becomes apprehendable as a felt resistance to the improvisatory and particularistic actions of individuals that are opposed to it” (1988:8).

Men and women often make a point of their right to utilise their “granny country”, consistent with the MMB patriline being one of the four lines of descent constitutive of the Ngarinyin person (cf. Elkin 1964:81). The MMB dambun (patrifilial country) is one of those to which a person is regarded as enjoying use rights in, the others being; father’s country, wife’s country, and mother’s country. In the contemporary situation children tend to spend considerable amounts of time visiting with and camping for long periods in a MM’s household.

3.3 Performative Use of Kinship Terms

lead to a fight, is a feature of the social organisation in many parts of Australia...” (Thomson, 1949:55).
The use of the *gaja* term demonstrates in a particularly vivid way the fact that there is some leeway available to those constrained by categorical relationships (cf. Rumsey 1981:191). In this section I contrast the use of *gaja* in relation to *rambarr/wolmingi*. Those who have a pressing need to conduct a less restricted social interaction negotiate within these categorical kin terms. Two older men, M.D. and L.G, for instance, were principals of the local Land Council and needed to occupy the same social space nearly every day. In order to facilitate this they were able to employ an ambiguity within the Ngarinyin kinship system which allowed them to call each other *gaja* (MM) rather than *rambarr* (WMB). As I have shown above, these relationship types are diametrically opposed in that the *rambarr* is an avoidance relationship founded upon asymmetry and *gaja* (see below) is an openly affectionate relationship based upon equivalence as long as there is a degree of genealogical distancing. The ambiguity in the kinship system which these men exploited is neatly illustrative of one of the distinctive features of this kinship system and here I will address it in some detail since it has considerable bearing upon the analysis of the mythic materials presented in Chapters 8 and 9. Elkin pointed out that the Ngarinyin kinship system applies the same term to people of succeeding generations, whereas no other types do this; in them the same term sometimes appears in alternate generations (being used reciprocally) but not here... What it is concerned with is the relationship of local clans or groups to one another (1964:79).

As I will show in the following chapter, the Ngarinyin system of marriage bestowal, expressing a preference for patrilateral cousin marriage, is further refined or restricted by the relationships between clans. While from a genealogical point of view a man should marry a woman who is a classificatory “father’s mother”, each clan is in fact linked to two other, usually close by or adjacent clans, to which the men of a clan take wives in alternating generations (cf. Blundell and Layton 1978). Because of the indirect nature of Ngarinyin marriage exchanges, the men of that clan then bestow their sisters and daughters on two other clans in succeeding generations. Thus a man’s preferred marriage partner is not a classificatory FM from any clan but from one specified one, and he will consequently call all the women of that clan

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55 Rumsey noted that this context conditioning meant that “the class to which certain kinds of kin are assigned vary depending upon nature of the relationship, actual or intended, between ego and alter, or (fn. Continues o.p.)
MARRA/marringi (sister-in-law = potential wife). This results in a further structuring of relationships with all other clans, especially those whom the men of a clan will call wife’s mother and mother’s mother.

Importantly, a man’s mother’s mother’s clan (i.e. his MM/MFW clan, see Chapter 4 for the discussion of clans) also provides his rambarr (i.e. his WM/WFW) but in alternate generations. In interpersonal contexts (cf. Rumsey 1981 for a similar treatment of the case of MB) a man would call his WM(B) rambarr but his FWM(B) gaja, MM. Only a difference in one generation level distinguishes a man’s MM from his WM, two women from the same clan who in turn would call each other amala, “father’s sister”/“woman’s brother’s child”. However, as noted briefly above, Ngarinyin people often refer to the members of one clan by a single term. Radcliffe-Brown noted in 1931 that “this tendency has...been given free play and has in a certain sense overcome the division into generations which elsewhere is so important” (cited in Scheffler 1978:386). Scheffler went on to show how this principle of generation merging makes the Ngarinyin kinship system structurally similar to systems of the so-called Omaha type. Its most distinctive structural principle is the covert structural equivalence of a woman’s brother with her father and, conversely, of a man’s sister with his daughter (1978:387).

As a result of this feature, it is possible to select the least restricted form of relationship from the two alternative relationship terms and still be seen to be abiding by kinship protocols. This is exactly the strategy being employed by the two senior consociates in the scenario above. They were members of adjacent clans of the Wodoy moiety (see Chapter 4 below), Brrejalngga and Brrejirad, and both would say that “proper way we call one another rambarr but now we call gaja lang us”. Brrejalngga clan provided women to “top” Warrgalingongo clan as wives which in turn provided women to Brrejirad as wives. Thus Brrejirad men of one generation got their mothers from Warrgalingongo and their mother’s mothers from Brrejalngga. Brrejirad men of the same generation got their wives from Brrewanggudu and their wives’ mothers from Brrejalngga. Thus the Brrejirad man, M.D. should by rights have called L.G. of the Brrejalngga clan a wife’s mother’s brother (in the sense that he did get an actual wife from Brrewanggudu and his wife’s mother from Brrejalngga clan)

between a pair of linking relatives” (1981:191).
but by mutual agreement they chose instead to “run ‘em ‘nother way” and calculate
the relationship as mother’s mother since this category of relatives came from the
same clan. I illustrate the dynamics of this relationship in the diagram below (Fig.2). It
can be seen here that M.D. actually married a woman he would previously have called
ngadji (M) since Brrejirad clansmen of his generation would preferentially marry
women from the Warrgalingongo clan (see my discussion of the importance of clans
to prescriptive marriage in Chapter 4). This was not unusual, as Scheffler cites Elkin’s
fieldnotes from Walcott Inlet in 1928 recording “two instances of marriage to
classificatory ‘mother’ (where WMF was ‘mother’s mother’s brother’, also ‘wife’s
mother’s brother’, and the two WMMs ‘father’s mother’ and ‘mother’” (1978:414).
From such “extra-legal” instances of men marrying women “to whom they have no
rightful claim” (ibid.414), Scheffler draws the conclusion that “regardless of the
premarital status of a man’s wife, once she is betrothed or married to him he may
designate her as marringi (FM), her father as waiingi (FMB), and her mother as
Fig. 2. A kinship nexus in which generation merging within clans allows the possibility of using the non-restrictive gaja term of address rather than the highly restricted rambarr term.

The white elliptical shapes are clan groups.

The shaded elliptical shapes are women of the clan promised in marriage, with the direction of the promise indicated by the spike emerging from the elliptoids.

The lower case letters represent what ego calls his relatives.

**The upper case letters represent what ego’s F calls these same people.**

The scenario of “avoidance of avoidance” through selection from dual possibilities is indicative of how the Ngarinyin kinship system can be used to create relationships of equivalence or difference through expanding or conflating kinship nodes in which dual qualities are present. It can be seen from the Ngarinyin kinship chart (pp. 96 above), for example, that a man’s rambarr and his mother are both daughters of a pair of classificatory or actual brothers and sisters. The rambarr is the daughter of the MMB and the mother, perforce, is the daughter of the MM. Thus the splitting off of a brother and sister dyad at the MM generational level, that is to say the splitting off of beings categorically unified at the clan level but made distinct through the application of kinship ascription, spirals outwards through their respective marriages to produce
two even more distinct social personages; a man’s wife and his mother who are markedly different at least in their sexual role vis à vis a male ego. These distinct personages, W and M, will, nonetheless, maintain certain unifying features from male ego’s point of view such as providing reciprocal (but probably not equal) physical and emotional nurturance. For men in the reciprocal relationship of father/son the reciprocity extends to all their relationships to women. Thus a man’s wife is his father’s mother and the father’s wife is that man’s mother. They “provide” mothers for each other by securing wives and thus embody a relationship of alternating disequilibrium (see also Chapter 4. for a discussion of a similar relationship between moieties).

The permutation of relationships originating at the level at which the brother and sister pair MM and MMB is split\(^{56}\) can be expressed as the homology:

\[
\text{rambarr} : \text{M} :: \text{Z} : \text{W}
\]

Here the pair of terms on each side of the double colon contrasts strong avoidance behaviour with nurturance and close sociality. In addition, the terms on the left involve a contrast between same and adjacent generations relative to male ego just as they do on the right. This conclusion is supported by Scheffler’s analysis of Elkin’s notes where Elkin wrote that

\(\text{wolmingi}\) line and clans, who provide WMF, WMB and WM….may also include persons otherwise related as \(\text{ngoligi} [\text{B}], \text{idje} [\text{F}], \text{lalingi} [\text{Z}],\) and \(\text{amalini} [\text{FZ}]\) (cited in Scheffler 1978:406).

Scheffler goes on to say that “a man’s WM \(\text{wolmingi}\) might be ‘otherwise’ (that is, if she were not also his WM or regarded as a potential WM) designated as ‘father’s sister’ or ‘sister’” (ibid: 407). It would seem then that Elkin’s field data, too, contained the possibility of recognising the critical nature of the sibling split in the \(\text{gayingi/wolmingi (rambarr)}\) complex.

In interpersonal contexts, adjacent generation relationships are generally marked by relationships of inequality, in which the senior generation plays out a transforming role of dual authority/nurturance (cf. Myers 1980a: 200). Relationships between same and alternate generation kin, however, are generally characterised by notions of

\(^{56}\)“In a very great number of societies there are consequences, ranging from a mere difference in terminology to a transformation in the whole system of rights and duties, following from the fact that there is or is not a change of sex in passing from the direct line to the collateral” (Levi-Strauss 1969:128, italics in original)
equality or equivalence even though the factor of age difference continues to play a modulating role. In inter-clan relationships, as I will elaborate further below, such generational/power differences are often collapsed.

To summarise the above: only the difference in a generation level transforms, as we have seen, a man’s MM into his rambarr\textsuperscript{57}. One whom I call rambarr (mother-in-law), my father calls gaja (mother’s mother) and vice versa. From ego’s point of view his rambarr’s father is his gaja. Thus the father-son dyad is replicated in the rambarr/gaja dyad, two people who, as I note above, call each other father/man’s child or father’s sister/woman’s brother’s child. This leads us to consider that this generational boundary between father and child may be what constitutes the social “screen” which is rambarr and, further, that it is the reciprocal relationship with the father which determines the position of the “screen” in the social field. The fact that the clan identity can be used to conflate adjacent generations as though they were alternate generations is the hinge upon which the other relationships such as rambarr and gaja can be transformed. In as much as there is a social equivalence accorded to alternate generational dyadic pairs such as MMB/ZDS, FF/SS and FFZ/SSD, the adjacent generation level then operates as a barrier to self-closure, but, importantly, one which can itself be removed at the clan level. Turning again to the image of the knee as an image of the MM relationship, it is now possible to see how it articulates or acts as the hinge for other relationships. The knee simultaneously joins and separates the calf (at which site the sister is represented) and the thigh (at which point the wife, actually brother’s wife, which is to say the same thing, is represented). When the knee is bent, to form an image of the reproductive genital of the mother’s mother on the posterior surface, the two skin surfaces of calf and thigh are joined. The kneecap, in this position, protrudes to produce an image of a child’s head emerging from the loins.

\textsuperscript{57} Wolmingi “might be [a man’s] classificatory ‘mother’s mother’ or sister’s daughter’s daughter” (Scheffler 1978:407).
Schematic representation of locations at which various relatives appear as muscle twitchings.

When we consider that each man is reborn from the thighs of his wife's brother in initiation ceremonies (see Chapter 8) the locating of the imago of wife's brother in the thigh is understandable (cf. Hiatt 1975:158). In the progression from buttocks (M) to hip (W) to thigh (WB) to knee (MM) to calf (Z) there is a progression from emotional closeness to emotional distance in which the greatest degree of transformation or involution of affect takes place at the knee joint. Recalling now that the close MM relationship becomes the very distant and formal WM relationship through a simple shift of one generation up or down, it makes sense that such an involution should occur at the knee, which maintains its ability to reproduce relationships of identity (B) or difference (Z) through its relation of conjunction/disjunction to the calf. Relationships of fusion and fission are simultaneously embodied but the movement of the body makes one or other of the processes focal. The seriation, which is so easily apprehendable through the bifurcation of the legs from the trunk also, allows for a simultaneous presentation in the body-image of notions of symmetry (male ego-B-Z) and difference (male ego-Z).

If my hypothesis is correct that the brother/sister split in the alternate generation level (MMB/MM) creates a wide gulf in the emotional content inherent to the social identities produced in the next generation (WM and M), then we might expect that such a gulf would be intensified in the sibling split at ego's own generation level. This is indeed the case for the relationship between a male ego's son's wife, whom ego
calls mother, and male ego's sister's sons wife whom he calls *marriyangi*, *(ZSW, FFZSW)*\(^{58}\).

This is the relationship characterised by the greatest degree of avoidance, locally described as being "like rambarr" and sharing with it a same moiety affiliation to ego. In a number of instances this relationship was expressed in the alternative reckoning form of gayingi (MM) just as rambarr was sometimes transformed in order to allow interaction between people engaged in a common project which would make it extremely difficult to observe *rambarr* avoidance protocols. Once again this transformation was achieved through a conflation of adjacent generation levels. Ego's MB was able to call his ZS by the same term and thus to call his ZSW *gaja* instead of *marriyangi*.

As I have said, the *gaja* relationship is the positive, uninhibited, aspect of the *rambarr* relationship. Both are same moiety female relations for any male ego, the latter mediated laterally by the wife, the former lineally by the mother. Fliess has shown that in dreams and clinical analysis, the knee, which as we have seen is the bodily site corresponding to this relationship, is an exceedingly common symbol of the reproductive aspect of the female genital (1961:224; 1973:80-82). Fliess was puzzled by this but ascribed it to the position for birthing which, regardless of other ways of comporting the body, requires the knees to be bent\(^{59}\). The gestalt of the knee also, I suggest, articulates in a way which allows it to present a protuberant frontal surface, a "head" of sorts (the "knee cap" as we say) which enlarges when the knee is bent, creating at the back of the knee a fold of flesh like a vagina. Thus the knee "head" (*alanggu*, the Ngarinyin term, is suggestively close to *alanggun*, "head") is emerging from a "vulva", all of which is created from a continuous expanse of skin\(^{60}\). Wagner's analysis of "the third order trope of embodiment" asserts that the figure-ground reversal of head and loins involved in parturition "clinches the expansion into macrocosm [i.e. the sexuality of embodiment]" (1986:139). The presentation of the

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\(^{58}\) Scheffler (1978:389) lists the reciprocal term *marriyangi* only as "HM/wSW". My data indicate that this relationship (HM/wSW) is currently known as *rangan*, which may be a cognate word with *marriyangi*.

\(^{59}\) Fliess points out that the Latin word for knee *genu* "derives from the Greek verb 'to procreate' as in *genesis*, *generation*..." (1961:224).

\(^{60}\) It is possible that the verb, *jurubia*, Ngarinyin for "submerge", is cognate with the word *juruwal*, "knee", an alternative word to *alanggu*. If this is the case Fliess' hypothesis stands in the Ngarinyin case also. More than this, though, the whole dynamic of figure-ground reversals is superbly "articulated" in this body image.
knee in the body-ego allows, in a simple folding of one limb, exactly the kind of figure-ground reversal of childbirth in which

[T]he fact that head belongs to one individual, and the loins belong to another is neither disqualifying nor trivial, since it is the means by which “head” becomes “figure” to the “ground” of the loins, and one individual emerges from another (Wagner, 1986:139).

One’s gaja non-threateningly embodies female reproductive capacity, paradoxically by doubling and thereby relativising (defusing) the significance of the ultimate dependency, the enormous power of the mother imago. Hiatt, speaking of men’s ritual assimilating female generative capacity, noted that “the activation of a symbol in its reproductive capacity entails an ability to control its destructive propensity” (1975:157). One’s own mother’s mother is a woman who is linked to a person as a patrilineally same moiety relative, is the one from whom the power of one’s mother is derived second-hand. The mere fact that this power is mediated in this way serves to lessen it. Now when it is recalled that one of the two bodily sites symbolising the rambarr is the armpit, it is possible to find a further isomorphism with the gaja symbolised by the knee. Both are major sites of bodily articulation. The knee is “positive” in the sense of being forward facing, unconcealed and with a working surface for kneeling on, rubbing things on, rolling hair-belts on, holding children on, and the fulcrum of position in intercourse. It contains its obverse side though, which can be concealing and sweaty. The armpit is “negative” in the sense of being hidden, hairy, full of sweat glands, which emit pungent odours, but is not a “working”, instrumental surface. In this sense, it may be that the hair of the armpit acts like a screen for the soft folds of skin beneath the armpit.

Even though these kinship conundrums are undoubtedly interesting in their own right (cf. Needham 1960) because of the critical light they come to shed upon the whole basis of the classificatory kinship system, I raise them here principally because

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51 A moment’s reflection on the overwhelmingly affectionate way in which the British “queen mum” is regarded as the quintessential granny, almost totally devoid of the ambivalence attaching to her daughter, will demonstrate that psychical configuration is far from absent in Euro-Australian society.

52 In an interesting permutation of the Ngarinyin case, Schebeck (1975:169) found that for Yolngu people the knee is the body site at which the avoidance relationship between mother-in-law/son-in-law is represented. Heath, on the other hand, points to some similar ideas about body presentation for Yolngu when he notes that “some of the texts in Heath (1980) deal with WiMo avoidance and WiMo bestowal, vinipi-miri-ya- ‘to apply armpit sweat (onto body of WiMo) in bestowal ritual’ “ (Heath fn. Continues o.p.)
of their import to the question of mother-in-law and sister avoidance which figure so prominently as themes in the mythic materials presented in Chapter 8. These themes are bound up with my focus upon human agency in the quotidian and cosmological dramas of Ngarinyin sociality. Individual agency is obviously only possible within certain social and cosmological horizons which make alternate possibilities available to the human subject. In the case discussed above, it is the generation-merging nature of clan constitution (see my discussion above) which makes a choice possible at the "kinship nodes" containing dual possibilities. This choice is itself conditioned by the limiting structures of Ngarinyin cosmological beliefs which offer another viewpoint upon the topic of generation merging.

We also know that there is a progressive incorporation of the deceased into the spirit world by the names of the dead generations becoming assimilated to the names of *wanjina* (see Chapter 6; cf. Munn 1970:149-50). The father's father's generational level is recycled backwards and forwards; the son's sons bear their names forward and the father's fathers recursively become part of an eternal generation of *wanjina*. A specific social identity is retained up until the second ascending generation, and is occasionally recoverable from older people for the third, but beyond that the distinction between the world of ancestors and historical personages becomes very unclear. In this respect, the adjacent ascending generation forms the boundary between ego and the incorporative world of the ancestors.

3.4 The Bough Screen as Permeable Generational Barrier

To approach the same *topos* from another direction entirely, there is yet another sense in which the generational level is a locally conceived of as a "screen", *rambarr*. That is in *junba* performances where the bough screen is that behind which the spirit world, the power-laden world of the deceased ancestors, is concealed. The dancers emerging from it are seen as embodiments of these ancestral spirits. These screens are vegetal, moveable and temporary and it is their quite contingent positioning on the dance ground which organises the social and aesthetic space around it between ancestors and the living. The dancers who emerge from behind it are figured as the beings who are able to be summoned by the inter-generational

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1982:54). Morton also mentions Aranda stories in which male ancestors give birth to boys from their armpit (1985:264).
travelling, that is to say time-travelling, barnman ("composer/healer") who thus energises the ground of the living with the "playing" of the dead. Interestingly his powers as a barnman are believed to be able to be strongly enhanced by his pursuit of mural, wrong way liaisons, particularly with his rambarr or a classificatory sister (see Chapter 7). The screening effect is highlighted by the fact that the composer, in his creative dream, cannot at first look directly upon the assembled deceased relations who come out to meet him in Dulugun, the island of the dead. His eyes are downcast and covered by green branches until he recovers from the "shock" and is able to look up and observe the dances performed for him by the dead relatives. The junha are paradigmatically performed just on sunset when the power of the dead becomes visible in the red sky in the west where Dulugun is situated, that is to say in the twilight zone of liminality between day and night. The generational screen in the kinship field (the dance ground where the dramas of human relationship are played out) has similar properties in the sense that it is moveable, i.e. it is relative to the generation of the people who are using it to define their relationships and it can be used, as we have seen above, to conflate (move) generations together for some purposes. The screen as personified in the mother-in-law/son-in-law relationship also has the capacity, as Merlan (1997:108) noted of this relationship type in general, to organise the affectivity of the whole social field around this dyad's interaction or, more accurately their socially highlighted absence of interaction. In junha performances, there is usually a contrasting role played by generational difference; older men and women overwhelmingly tend to be the singers, and the younger men, their children's generation, tend to form the core of the dancers, interspersed with a few older men of the singer's/composer's generation who lead the dancing. The entrance of the dancers as they dance towards the singers from behind the bough screen into the visible arena of the barurrur ("dance ground"), and their retreat behind it at the end of each sequence, is consonant with the emergence of children from the invisible ancestral world where they are identified with the spirits of their FF. They dance out from behind the bough screen towards their fathers and other male relatives first and foremost, and their mothers and other female relatives who sit in a group semi-circling the men. The men's voices, following the ascendant single male voice of the composer, lead the singing, which is then complemented by the chorus of
women\textsuperscript{63}. It is the male’s penetrative singing and \textit{gan.gan}, clapsticks, which elicit the dancers from behind the screen just as it is the hunting of the father which finds his child’s conception spirits. Lommel noted that in Wunambal stories

the first miruru-man [doctor-man] was Walngamari. Walngamari’s father had died….gone to Dulugun [Land of the Dead] and stayed there. \textit{The son longed to see his father and called him incessantly}. So the father came to him in his dream and took his soul along to the realm of the dead (1996:51, my italics).

I present these data about the nature of the finding and performance of \textit{junba} as a diagram of the dance-ground conceptualised as generational space in Fig.4 below:

\footnote{Sally Treloyn (2000) has made an interesting musicological analysis of the interaction of these vocal sequences in terms of the “staining” effect of the main cadences upon the subsequent development of the melody.}
Fig. 4 The Dance Ground as Generational Social Field.

In the diagram above the dancers, embodying spirits of the dead, are represented by the oblong shapes emerging from behind the bough screen onto the dance ground, the elliptical shape at the centre. These dancers, usually belonging to the adjacent descending generation in relation to the singers, are shown as becoming increasingly light as they move into the open dance ground in response to the elicitory calls of the composer who is represented thus:
3.5 Preliminary Conclusion to Chapter 3.

I began this chapter with a discussion of two competing approaches to understanding kinship systems, one privileging ego-centric and other privileging socio-centric categories as primary. I argued that this dichotomy was an epiphenomenon of the fundamental Cartesian tension between society and individual. I then proposed that this dichotomy could be collapsed by taking the embodied human subject as the primary matrix through which infinitely expansive relationships between self and other are constituted. In order to demonstrate how this might be so in the particular lifeworld of Ngarinyin people, I explored the differentiating and collectivising dimensions of particular kinship terms, using as an explanatory base Scheffler and Rumsey’s debate about the way in which superclasses should be drawn.

I went on to discuss the phenomenon of embodied continuity between kin dyads as expressed in muscle twitchings and what this was able to show us not just about affective relationships becoming socially ordered as a set of collective representations but also about the immanence of self in other. This section of the chapter laid out a sketch of the nature of the relationships between each of these kin dyads and gave an instance in which tactical use was made of dual possibilities inherent to one of these dyadic sets, the MM-WMM complex. In the course of the discussion of this subject I extended Rumsey’s re-evaluation of Elkin’s claim of the extent of generation merging in Ngarinyin kinship to show how not only the mother’s agnatic line but also the MM’s agnatic line was not necessarily subject to generation merging.

The question of generation merging was then raised as an aspect of local cosmology which is discernible in performative contexts other than speech situations. I applied the model of generation merging and differentiation to the social field of the dance ground and raised the question of how this implicates the local understanding of how the person is constituted though relationships with mythic ancestors as well as living relatives. In the Chapter 6 I will show how the cosmology of *wanjina* depends upon and elucidates these relationships between the generations. Before this can be accomplished though, it will be necessary to show how the generative model of the person embodied in kinship relations is enlarged into socio-centric groups and the relationships of exchange which animate them.
Chapter 4. Socio-Centric Images of the Person.

4.1. Waya (‘skin’); Moiety: The Person Divided in Anticipation

In the previous chapter I mapped out the major dyads of kinship reckoning and the affective values they imply within the overall schema of a Ngarinyin image of the socialised body. In this section I address the Ngarinyin forms of socio-centric categories which create a “social shorthand” for articulating diverse and differentiating kinship relationships according to concerns which are salient to specific social contexts such as marriage, ceremony and ways of holding rights and interests in country. These indigenous categories were not merely invented to instrumentally serve such functions but emanate from fundamental constitutive embodiments of self vis a vis the other in this particular psycho-physical world.

Ngarinyin society shares with many other Northern Australian Aboriginal societies (cf. Morphy 1991, Warner 1958, Thomson 1949, Tonkinson 1977) a social division of all its members into two complementary, exogamous parts which, following accepted anthropological usage, I will call moieties. This binary division is effected not just on the social world of human beings but on all known things in the universe, imparting a strong sense that everything in that world possesses a social life.

Moieties are the maximal, least bounded categories within this social world. They constitute the largest classes of the classificatory kinship system (cf. Levi-Strauss, 1969: 72; Scheffler 1978:522ff). Language groups are more local, bounded entities which both crosscut and are crosscut by the moieties. Further differentiations such as clan groups (see below) can be collapsed back, for some purposes, into these two social parts.

The residents of Dodnun, for example, often remarked upon the fact that the group of clans clustered around Dodnun and its satellite at Mejerrin belong to the "mamalar" block", i.e. a Jun.gun moiety grouping of contiguous clan countries. Affiliation by moiety to a block of country was an important aspect of an identity which, like clan affiliation, was seldom articulated as an explicit territorial concept but rather as a set of kin terms. In this respect moiety and clan affiliations serve as categories of kin relatedness which provide a shorthand means of referring to a variety of actual and putative relationships. Given that most people at Dodnun were not living
on their own *dambun* (clan country), it is hardly surprising that explicit expression of territoriality was a muted aspect of social life. Rather, people here articulated their sense of relatedness through the constant use of kin terminology and through abiding by the behaviour which was held to be appropriate to those kin categories, most notably the reciprocal kin term categories which belong to a same moiety group of clans: *abi* "brother/father's father/son's son", *idja* "father/son", *amalngi*, "father's sister/man's daughter", *gaja*, "mother's mother/sister's daughter's son" etc. Residents of Dodnan often remarked that Jilindingarri clan country stood out in the geographical vicinity as the only one belonging to the opposite moiety and that the group of clans in the area of Dodnan could operate as "one mob" because of the commonality of the moiety relationship.

The kind of moiety pattern characterising the Ngarinyin social world is widely known in the literature as “indirect matrilineal”, each person being ascribed the opposite moiety to their mother. This is most evident in the occasional cases of a child being from a same moiety union where the principle of “opposite-to-mother” usually supercedes the principle of “same-as-father” for moiety assignment. Thus the social world is conceptualised in terms of “own side” or “own skin” (those who are grouped by filiation with one’s own father, father’s father and their siblings) and “other side” or “other skin” (those who grouped with one’s mother, mother’s father, father’s mother (i.e. classificatory wife) and their siblings).

The two moieties, *ornarr* (bone) and *amalarr* (dust), are identified with groups of (often minimally) contrastive pairs. In the time of my fieldwork (1994-2000), and that of Rumsey (1975-1999), two species of Night-Jar; Wodoy (Spotted Night-Jar) and Jun.gun (Owlet Night-Jar), were the most commonly used totemic species used to represent the moieties. These two species of small night birds are also associated with physiological and behavioural contrasts (cf. Thomson 1949:10fnn.). Wodoy for instance is said to favour open places and to be friendly and outgoing while Jun.gun is said to live in hollows of trees and rocks and to seldom emerge into view. This was certainly my observation. Wodoy was commonly seen on tracks while driving at night and only flew away at the last possible moment. I never saw the Jun.gun bird in my five years of fieldwork.

The other pairs of species which are strongly identified as emblematic of the moieties *ornarr* and *amalarr*, are, respectively, *Guranggali* (Brolga) and *Banarr* (Bush Turkey/Australian Bustard, now currently in most common use in Wunambal
country) and *Walamba* (the Red Plains Kangaroo) and *Yaarra* (the Grey Hill Kangaroo), the latter pair being the terms most often used in Elkin’s time at Walcott Inlet (1928) and during Helmut Petri’s work in 1938 and again in the 1950s.

A comparison of the totemic species’ *modus vivendi* is extended to the human beings who belong to each of the moieties. Wodoy people are commonly said to be taller and leaner (like Brolga compared to Bush Turkey and Red Plains Kangaroo compared to Grey Hill Kangaroo). They are also said to be more beautiful (colourful, particularly showing red-colour, like Brolga and Red Kangaroo), more intelligent and with a more highly developed sense of morality (e.g. the long-term conjugal pairing of the “Native Companion” Brolga compared to the indiscriminate Turkey) than the shorter, stouter, more foolish and morally lax Jun.gun people (cf. also Blundell and Layton, 1978). I naturally wondered whether this impression was being gleaned because my consultants were, at that time, mainly from the Wodoy moiety, as I too was by ascription. While the comparison was certainly highlighted to the advantage of Wodoy people, I found that even Jun.gun people were inclined to amicably accept this judgement as having validity, though more in the sense that these qualities were a shadow cast upon the contemporary world from the ancestral past. One realisation which emerged from this questioning was that although both Wodoy and Jun.gun people were inclined to acknowledge the value judgements inherent in this distinction, they all regarded it as simply a disposition which was inherited from that ancestral past and therefore didn’t serve to accord living Wodoy people any inherent moral or aesthetic superiority over Jun.gun people. As Myers puts it for the Pintupi, “the principles employed by people in the negotiations of daily life have a claim to being outside the creation of the manipulators…” (1986:70).

What came to be (recursively) regarded as the wise and foolish, the lean and stout, the moral and immoral (i.e. after the cosmogonic introduction of such moral relativities) were all seen to play their part in the creation of the world and continued to be necessary to its proper functioning. These qualities of being, while hierarchised in local value judgements, were not seen to offer any rationale for domination of one person over another, but merely expressed the “facticity of human existence as the product of the total cycle of development” (Mimica 1991:50). No one would dream of condemning a Jun.gun person for retaliating to an attack, no matter how “righteous”, by a Wodoy person. Rules of behaviour had no substance without those who broke them. In this regard Mimica has asserted that
rules, like any legal system......are the post factum abstractions and stipulations of an already constituted, lived social and lingual reality. But these rules had no constituting function in the formation and maintenance of that reality (1991:50)

The moiety hero myths move through what Wagner (1981) called "collectivising and differentiating tropes". Such contrasts express not binary oppositions but a variable capacity for expansion and contraction of imagery, in this case of complementarity, into every arena of human life\textsuperscript{64}. The moiety social division itself is also a movement through a collectivising and differentiating process in the sense that every human subject is constituted through difference from the mother's "skin" (the primary relationship against which moiety assignation is determined) and sameness with the father's "skin". The inter-relationship between the two skins constituted a "background" identity of belonging to a society distinguished by having "two skin, not like desert mob, they got big mob skin name". Mothers and children, husbands and wives were social roles which could not be fulfilled without this fundamental complementarity. The hierarchisation of values which attended the moiety relationship is integral to any relationship of complementarity. Merely symmetrical relationships preclude the possibility of elicitation and exercise of initiative in giving and taking which depends upon the existence of a perceived difference in current status. The foundational myths of the society are clustered around this struggle and eventual mediation between the totemic heroes, Wodoy and Jun.gun. Blundell and Layton (1978) assumed that the West Kimberley moiety hero stories represented a conversion "at an ideological level" of the "actual condition of equality" obtaining between the moieties to "one with implications of superiority and inferiority" (1978:241). This assumption\textsuperscript{65} was based upon an etic level of analysis in which exchange of women and resources between moieties, as opposed to the indirect exchanges between clans (see my discussion of clan below), was technically a case of

\textsuperscript{64} "The collectivising trope is a label for a certain moment in the perception of meaning rather than a tool for the building of normative orders" (Weiner,1995:52).

\textsuperscript{65} This argument that the moiety myths represent an ideological conversion of a real relation of equality to one which disguises it as inequality is an unusual instance in which the terms "real equality" and "ideological inequality" reverse the order in which the relationship of power and ideology are usually analysed (for example, Strathern's recapitulation of Josephide's argument that the ideology of reciprocal exchange relations obscures the real inequalities between men and between men and women in the productive enterprise, 1988:146-166;cf. also Hiatt 1967). One would have to wonder what kind of social conditions would encourage the ideological mystification of relations of equality as inequality.
direct reciprocity and therefore “equality”. However, all such exchanges (see my discussion of the wurran below) are made by a subject, or group of subjects, concretely situated in relation to needful and desiring others. Therefore every exchange is made from a position of inequality in terms of the oscillation of desire and possession of the object of desire. The moiety hero figures, Wodoy and Jun.gun, embody the principles of retaliation to attacks upon one’s person and energetic initiative, regardless of how seemingly foolish the enterprise, which was regarded as “proper way” human behaviour. As Myers found in the Western Desert, the defense of one’s autonomy and the rejection of unmediated dependency were seen as crucial social skills if one wasn’t to be regarded as a fairly hopeless sort of human being.

Three of the four main houses (there are several small one person dwellings) at Dodnan settlement had Jun.gun moiety male heads of household and related to each other as classificatory "brother, sister or [father’s] child". The other household head was of the opposite moiety, Wodoy, relating to the others as "in-law" and generally maintaining a social distancing. This man, C., belongs to the distant Liyarr country on the Durack River and is linked into the Dodnun community and Ngoru-ngoru clan primarily because his first wife was O.H.’s sister. Most major disagreements in Dodnun community had a marked tendency to be argued along moiety lines, just as Love had found at Kunmunya (Love 1927-40:36; Tindale 1953-54:79). The exception to this tendency was that the wife of the one Wodoy moiety head of household generally took the side of her husband and daughters. A common response to major disagreement has been for this family to join the wife’s father’s brother’s family (who played a dominant role at the neighbouring station) for several days at a

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66 "The relation between the moieties is never as static nor as reciprocal as one might tend to imagine” (Levi-Strauss 1963:135).
67 Such judgements play a major part in both the condemnation of drinkers by those who have given up or never partaken in drinking alcohol and in the defense which the heavy drinkers themselves mount against these criticisms. “It’s my life,” drinkers will reply to being “growled”. The non-drinkers, or even those who still drink but don’t regard themselves as addicts, will agree “Yes, its your life but not just yours, what about us then? How can we live alongside you like that? Why do we have to bury you? It’s out of order, you should be burying us!” Myers noted that among the Pintupi, young initiated men begin to assert their autonomy as a “negation of being ‘looked after’ by ‘fathers’ or ‘mother’s brothers’” (1980a:209).
68 This is in contradistinction to Warner’s finding that among the Murgin (Yolngu) “intra-moietiy fights are common; in fact more common than warfare with clans of the opposite moiety” (1958:32).
time (cf. Myers 1980b: 316). This dispute resolution process highlighted the role played by closely related same moiety clan-based groups on their home ground. 69

In Ngarinyin myths concerning the moiety heroes, Wodoy and Jun.gun, in the first instance, appear together in the "collectivising mode", as a dioscuric pair in relation to another primordial being, Wibalma, the original creator of sacred boards (mayangarri). Acting in unison, the moiety heroes steal the boards from Wibalma's cave workshop during his absence and make them available to the Ngarinyin clans which establish the wurnan system of ceremonial exchanges (see Chapter 5) in order to pass them around and to prevent any such antisocial accumulation being repeated. This was seen as a social act of justified theft in that people say that it was unconscionable for the "greedy man", Wibalma, to keep all these fertility inducing resources to himself 70. The actions of Wodoy and Jun.gun are hailed as an act of "making culture". Once Wibalma has been dealt with, though, the actions of the moiety heroes become a struggle between themselves, the "differentiating mode", through which other Ngarinyin social institutions, such as moiety exogamy, come into being (see Chapter 5).

Contra Blundell and Layton (1978), the moiety relationship is not a symmetrical or "equal" one, except as perceived through synchronic, structural models. Rather, the locus of need shifts back and forth between the moieties, exchanging the roles of giver and receiver. This situation of exchange is like the New Guinea Highlands one which has been described by Andrew Statherm as one of "alternating disequilibrium" (cited in Merlan and Rumsey 1991:205). Ngarinyin people do speak, in the rare contexts in which a promised wife given from one moiety is acknowledged as being equivalent to another man’s daughter from the opposite moiety, of the system of exchanges from the top down as in the synchronic anthropological model of moieties. Such statements are always made, though, in terms of a complementarity which is necessarily founded in a temporal asymmetry. In order to draw this point out further, it will be necessary here to elaborate on particular expressions and instantiations of the moiety relationship.

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69 Such groupings of contiguous same moiety clans were referred to by Capell (1972:7) as "a commonwealth of clans" and by Warner for the Murngin as "phratries" (1958:34-35, cf. also Thomson, 1949:10).

70 Myers notes that in the Western Desert "to make a sacred board oneself is to assert one’s total autonomy, denying other people’s relationship to oneself and to the object. One should have kunta, that is, ‘shame’ or ‘respect’, for others" (1988:70).
4.1.1 Moiety and the ceremonial use of colour

In body painting for ceremony there is a strong association of the colour red with the Wodoy moiety and white with Jun.gun. It is said that red ochre, *dubulangarri* or *bilj*, is symbolic of blood, fleshy meats and vengeance while white ochre, *ormmol*, is symbolic of appeasement, water and life-giving forces [V.3: 20,21,28,45; V.4: 7]. This is an interesting reversal of the related concepts of Wodoy being the moiety symbolised by *ornarr* (bone, which is white when dry but reddish yellow when only partially clean) and Jun.gun as *amalarr* (dust, which is usually red in this life-world). In this section, I draw out how these seemingly paradoxical images in fact express the quality of interdependence and emergence from a common ground which is critical to the social gestalt of the moiety relationship.

4.1.1.1 White

The sense of white ochre being life-giving as opposed to red’s lethal associations is underscored by the belief that it is actually ancestral body essences, particularly semen, *amurr*, deposited by ancestral beings in the country. In some places, such as at Jiginarun (Barnett Gorge), the ochre is said to have come from *jilai*, the white sinew from a kangaroo. At Saddler’s Springs (Iminji) the ochre is said to have come from where a Rock-Devil (*agula*) defecated, and at the Hann River the white ochre is said to have been made by *Nalada*, a Black-Snake with huge testicles which deposited a trail of “white shit” along the river valley. It was also explained to me that white-ochre body paint can be used to “cool off” a *barmman/composer*, meaning to emotionally settle him to allow him to complete his journey to the spirit world to find new songs. He compared this to the cooling effects of both rain water and the *malara* tree, a white-flowering sweetly perfumed tree, said to be “rain from *wanjina*” [V.2: 101].

The strong association between *ormmol* and water is graphically apparent in the white body mass of *wanjina* paintings identified with *angguban*, the *cumulo nimbus* clouds of the Wet season which appear as towering white structures before they turn into dark rain cloud. This period of rain is followed, in turn, by *juwurri*, the white mists coming out of the still warm rocks. This *juwurri* is said to come from the faeces of white marsupial “mice” which leave “a trail of shit along the country” which gives rise to the steam and thence to the formation of new clouds. A final process in
the repainting of the *wanjina* images, the bestowal of the touch of revitalisation, occurs when the painter sprays a light mixture of *ormmol* and water over the entire rock face. This is the *giyug*, emulating the action of the *wanjina* pouring water down from the skies. This association between *ormmol* and water is strengthened by the fact that *ormmol* is most easily collected towards the end of the Wet season when the banks of the creeks have been gouged away by floodwaters, revealing seams of the ochre in the surrounding clay beds. At this time of year the water-saturated ochre is stunningly bright and greasy to the touch and is easily scooped out with the fingers. Later on, during the dry months, deposits of the ochre can be found in smaller balls near where these seams were once visible. The two salient qualities, then, which are admired in good *ormmol* are purity of colour (i.e. whiteness), and greasiness, which makes it easy to apply as a strong paste to the body. This greasiness is itself a function of how well it holds water without drying out. Any admixture of *galji*, the greenish grey and off-white clay in which the pure white huntite seams appear, is likely to make an uneven paint cover and will blister and crack much more easily upon drying. People are quite dismissive of this kind of product and will only use it as last resort.

The greasiness of *ormmol* is focal to many stories from the area. The belief that it is “fat”, particularly *amad*, fat from the kidney region of ancestral beings, or *amud*, semen from these same beings, has wide currency. There is a strong belief that diamonds emerge from the same substance, being congealed fat from the body of these creator personages (cf. Myers 1986:67;148). A knowledgeable Kija man from the central Tableland area bordering Ngarinyin country explained to me that while driving in the vicinity of Argyle diamond mine (also in Kija country) he spotted a white seam in the cliffs of a sandstone escarpment and remarked to his wife that that was surely the fat of the ancestral Baramundi which he knew had played a major role in creating this part of the country. He went on to explain the nature of its travels and that Ngarinyin people were losing much “power” from this mine because the Baramundi had come from that direction. He had nothing himself to gain by pointing out that Ngarinyin people have a stake in this deposit of fat, now turned to diamond. Another diamond exploration area in the Mt. Barnett region had also turned up large quantities of a particularly vivid white *ormmol*, and this deposit was attributed to the actions of *Nyamada* (sometimes heard as *Nyamala*), the Black Snake referred to above with swollen testicles who had deposited his essences here in the country, by creating a “volcano” which spread its “white ashes” near the Hann River. *Nyamal* is
the Ngarinyin word for “hot ashes” while *(ny)*amad is the Ngarinyin word for the kidney fat from any species which is believed to be the locus of the emotions, particularly of love and mariri, “sorrowing”. The probably fortuitous resemblance between these words seems to have allowed a point of departure for the poetic metonymy bringing both ashes and semen into focus in this story.

Diamonds are an intensively congealed form of wealth in the western economy and Ngarinyin people are well aware of the great amounts of energy which Europeans devote to the pursuit of them. Indeed they are constantly under pressure to partake in the “heritage protection/ work program clearance surveys”\(^71\) to allow diamond exploration to proceed upon their country. There is a strange confluence in this respect between the European demand for diamonds and the Ngarinyin emphasis upon fat as concentrated emotional power and as concentrated nurturant wealth (cf. Taylor 1990:335-336 on Kunwinjku rituals to make “fat or sap run in the trees”). The high calorific value of fat, combined with the strong taste and ease in swallowing which it imparts to meat, has made the term “proper fat one” the highest accolade which can be made about food. Ngarinyin people’s fishing and hunting patterns are largely determined by the season in which various species are known to be fat. The power of kidney fat also manifests in card playing in which possessing on one’s person the kidney-fat of the Frill-Neck Lizard, for example, is regarded as both “good luck” and a potential cause of being accused of cheating. Fatness is also highly valued in newborn babies as an index of strength (cf. Love 1936:115). Paradoxically, the animals in which anguma, child spirits (see pp. 149 below), are found are often reputed to be disappointingly lacking in fat despite their appearance of being fat-laden. This transformation of fattiness into wateriness indicates the transfer of vital power from the animal host to the dreamt spirit child.

White and yellow fat (in some contexts coloured with red ochre) is also extensively used for “anointing” initiates and sacred objects, and thus imparting to them a lustrous aura which is emblematic of ritual power (cf. Morphy 1991 on bir’yun; Jones and Meehan 1978). Thomson reported on a similar equation of fat and marr, “ancestral power”, in north-east Arnhem Land where it was regarded as dangerous to either waste or to hold to for too long “a too great concentration of marr” (1949:32) as

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\(^71\) These are required under the legislation of the State based Aboriginal Heritage Act but only made focal through the passage of the Native Title Act (1993).
it would cause sickness. Consequently, ceremonies were held to dispel this *marr* through using up the fat in order to avert the danger of sickness.

4.1.1.2 Red

According to my senior consultants, red ochre always comes along the traditional trading routes from *waringarri*, “sunrise side” which is associated with the Wodoy moiety while *jaguli*, white pearl-shell, comes from the *gularr*, “sunset-side”, associated with the Jun.gun moiety. Red ochre is used in ways which link it explicitly to blood, death but also to a nurturant reanimation. In traditional funerary practices, as I explore in Chapter 6 below, the skulls and long limb bones from a corpse will be painted with a mixture of red-ochre and animal fat before being wrapped in paper-bark for interment in the *wanjina* cave to which it belongs. In mythic terms, red ochre is perceived to be the blood of Wodoy which was spilled at Dugumiri, a range on Carleton Station (east of Wyndham) where Wodoy and Jun.gun fought over the proper way to treat and eat sugar-bag in *larlan-di* [V3b, 96].

In what seems at first to be a complementary reversal of this mythic colour scheme, it is the Omarr moiety totem, Wodoy, which is most strikingly represented as being sprayed with white ochre. This is most marked in Walungarri ceremonies where the characteristic white spots on the feathers of the Spotted Nightjar are replicated by mouth spray painting, *giyug*, on the body of a Wodoy moiety *wanggi*, or neophyte. Meanwhile, the Jun.gun moiety participants are those who have a bold application of red-ochre without the white spray painting [V3b, 42-3]. When Jun.gun boys “go through law”, it is the white sprayed Wodoy moiety participants who perform for the Jun.gun *wanggi*.

These colour schemes are produced through the ritual reciprocity which occurs, at the minimal level, between the moieties, but which are actually performed between more specific sets of relatives. In the case of the Walungarri, this more specific focal relationship is that between the initiate and his brothers-in-law (WH),

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72 Some Ngarinyin people at Mowanjum also applied red ochre to the bodies of those who are in a relationship of affinity, specifically brothers-in-law and classificatory wives, when a man dies. This period of being daubed with red-ochre preceded the application of charcoal to the entire bodies of these relatives which is carried out some days further into the mortuary ceremonies. It was pointed out to me though that this applying of red ochre before the charcoal was a distinctive cultural form belonging to the Walmajarri and Nyikena peoples of the Fitzroy valley and that this was used in Mowanjum only for those few people who had marriage connections to those extraneous groups.
who are perforce of opposite moiety affiliation. Thus, it is not so surprising that Wodoy moiety ceremonial participants display the body markings of the white ochre which is, as we saw, identified with the Jun.gun moiety. It is Jun.gun moiety participants who apply this white paint, part of themselves, to the bodies of the Wodoy participants. On other occasions it is the Wodoy ritual performers who apply the red ochre which is identified with the blood of their own ancestral moiety hero to the bodies of the Jun.gun participants.

Through ritual exchange and opposition the moieties make each other into what they are, “same but different”, just as the two moiety heroes, Wodoy and Jun.gun, fought each other to establish the laws of marriage and reciprocal object exchange in the first place. In the stories of these two personages, it was Jun.gun’s blows which spilled the blood of Wodoy which became red ochre. It was the attacking blows of Wodoy in the first place which caused Jun.gun to retaliate. But it was the refusal of Jun.gun to recognise that he shouldn’t try either to cook honey or marry his own sister, thus offending and refusing Wodoy, which caused Wodoy to attack him. Wodoy ceremonial participants forever afterwards mark out the bodies of Jun.gun initiates as somehow part of themselves by applying this red ochre to the Jun.gun bodies, at once retaliating for the blows and revealing Jun.gun’s guilt by smearing Jun.gun bodies with Wodoy blood. These actions also incorporate Jun.gun people into a single system of exchanges by showing that people of the Jun.gun moiety are now “made of the same stuff”, covered in the blood of Wodoy just as their children will emerge from the bodies of Wodoy mothers, be initiated by Wodoy men, and married to, and mourned at death, by Wodoy men and women.

4.1.2 Moiety and Marriage
Moiety identification continues to be most important in the choice of marriage partners. The minimal condition a correct marriage must display is that moiety exogamy is observed. I will discuss below (pp.165) how the more complex rules of preferred or prescribed marriage operated, but for the moment the issue of moiety exogamy is my focus. Most marriages in the Ngarinyin social world conform to this rule and in those instances where they do not the ensuing social approbation is a clear indication of the rule’s persistence in social judgements. Even a man’s marriage to a distant classificatory mother will be tolerated (at least as a second marriage) because the partners still belong to opposite moieties. As Scheffler found from Elkin’s 1927-8
field data, marriages to distant kin of this category were fairly common (1978:414) so there is no reason to assume that such marriages these days are the result of the disruption of the system of promised marriages. Scheffler also noted that Elkin’s data suggested that,

the most general rule is that a man may not marry a kinswoman of his own patrimoiet; he may marry any distant kinswoman of the opposite moiety virtually without regard to her kin-class status, provided that she is not also his WBW or ZHZ – thus two men may not marry one another’s sisters, but there is no rule to prohibit a man from marrying his ZH’s classificatory ‘sister’ (Scheffler 1978:406).

Clans which belong to the same moiety and whose territories are adjacent to each other often relate to each other as classificatory “brother” (cf. Turner 1980). Where this is the case they, by definition, relate to other clans with a shared set of relationship terms, including the affinal links to the clans of preferred marriage partners.

In cases where one of a pair of same moiety clans has left no male offspring, the other assumes custodianship of its country. This is true for example, of the Manyarngarri clan in relation to Dilangarri, whose country lies in the region of present day Doongan station. The senior clansperson for Dilangarri is the old and frail M.D. and she continues to be cited as the traditional holder of that country. In practical terms of negotiating with other interests in her country, though, people of the neighbouring same-moiety clan country, Manyarngarri, uphold D.’s interests on her behalf. The integrity and distinctiveness of Dilangarri country is not challenged in this process. A similar process occurs with “bottom” Galarungarri country which has no living people patrilineally related to it. Here, M.J., of the neighbouring same-moiety estate, Gurungongo, is said to be the custodian of this country for all practical purposes. Other recent examples of the role of moieties in clan clustering will be discussed below. N.P. explains that:

Amalarr and Ornarr, everything goes with the land...Amalarr is Jun.gun and Ornarr is Wodoy, it is under the marriage rule. Jun.gun and Jun.gun look bad, breaking the law. The law was given by those two so nothing goes wrong.
That's why even animals got their own "skin"- like kangaroo, birds even the tree and grass all the same-mamalarr and mornarr. Moiety affiliation also figures in the assimilation into the Northern Kimberley social world of children whose father comes from outside the region, the children being assigned to the opposite moiety to that of their mother. The senior man, D.J., for instance, who has a non-Aboriginal father, was placed in Biyarrngongo clan, Wodoy moiety, and adopted by a step-father from that clan and moiety, because his mother was from Gamaluwa clan, Jun-gun moiety (see Chapter 5 for further examples). This tendency to assign a "proper skin" to children was also noted by Deakin (1977:157) in Kalumburu where "relational terms are changed to fit the new situation" in the case of "wrong way" marriages.

4.1.3 Conclusions regarding moiety divisions

The moiety division, and the mythic structures which articulate it, can be best understood as the creation of affinal complementarity as a fundamental symbolic obviatiion of the processual constitution of the embodied human psyche. The "splitting" of self from not-self, "own skin" from "other skin", child's world from mother's world (cf. Levi-Strauss 1969: 86-91) is an operation which constitutes identity itself and "all identities require an other; some other in and through a relationship with whom self-identity is actualized" (Laing 1969:82). The creation of this sense of difference against a background of similarity is something which requires continuous human interaction and effort. It is never a given of social life. Schilder pointed out that

[s]ocial life will always provoke the tendency to identify ourselves with others. Imitation is one part of it. Identification is closely based upon the identification of body-images. But social life is based not only upon identification but also upon actions, where the full object character of the other is preserved. There are two conflicting tendencies, one which by identification takes others into ourselves, and another, not less strong, which needs others as independent objects (1964:303).

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73 These two words contain the prefix (m-) which connotes the gender class of things associated with the earth: place, camp, country.

74 Obviation, as Wagner used the term is involved in "any symbolic operation that exposes the simultaneously differentiating and collectivising modes of a tropic equation" (Weiner 1988:10).
This human effort and action is patently evident in the moiety myths and the social interaction between the moiety groups in marriage and wurnan exchange (see Chapter 5). These exchanges are made between complementary groups which distinguish themselves as "self" and "other", and sociocentrically as ornarr, "bone" and amalarr, "dust". These two components of the person are the destructible and indestructible essences of the body respectively, assimilating the interconnectedness of bone and flesh. Schilder has shown that the experience of the surface of the body is largely given by the "the relation of the bone structure to the skin which will give the final elaborations to all our tactile sensations" (1964:87) so that the places where the skin stretches over the bones, for instance, become the most highly focal sites of the sensation of the continuous surface of the skin. However, this alone doesn't account for our sense of our bodily surface since "sensations get their final meaning only in connection with the postural model of the body" (ibid.: 297) which is "one of the fundamental units of our experience" (ibid.283). But even this experience of the unity of the body is not simply given to us because the gestalt that the postural model of the body generates "is never a complete structure; it is never static " (ibid.: 287) because "motion and action are necessary for this development" (ibid.: 286). While we may construe the asymmetry of the body in terms of inside and outside (such as are expressed in the moiety totems' modus vivendi), the "outside" skin of the body is actually experienced as being "distinctly below the surface of the optic perception of the body" (ibid.: 286), thus making the distinction between inside and outside somewhat problematical and perhaps laying the foundations for the asymmetry itself since the inside is here experienced as having a primacy which the notion of surface is forever dependent upon. When applied as optic-spatial imagery such as mapping out the animal/human body image on country, this asymmetry becomes more pronounced rather than less, because this sensory modality is less attuned to the experience of immanence which tactility yields. Other relationships between parts of the body, such as the relationship between the limbs, between the eyes and between the ears are more pronounced experiences of symmetry. This is true to such a degree that a sensation or movement in one side of the body is readily experienced in the other side under certain conditions (Schilder 1964:26-28).75

75 "Symmetrical parts of the body are physiologically and psychologically connected with each other" (Schilder 1964:21).
The moieties are seen to be receiving with one hand and giving with the other; in other words, "there is always an object towards which the action is directed" (Schilder 1964:51). This intentional action, this motility, is what creates a knowledge of forever emergent unity between the two complementary groups, each member of which has not just both bone and skin, left and right hands for giving and receiving, but shoulders (fathers) and breasts (sister's sons) too. Every individual member of the moieties, that is to say everyone and everything, contains within their own body ego the complete bodily schema of both moieties. A lack, a difference has to be socially created to elicit relationships between them. Thus the males of one animal species are regarded as belonging to one moiety, while the females of another species, rather than the same one, are said to belong to the complementary marriage class. For example, the female Grass Kangaroo, wudma, is said to have as its marriage partner, gundili, a small river kangaroo, while the male Yaarra, the Grey Hill Kangaroo is said to take gadulungga, a wallaroo for its wife. This is an active creation of asymmetry in the socialisation of the world (cf. Morton 1985:135).

Map 2 on the following page shows the interlocking shapes of mamaladba (Jun.gun moiety country, as an aggregate of clans of that moiety, in the dark shading) and morndaba (Wodoy moiety country). This schema follows that of Blundell and Layton (1978: 238), with which it is generally consistent, but extends to the entire range of known Ngarinyin clan countries. I have not attempted to replicate their data for the western-most of the Worrorra clans, nor have I sufficient data for the most Northern of the Wunambal clan countries which the moieties overarch. It will be noted that one of the most significant of all northern Kimberley story sites, Wanalarri (see pp. 182 below), from whence all the wanjina split up to their separate clan countries after a vengeance attack of dust and flood upon humanity, forms the most pronounced nexus of differentiation across the global schema.
4.2 Arin, Clan: the person both scattered and contained.

As in many other parts of Northern Australia (Warner 1958; Morphy 1991; Thomson 1949; Hiatt 1965) the social world of the Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wunambal people is characterised by patrilateral land-holding groups or “clans”, the members of which share, at this one level, an identical set of attachments to one of the more or less loosely bounded tracts of country which they call dambun (in Ngarinyin), dambima (in Worrorra) or gra (in Wunambal). In Aboriginal English these terms are often translated as “blocks” or “little blocks” or simply “my grandfather’s country”. These tracts of country, each of which belong to one or other of the moieties (cf. Elkin 1933: 453; Love 1935:224), together fill up the entirety of the territories of the three language groups referred to above. That is to say there is no “empty country” between them. Each one of the dambun is adjacent to several other dambun and it would seem that the looseness of the boundaries allows a certain amount of leeway for neighbours to be involved in negotiations about events occurring in boundary areas which will affect a wider group of people. Those people who are grouped together as belonging
to a particular *dambun* regard each other as patrilineal kin and call each other by the reciprocal terms for brother/grandfather/grandson (*abi*) or father/son (*irra*) or father’s sister/brother’s child (*amala/irra*). The categorical equivalence which is thus created amongst a *dambun* group means that the members of other clans call each *dambun* group by the same set of terms (cf. Elkin 1964:80 and my discussion of the same in Chapter 3), varied only for gender and/or generation in some cases (Rumsey 1981; cf. pp. 94 above regarding MM). For instance if the members of one clan call another *gaja*, mother’s mother (or MMB), then, in certain contexts, all the members of this second clan will call the first clan members by the reciprocal term for daughter’s daughter (or DDB). If a man calls another clan *waya*, brother-in-law/father-in-law, then not only will his children call them so too, but, in certain contexts, all the members of the other clan will call the first by the same reciprocal term (cf. Elkin 1964:79). In some cases it is necessary to understand the rules of prescriptive or preferential marriage in order to grasp the categorical equivalences in clan country appellation. For example, if a man calls another clan *ngadjjimamingi* (mother/mother’s father) then his son will call that clan *marringi/wuningi* (wife/brother-in-law), because a man ideally marries a woman from the same clan as his father’s mother (for further discussion of this issue see pp.165 and *passim* below).

Importantly, not only the members of a clan group are called by the same relationship term but also the actual clan country is called by that term also (cf. Elkin 1964: 107; Capell 1972:83; Blundell and Layton 1978). Clans which relate to each other as *abi* (brother) are by definition of the same moiety and if these clan estates are adjacent to each other they will often have a particularly close relationship which may provide a line of succession to deceased clan estates.

In the course of my fieldwork I was able to expand upon the data collected by Elkin (1933:452) who identified 43 clan groups (which he indicated was unlikely to be an exhaustive account), of which 22 belonged to the “yara moiety” (*amalarr*) and 21 to the “walamba moiety” (*ornarr*). Rumsey, working in 1993 with some of the same people as I later worked with, identified 52 clans (1993) of which 25 belonged to *amalarr* and 27 to *ornarr* moiety. By being able to travel further into remote country with Ngarinyin people from several different settlements, I was able to identify 67 clan countries, 35 belonging to *amalarr* and 32 belonging to the *ornarr* moiety. I reproduce this list of clans, their moiety affiliation and their principle totems below (Table 1). Of these clan countries about two thirds still had people living who
were patrilially linked to those countries. The others were usually said to be cared for by an adjacent, same moiety clan group or someone who had *maanggarra*, a matrifilial link to the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLAN</th>
<th>MOIETY</th>
<th>Gi</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agulangongo</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Rock Devil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anawurngarri</td>
<td>J</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avulnangarri</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Rock Wallaby</td>
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<tr>
<td>Balalangarri</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Seven Sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barurrungarri</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Dance-Ground/Stringy-Bark Tree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biyarrngongo</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Red Gravel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Borringarri</td>
<td>J</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brredoron</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Gorge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brregural</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>White Cockatoo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brejealnga</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>White Stone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brejirad</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Pink Hibiscus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brrelandarr</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Kapok</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bremerarra</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>River Bamboo</td>
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<td>Bremiiji</td>
<td>W</td>
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<td>Brewanggudu</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Hill Kangaroo</td>
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<td>Brewearrju</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Eagle-Hawk’s Nest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dalangongo</td>
<td>J</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dawunjingongo (Miwa)</td>
<td>J</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilangarri</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Dingo</td>
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<td>Diwa</td>
<td>W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galarungarri (top)</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Rain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galarungarri (bottom)</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Rain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galiyamba</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>White Gum</td>
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<td>Gamaluwa</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>King-Fisher</td>
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<td>Ganbungarri</td>
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<td>Bottle Tailed Rat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garnjalgarri</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Hawk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garnjirgarri</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Hair Belt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gubungarri</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Brains of Snake</td>
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<td>Gumularwurru</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Gumurun Hill</td>
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<td>Gunjangongo</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Pandanus</td>
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<td>Gunyirrngaarri</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Black Ant</td>
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<td>GunjarlnGarri</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Coolibah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guragona</td>
<td>J</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gurungongo</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Cypress Pine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyungongo</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Spray Paint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janungarri (bottom)</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Grass Hopper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janungarri (top)</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Grass Hopper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarrulngaarri</td>
<td>J</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jibilgaarri</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Whistling Duck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jilindingarri</td>
<td>W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landarrngaarri (Wilawila/Ngarinyin)</td>
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<td>Kapok</td>
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<td>Lan.garigona</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clan Name</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>English Name</td>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Larlangarri</td>
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<td>Pretty Flower</td>
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<td>Liyarr</td>
<td>W</td>
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<tr>
<td>Man.garaligona</td>
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<td>Gum</td>
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<td>Marrndangarri</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Guts Ache</td>
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<td>Manjilwa</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Cuckoo</td>
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<td>Manyarrngarri</td>
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<td>Black Dog</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morurungongo</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Sugar Bag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngarangarri</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Spotted Quoll</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ngaywadngarri</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Sand Frog</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ngurungoru</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Crocodile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umborayigona</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Sugar Bag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wajawajangarri</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>King Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wajiningongo</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Turtle Tracks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wandingarri</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Hill in Unggumi country</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wamarn</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Wattle</td>
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<tr>
<td>(bottom)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrgalingongo (top)</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Wattle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrgalingongo</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Kangaroo Skin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wayangarri</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Rocky Point</td>
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<td>Winarraguda</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Winyudun Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winyudua</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Emu</td>
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<td>Wiyarringongo</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Spotted Nightjar</td>
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<td>Wodoyngarri</td>
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<td>Kangaroo</td>
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<td>Yawarlingarri (Miwa)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yawalingongo</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Kangaroo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1.** Clans with moiety affiliation and principal totems

### 4.2.1 Clan groups in action

Having shown the overarching pattern within which *dambun* are emically conceptualised, I now turn to the question of how the groups which are associated with each of these countries use such patterns in the organisation of their experience on country. In what ways are links with these tracts of country acknowledged and reproduced over time? And, importantly for this thesis, how do such links articulate with local images and mytho-poeia of the body? In order to approach these questions it is necessary to shift the focus of the thesis back and forth between the macrocosmic view of the imagined cosmos as a single unitary bodily field and the microcosmic view of relational constituent parts which nevertheless maintain their own integrity. Mowaljarlai used to say that the Ngarinyin verb *bun*, means "pushing up like a sprout. We *bun* the country, *dambun*, live in it, sexy place...like baby opening up vagina...where we come out" [V.3, 1]. Rumsey (1996:128) has followed the trajectory
of the word *ngarrarin* which overlays concepts of "clan country" with "body/being/person/presence/self" (also Coate and Elkin 1974:45). It is clear from these expressions that the notion of *dambun* is one which thoroughly implicates embodiment, but how are bodies so deployed, and how do current uses of clan country vivify the potentially abstract idea of a "clan estate"?

As indicated above for the moiety case, it would be a mistake to assume that the territorial dimensions of relationships between clan groups exist independently of the affective life of the people involved. In Ngarinyin communities where I conducted fieldwork, solidarities and distinctions between *dambun* groups were expressed as particular modes of affectivity modulated by the type of kinship relation between the parties which were encapsulated in a clan group. Emotional closeness or distance was experienced though the prism of kinship and the relationships between clan countries was one aspect of this. A man might maintain an amiable and vivacious relationship with his mother’s mother brother, for example, and his relationship to that person’s *dambun* takes on a similar emotional cast. Of course, people developed and maintained close relationships with others based on compatibility of their personalities but this was always filtered through the prism of kinship which provided the preconditions for such a friendship to flower. It was quite impossible, for example, to develop a shared interchange of crude jokes with one’s sister or mother-in-law since such things could never be publicly shared between with these two types of relatives. The ego-centric experiences of kinship, then, were often organised around “ideal types” which were condensations of kin into the social categories of clan and groups of clans.

4.2.2 Clan country expression amongst co-residents

To begin to answer the questions I raised at the outset of this section, I turn now to my experiences at one of the remote settlements where I did my longest period of sustained fieldwork. Dodnun is situated in the country of the Ngoru-Ngoru (Sand Frog) clan, which is of the Jun.gun moiety. M.A. was senior clansman and until very recently occupied a central place in the camp. His house was situated closest to Bijili Creek, a tributary of the Hann River, the major watercourse running through Ngorungorongor estate. Despite many years spent working on the Government station at Munja, and on the now Aboriginal managed pastoral lease at Pantijan on the Sale River,
M.A., who was then in his late 80s (but who died in 2000), continually returned to live within his own country. His children, and their children, continued to be recognised as core members of the diverse residential group at Dodnun.

The Du. family, descendants of M.A.’s full brother, Du. Bungurr (and his wife, A.P., of Ngarangarri clan) are also members of the Ngoru-ngoru clan. Various members of this family were often in residence or on extended visits at Dodnun. One of Bungurr’s sons, J. Du., had worked for periods on Mt. Elizabeth Station and the neighbouring station of Mt. Barnett and the next station west, Mt. House, which is within his mother’s clan country, Ngarangarri. It is interesting in this regard that since the death of Owendar, J. Du. and his family have become permanent residents at Dodnan, moving into one of the peripheral “early model” shelters which had been empty for several years following the death of its resident. This move appeared to be a strong statement of belonging modulated by his perceived need to not worry other long term residents that their legitimacy in the community was in any way compromised by the returning home of a clansman in his prime with a large family. Thus the family’s “sitting on the edge” of the main camp, but with strong aspirations to occupy one of the planned new homes, expressed a culturally appropriate humility deriving from the strong claims to country which J. had inherited from the deceased elder clansman and his brother, that is to say from his “two fathers”.

Ngoru-ngoru clan country is mother’s country (maanggarra) for the children of W.A., who belongs to Gubungarri clan of the Wodoy moiety, and who was married to a now deceased woman of Ngoru-ngoru clan. A sister of J. Du., she resided with her husband at Gubungarri Community. Thus W.A. (who died in 2000) and D.’s children were all able to exercise interests in Ngoru-ngoru country and were regarded as part of the Dodnun community though none were permanently based there at the time I lived there. Several of these younger people resided on their father’s country at Gubungarri Community on neighbouring Mt. Barnett Station. One son returned during the dry season to work on his mother’s country at Mt. Elizabeth. Ngoru-ngoru is also maanggarra for the children of an elderly woman living on Gibb River Station, 60 kilometers away. Four of these children continued to live with their mother in Ngallangunda community and were frequent visitors at Dodnun but made a point of the fact that they “leave that country for uncle to run”, and largely kept to fishing holes and other resource use where their husbands and wives had clear use rights which didn’t require even standing permissions.
4.2.3 Further and further out from the stations

The quest for greater autonomy was a relentless one in this social world, all the more so it would seem where the web of interdependencies was culturally authorised to such a high degree. In 1999, for example, the traditional owners through the Indigenous Land Corporation acquired two pastoral leases far off to the east of Dodnan, Pentecost Downs and Durack River. P.C. was immediately put forward by the community as the senior man for this country because this station lease covers his Liyarr clan country. His older brother, C.E., until his decline into illness, had previously held this role as well as the role of chief initiator for the surrounding region. As the only Wodoy moiety head-of-household at Dodnan, he immediately began to make plans to move from their home there to his *dambun*, what he called "(h)own country". The desire to, wherever possible, live on country to which a person has unequivocal rights is well demonstrated in such a case.

Another outstation movement emerged from the camp at Dodnun, aiming to set up a permanent camp at Mejerrin which lies in the vacant crown land sixty kilometers to the north-west of Mt. Elizabeth Station. For two generations many people closely associated with the Mejerrin area made their home at Mt. Elizabeth, the nearest station to the emerging settlement. Mejerrin is in the *mamalarr*, Jun.gun moiety block, in Warrgalingongo clan country. The main proponents of the shift to Mejerrin were traditional owners of Warrgalingongo clan country in which Mejerrin is situated, and others who related to each other as classificatory "brothers", and belonged to contiguous clan estates: Gunyirrngarri, Mororangongo and Garnjingarri.

A Mororangongo (Jun.gun moiety) clan member, W.P. whose clan country lay just to the north of Mt. Elizabeth was another of the senior residents at Dodnun and the senior man of the household where his classificatory brothers from the Gunyirrngarri clan resided. W.P. raised these younger men following the early death of their father and was one of their partners in the development of the outstation at Mejerrin, sixty kilometers to the north west of the community. This man's mother, like the mother of the Gunyirrngarri young men he had adopted, belonged to Wayangarri clan country, at the headwaters of the Moran River. The persistence of

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76 The ILC was established as a counterpart to the Native Title (1993) legislation to institute Commonwealth funded programs of land acquisitions for Aborigines across the continent.
prescribed marriage patterns between Wama's clan, Morurungo, and the Wayangarri and Jilindingarri clans is apparent from the fact that W.P.'s paternal grandfather, Derangumen, married into Jilindingarri clan. His "older brother", ngola, relationship to the young brothers and sister he "grew up", generated a strong social bonding which distinguished their camp at Dodnun. This was complemented by what was for P.W. the maternal presence of G.W., thus shaping a situation in which he as a widower could confidently call upon the care and sustenance which the social composition of the household could afford. The shared moiety affiliation between Mororongongo and Gunyirrngarri with the host clan, Ngorungoru, strengthened their position in this country.

As Mejerrin began to take shape as an outstation community, the senior custodians for Garnjingarri began to lay the foundations for a permanent camp in their own clan country which is visible to the north from Mejerrin. This example indicates that while the pressure of limited resources had activated traditional coalitions of neighbouring clans for returning to country on a more permanent basis, whenever the opportunity arose people demonstrated a strong desire to differentiate even further and to secure living areas in their specific clan countries within the moiety block.

Far from being regarded as merely another fairly distant camp propelled by people mainly resident at Dodnun, Mejerrin, and the country in between it and Dodnun were deeply invested with significance. Relationships between places were established through mythic tracks in the country to the north-west of Dodnun, where the Pantijan track crosses the Hann River, at Nyornja (Wild-Honey Pollen Place), where B.G. has her conception site and thus a well accepted association with that country. This is despite B’s own country being situated some two hundred kilometres away in Wunambal country. Her father’s frequent travels along the Pantijan Road through Mt. Elizabeth Station allowed him to "find the dream" for his daughter at this place. B had her main residence at Mowanjum community near Derby, but continued to spend periods at Dodnun and traveled out to her conception site when visiting the outstations at Pantijan and Mejerrin. It is from here at Nyornja that the Sand Frog people, Ngoru-ngoru, were believed to have first crawled, making their way up the Hann River, onomatopoeically calling out their name, "we are the Sand-Frog people". Further down the Hann River at Balmandarra, the Crocodile people, Ngung, heard the Sand-Frogs calling out and stopped in their travels, thus creating a border between themselves and Ngoru-ngoru
In the headwaters of the Drysdale River is another large Crocodile painting site called Lo, which lies on the northern edge of Garnbungarri clan country, from where women of the Ngoru-ngoru clan have traditionally taken their husbands. The track then leads into the adjacent clan countries Gunyirngarri and Mororongongo. In this tract of country, called Gurowulan in reference to an ancestral Kangaroo holding a baby in its pouch, there is a spring called Janjili, which was the conception site of a woman of the Brrejalnnga clan. The women from this clan traditionally married into Gunyirngarri and Warrgalingongo, the clan owners of the country around Mejerrin. Finally the road lead through a part of the range called Jalandondian which is believed to have risen out of the flat ground in response to the singing of the ancestral Honeysucker, Jalandondi. This responsiveness of stone country to the interaction of living beings is something which I want to alert the reader to here in regard to my central thematic material of movement and the bodily structures immanent in country itself. The Jalandondian story which my Ngarinyin teachers brought to my attention was also discussed by Capell (1972:71-72). Here in Warrgalingongo country, the Honeysucker wanjina spoke and/or sang, making the mountain appear and then sat on top of it. The country is behaving as though it had skin, flesh and blood which has become excited by the singing of the Honeysucker. I will show in Chapters 8 and 9 how this evocation of the viscerality of country is a response of sexual excitation which vivifies both country and person. The term which is used for making the country grow up tall is dalja which is also the term for “growing up” a child. The instability of this mountain, so similar in psychical content to the unstable mountain at Winjagin (see Chapter 8), causes part of the mountain to slip to one side, trapping Jalandondi forever. As in the other stories from this genre, which I elaborate on in Chapter 8, there is an incipient division of the stone edifice; a “halving” which causes the imbalance.

Before reaching the twin peaks at Mejerrin, which figure prominently in currently performed song cycles and form one of the three major images of country in the community hall at Mowanjum, there is a large waterhole called Yulwayan. This waterhole is in Mororongongo country and is the conception site for Paddy Warna's cousin/brother, Gumulayali. The name Yulwayan refers to the waterhole's association with the Milky Way wanjina, Walanganda, who is believed to have lay down in this waterhole and reflected his image into the night-sky.
The children of D.D., Winjagin and Jud Woningarri, each had their conception sites (wunggurr) in their father's clan country in the vicinity of Mt. Hann, just beyond Mejerrin. This was despite D.D.'s access to it being restricted largely to his time on mustering camps while working at Mt. Elizabeth Station (see Map 4). This connection reinforced the relationship between Dolon's residence in a classificatory father's country in Ngoru-ngoru and his actual father's country in Garnjingarri. This example illustrates how people who were living away from their clan countries continued to identify with them in a patterned way, perpetuated in part through links to wunggurr conception places (see Chapter 7).

4.2.4 Dambun and wanjina

Each of the Ngarinyin clans has at least one wanjina to whom the members of the clan were believed to be related in a quasi-genealogical way (see Chapter 5). Most often this wanjina was referred to as being in the relationship of abi, (a classificatory paternal grandfather) or sometimes as idja (my father). By extension of this principle, people referred to the wanjina of other clan estates with the same relationship term as they used for the estate itself and the members of that estate. Usually this wanjina is located in one of the sandstone caves within that estate where it was believed to have lay down after its wanderings (cf. Capell, 1972). Because the wanjina created the existing shape of the country in these travels, though, there were instances where the most significant actions of a wanjina have taken place in another clan country and thus a person's wanjina may be regarded as living in that country.

As well as having one or more named wanjina which were regarded as actual ancestors, each clan group also had an ensemble of symbols, its gi, which were regarded as also having a relationship of consubstantiality with the members of that group. Prevailing anthropological usage has termed such symbols, usually natural species or sometimes phenomena, “totems”.

Gi is actually an agentive term in Ngarinyin (what Rumsey 1982 calls a “verbal particle”): to gi is “to push out”, “to move” something. Mowaljarlai explained that gi could accurately be used to refer to the action of “push start motor car with flat battery or if you sack a man” (cf. Coate and Elkin 1974:241). Thus when a group guru gi budmangarri, for instance, this is literally translated as “Cypress Pine totemise they do”. This word giyug (cf. also Coate and Elkin, 1974:241) also refers to the action involved in the re-creation of cave paintings utilising mouth spray-painting,
particularly of the white ochre background but also including hand stencils. The action of "pushing" into life is how the new green growth of the wet season grass is also talked about, *jalala bibibi*, standing up, like the *jalala* signal stones on top of *wanjina* caves, with such green intensity that a person might be induced to "vomit from looking at it" (cf. Povinelli 1993:141; Hiatt 1975). This violent reaction to the intense new growth mirrors the abundance of the new life being disgorged by the country and from the body of *wanjina* in the Wet season. The violence inherent in this action is captured in the notion that grass seed pods, for example, "explode" and shed their seeds when hit by *bandameni*, the "dry lightning" which comes at the beginning of the Wet. Some *wanjina* are said to have "pushed their head" out through the earth by "cracking it", *bun*. This is the case at the pyramid shaped stone hill on the upper Isdell River, *Alanggun ba wanggangarri* ("where his head popped out"). All of these expressions invoke a powerful sense that people's substance, like other living things, such as the new green grass, vigorously pushes itself forth, even "forces" itself into their father, their paternal grandfather's country and the totemic species which are emergent from that country.

There is a strong agentive process here which to some extent goes against the grain of the traditional anthropological sense of totemism in which someone is born into or inducted into an association with a set of symbols. On the other hand, there is still something left of the passive meaning of being "inducted" into a clan in the sense that a person is regarded as being in a consubstantial relationship with a particular FFB (for a male) and FFZ (for a female) whose name the person will often carry as one their ensemble of names (see p.147). Because this abi may be from another clan to the father, the possibility of being adopted out into that clan (and thereby having two clan countries) is always present, thus effecting a "lateral" shift where the "lineal" descent movement has been negated by the identification process between FFB and BSS. Being a reincarnation of the FF(B or Z), the abi is the one who is "pushing" themselves back "out of the water" and into the realm of consociality again. In order to achieve this, the returning abi has to be dreamt by his own father who is also his own son, the paternal grandson's father.

Contra Levi-Strauss (1962, 1963, 1973), the systematic relationships between differentiated social groups such as clans and species cannot be adequately framed in
terms of a particular species serving as the arbitrary signifier of one or other group as referent (cf. Hiatt 1969; Peterson 1972). Even in the case of moiety totemism which has been put forth as the one area where such arbitrariness in the signifier might apply, I have shown above that Ngarinyin people attribute actual physical and behavioural contrasts to the moiety totems and the people who belong to them. When Ngarinyin people themselves translate the sense of gi as “to totemise”, they are more likely to say “we represent that cypress pine” or whatever the species or object is, where “represent” is framed as an agentive process by human beings. While this may be dismissed as simply an aberrant use of English by people who have picked up a foreign term (represent) and are using it in an idiosyncratic manner, it is more likely that this expression reflects a belief in the reciprocal relationships between present day human beings and other natural species and phenomena with which they share an implicit identity. Humans and their social groups are not considered here to be the ultimate referent or filter of everything in the cosmos. This is where Levi-Strauss’s humanism needs qualification.

Francesca Merlan’s review of the notion of child spirit findings across Northern and Central Australia has drawn out a salient distinction between “the imagery of conception filiation (‘emergence’, ‘finding’) [which] is of chance, not continuity”, the latter quality characterising clan filiation (1986:486), which, in contrast, relies upon lineal ties of succession which are predictable and often involve the transmission of a “renewed attachment” (ibid.) to specific kin, totems and places. Merlan recognises the possibility (which is often realised in the Ngarinyin world) that the site of conception finding may occur in a place which is also within the patrilineal estate of the father, thus combining the regular ties of inter-generational succession with the “fortuitous” character of conception ties. In such instances, argues Merlan, the “sameness” of the tie of succession is “covert” or non-focal in relation to the particularising, individuating nature of the conception tie. This particularising imagery of conception finding, says Merlan, remains focal “no matter how tightly

77 The historical moment of anthropological debate which criticised Levi-Strauss’s restrictive notion of totemic species as merely formal operators is probably long past but it is clear that in the Ngarinyin world the relationship between sets of totemic clans is one in which chains of syntagmatic relationships are differentiated at only one point. If an algebraic expression were required to express this relationship, Trubetzkoy’s notion of “heterogenous oppositions” (1969:83ff) most succinctly captures the loops of serially differentiating values inherent in Northern Kimberley totemism (cf. also Morphy 1991:49 for a similar phenomenon amongst the Yolngu).

(fn. Continues o.p.)
inter-linked it may actually be in practice with the structural (e.g. patrifiliative) tendencies of certain societies” (1986:486).

While I do not intend to unnecessarily muddy the waters between these two quite distinct modalities of constituting identity, there are suggestive links between them within the ethnographic material which need to be drawn out. Perhaps the most immediate of these is the degree to which human agency is involved in both these modalities. To attempt to clarify this issue, I want to draw out the dialectic between agency and passivity in the constitution of both conception and clan identity. Here it is impossible to avoid implicating the notion of wunggurr, conception spirit finding, with the socio-centric categorisation inherent to clan groups. In the sense that both involve a “finding” and a “being found”, they cannot be treated entirely separately. Indeed, there were many instances when a Ngarinyin person, on being asked what was the name of their wanjina, usually the patrifilial estate ancestor, replied with the name of their wunggurr, the conception spirit (for the relationships of convergence in the imagery of wanjina and wunggurr see Chapter 5). This may partly have been a result of the fact that all events of the creative epoch are referred to as wunggurr (cf. Elkin 1930b:350-351) not only the site of child-spirit finding (see also Chapter 6 on the interchangeability of the two terms wunggurr and wanjina). However, closer questioning revealed that some people considered their “own one” wanjina to be the wanjina associated with their conception place. B.J., for instance, who belongs to Mirrirnggarri clan country was regarded by the senior clansman for Gurungongo, a same moiety but distant dambun, as able to identify with Gurungongo, “he lang us”, because he “got his wanjina there”. This was far from being an isolated instance of condensation of the imagery of wanjina and wunggurr.

4.3 Conception spirit finding: the person more scattered

Ngarinyin people perceive anguma or rai (a term with a more widespread northern Kimberley usage which seems to derive from the Bardi language), child essences, as “leaping out” on to their fathers from waterholes or a hunted animal and lodging themselves somewhere within his body, usually in their hair or the soft recess above the sternum. As Merlan puts it, “there is a distinct emphasis on [the] autonomy” (1986:475) of the child spirits. This child spirit then tells the father its name in a
dream, thus indicating the father’s relatively passive relationship to the *anguma* (cf. Maddock 1978:109). At the same time, this event of being seized by the *anguma* is often precipitated by the father’s action of (unwittingly) hunting an animal containing the *anguma* (cf. Povinelli 1993:142).

The active role of the father in conception events is in his “finding” of the child’s name in the dream, complemented by his hunting or fishing or finding of the child in some other way, nearly always in an animal (cf. Love 1936:113; Warner 1958:21; Kaberry 1939:42; Merlan 1986). The reciprocal nature of the Ngarinyin type of kinship relationship with the father (cf. Rumsey 1996:5) means that a man is as much his father’s father as his father’s son and the domination of one over the other is never clear-cut. Even in the process of “finding”, the child spirit and its future father inflict mutual wounds upon each other, whether it be through the marking caused on the future child’s body by the rifle or spear or fishing hook or the disappointment caused by the child spirit causing the father to somehow “miss” his target as far as consumption goes but later coming back at him as a child. This spoiling of the father’s hunger may occur through his not capturing the animal at all, through hurting or at least shocking the father in an accident prior to conception, or through the hunted animal being tasteless, watery and inedible. This tastelessness is a precursor of the father’s being prohibited from eating most fats during his wife’s pregnancy. One man found the *anguma* of his only son in this way:

Plains kangaroo bin escape from bush-fire. I get little round stone (bamboo ‘longa me was broken) and chuck it at kangaroo, hit ‘im cheek, make ‘im silly, cranky...kill him then...get ‘im liver and fat. Go back; give ‘im to uncle. When I sleep, I dream kid telling me ‘what you hit me for, Daddy? Bushfire chase ‘im me from my country...X, that my name’

In this instance the father actually kills the animal containing his son’s spirit. In another case, a man was born with a mark on his chest where his father had shot him as a bush-turkey (cf. Munn 1970:146). Later, as a young adult, he himself killed a

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78 In this respect, the active participation of the father/hunter in the conception scenario, my Kimberley experience differs from the norm described by Merlan who places the “non-recognition of human agency” (1986:488) as crucial in Aboriginal notions of conception events (cf. Povinelli 1993:142). However, as Merlan has pointed out (pers. Comm. 2001) there remains a notion of the “autonomy” of the conception spirit in appearing to the father, placing himself in the way of the father, and she also cites in her article (1986) the example of a man luring a fish containing a child spirit towards him which is consistent with my data.
bush-turkey with a stock-whip and his first son was born with a mark on his neck which all interpreted to be the mark where his father had killed him. A patrilineal cycle of killing and being killed, mediated through the same conception totem, is very clearly evident here. When we explore the semantic resonances of the verb “to find” in Ngarinyin, *mara*, the polysemy allows several other referents. *Mara* can mean “to see” in the sense of “to hit with light” (Coate and Elkin, 1974:348). Looking is akin to an act of aggression and this is observably the case when a person is threatening and challenging others to fight – all eyes are downcast. Further to this, *mara* can also be used as a euphemism for “to kill”, as in the phrase *mara irrwini*, “they found or saw or killed him”.

In another instance of “finding”, a man caught a fresh-water crocodile but then found the water it came from to be strangely red coloured “like beetroot” and, in a premonition of something amiss, the whole party moved to another camp. Later his wife found she was pregnant and this was interpreted to have been from the *anguma* contained in the crocodile. In yet other cases, the animal containing the *anguma* behaves in a mysterious manner and the sign is interpreted as proof of the presence of child substance in time for the ensuing wave of inhibiting empathy to prevent the animal from being killed at all. This is the case in the instance where a man, on waking, found a “porcupine” (i.e. echidna) curled up inside his cowboy hat. This turned out to be his future daughter’s *anguma*.

In another instance of conception finding, a man was carrying a sack of flour on his shoulder when it inexplicably dropped to the ground. The man and his wife later found that the woman was pregnant and, on reflection, realised that the *anguma* of his son had jumped onto his shoulder and upset the flour bag, ameliorating his “shame” at dropping the bag (which had happened in private). The child spirit here had wounded the father’s pride just as missing an easy target with spear or rifle might do. Mowaljarlai told how a man experienced shame just from the fact of encountering the child spirit for the first time “like meeting any new person...a man doesn’t know what to say...he get a little shock, very awkward” (cf. also Myers, 1976:147-150 on the “shame” of meeting strangers).

When mention is made that “today is so and so’s birthday” the response will be a sudden wave of empathy for that person expressed as ‘ahhh...poor fella”. While birthdays as such were not, until quite recently, a marked event, there is probably some congruence here with conception events in as much as the mere act of
remembering someone in a helpless state elicits an empathic reaction. Here, remembering someone can hurt the person doing the remembering as well as being felt to be potentially invasive on the remembered person’s intimate self, causing shame to them—cause enough for sympathy in itself. This seems to be something similar to the shame induced by one’s parents showing baby photos to one’s peers in later life. Conversely, it is believed that forgetting someone’s name can be damaging to that person, leaving them wandering around in a psychical limbo, disembodied, possibly dying from this act of neglect. Older people become worried for the person whose name they can’t remember, spending as long as it takes to “find” the name before moving on to a new topic of conversation. This “finding” involves an intensive scanning through psychical space to recover the lost object. Some people have expressed their anxiety about not “finding” a name by saying, “I think I must be getting deaf” [V3, 47] as though the name is “out there” but cannot be “received”. Here the sense of “finding” is a conflation of active and passive modalities in which the person is actively seeking for the name but the name must also make itself heard by the listening recipient. Similarly, men with no children will explain sadly that they “couldn’t find any kids...I don’t know what for”. This conflation of activity and passivity, characteristic of “finding” child spirits and names may be elucidated by Devereux’s remark that

remembering is functionally a goal-directed and reality-adjusted activity, but structurally and dynamically it represents a repudiation of present reality, in that intrapsychic reality, rather than immediate external reality, occupies the center of consciousness (Devereux 1974:406).

The action of “finding” a spirit child has distinct similarities in its general contours to the agentive sense of “totemising”. Child spirits or essences “push” themselves onto their fathers in a similar way that the wanjina “pushed himself” into the soft rock of what became his clan’s country during the larlan. Because a father “hunts” his children by “finding” their conception spirits, he also, albeit somewhat tangentially or “covertly” as Merlan puts it, incorporates them into his clan group and a relationship

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79 This shows considerable psychological insight. Devereux (1974) pointed out that forgetting a name is often a denial of unconscious aggression towards the person, explaining why we feel ‘found out’ and embarrassed when we do this in the presence of someone we re-meet.

80 Povinelli remarks that “memories are seen as a product of work like other products of economic and mythic Dreaming action” (1993:146).
with a certain clan country and its totemic symbols. In this action, hunting can become an “embodiment of human and mythic ancestral desire” (Povinelli 1993:139). By “finding” his father a man’s anguma also “finds” his clan country and actively “totemises”, gi, certain totemic species. Sometimes, as part of the “dynamic between reproduced relations and lived social action” (Merlan 1986:488; Povinelli 1993), this involves a conscious strategy of actually locating or re-locating spirit conception sites within the father’s actual dambun. Several men told me that though their children’s “finding” places were in another fairly distant dambun “I move ‘em in right place, I got them there now langa my place”. The children’s wunggurr names were subsequently derived from places in their own patrilineal countries, while the stories of their “finding” continued to name the place where the “fortuitous” events had actually occurred.

![Diagram](image)

**Fig.5** Cyclical Relationships between *wanjina*, *anguma* (Child Essence) and Clansman.

The reciprocal wounding between father and child in conception finding is congruent with the fairly peripheral role of the father in this society to disciplining children (cf. also Warner 1958, Love 1936). It was often asserted that the father “has nothing to say” about such things. Strehlow remarks upon a similar situation pertaining in the central desert where “mothers gratify every whim of their offspring and fathers do not bother about any disciplinary measures” (1947:99-100). Since a man’s son is also married to that man’s classificatory mother, an older man will often appeal to his son’s wife’s kind-heartedness to look after him and feed him, “mother gotta do it”, and his son’s attitude to this will have considerable bearing upon how much his wife
is prepared to do in this regard. The power balance between father and son remains highly unstable throughout their lives.

In this section I have found it necessary to explore, if only in a preliminary way, the dynamics of the reciprocal father/son relationship, particularly in relation to conception spirit finding, in order to show what I am characterising as an actively seizing relationship between father and son. By lodging itself in the soft unprotected part of the father's body, anganda, the gap between the collar bones, or in his hair knot, the child's anguma in a sense “hunts” the father, “spears” him in the course of conception events.

In this way the anguma behave like the wanjina which also dwell in the permanent water-holes and also hunt and kill using various natural species as weapons. Here I refer back to G—'s explanation of his consubstantial relationship with his wanjina, Ngajngu. The King Brown snake, bamali, bit him on the arm in his life as a young wanjina. All the other wanjina carried his inert body up to the cave of Merrinbini, his wunggurr place, and began to cry over him but he awoke again and forever afterwards G— carried that King Brown in his stomach, and couldn't be harmed by it. He never touched sick people with the arm which was bitten, the right arm, because he had “the danger” of the King Brown in that arm. The aspect of G— which is wanjina, Nyajngu, continued to carry this dangerous weapon “doubled up inside me, like in ice” [V.3A, 72]. All long-necked water animals, such as crocodile, long-necked turtle, water-goanna, eel and brolga are said to be the wanjina’s “spears” or “weapons”. These weapons are used in battles with human beings and other wanjina in the narratives of the larlan. Apart from their shared affinity with water and their outer morphology which lends them to “spear-like” uses, these animals are also known to be particularly replete with fat and therefore ancestral potency. Given the earlier exegesis (Sec. 4.1.1 above) which has shown amad (kidney fat) to be strongly associated with amud (semen) it is not unreasonable to find a congruence, if not a complete identity, here between the hunting and killing by the wanjina with his animal weapons and a paternal grandfather's (who is often also the wanjina for that clan) reincarnation through hunting/finding/killing (his son) and then also being hunted/found/killed (by his son). The dyadic pair of FF and SS “find” “hit”, “kill” the child spirit’s father just as the wanjina throws his fat-replete weapons at living human beings to destroy them. The wanjina can, in this particular way, be thought of as “hunting” his own clan members in the sense that he hunts, as a paternal grandfather,
the animal which contains the man who will spiritually re-conceive him as a son. The weapons which he uses to “hunt” this man become the animal receptacles within which the hunting father often finds the spirit children in conception events. The raining down upon the earth of crocodile, eel, long-neck turtle and other species, fills up the waterholes, “the living water”, with fatty water-beings emerging from the body of wanjina as projections of himself which contain ancestral power and will be hunted by living people. This rain occurs, in turn, in response to human ritual interaction with the wanjina. The wanjina generation being ego’s FF’s generation implies that the fat/semen/ancestral power of ego’s FF enters the water-hole to be re-found by ego’s F. This is one of the reasons these fat-laden water animals in particular are subject to age-grade food prohibitions for boys in particular.

4.4 Body Scarring: Cutting Open The Self

A person’s body had to be “marked”, “hit” with live examples of these animals by mature, married people with children before he could eat these species himself. These marks are called brilgi (see Sec.4.4 below). In this respect it is significant that, although the body scarifications were used on both genders in much the same way, boys, who will go on to “find” spirit children on reaching social maturity, are subject to more strict regulation of the food prohibitions. Boys, for example, may not eat wulumara, Long Neck Turtle, before being cut with the appropriate set of brilgi, but immature girls were regarded as being able to eat both Long and Short Necked Turtle without restriction.

The cicatrices which were cut in stages into the bodies of men and women during their youth are “traced” over the marks created on the skin by an older person wielding a particular animal as a weapon and running its claws down the skin. The first set of marks made, nyowala, were cut around the young person’s waist. These were followed by gulili on the shoulders. Then bangudmal on the lower back, then ardi-nangga on the abdomen, then oyonggu on the calf, wulumara nangga on the

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81 Jadran Mimica (1992:87-95) has explored the ontological dimensions of the patrilateral marriage system used by the Iqwaye people of the southwestern interior of the New Guinea highlands. They share this preferential marriage arrangement with the people of the wanjina cultural domain. Mimica explains that the marriage of a man to a classificatory FM, because he is identified with a FF, involves “the only possible obviation of incest which purports to be exactly its closed approximation. Thus in egocentric terms I can formulate it as follows: instead of myself, my own son can marry my (classificatory) mother, and as such he can give birth to myself” (ibid: 88).
biceps, nyowala on the neck and finally, manambarra, horizontal incisions made across the chest [V.3B, 129]. Because the animals which leave these marks on the body in the process of scarification all contain potent fats, they are not suitable to be ingested by younger people prior to their being themselves “marked” by these animals. Spirit children are often ingested or at least transmitted to women by ingestion and sexually immature people must avoid them. Following the process of marking the body with the incisions which make the tracks of these animals, the body must be ceremonially “annointed”, amandiya, with yellow animal fat being smeared onto the body. Amandiya takes a further meaning in late teenagehood when boys will be smeared with sexual fluids from a mature woman, to inspire an appetite for a married sexual life.

The process of “finding” conception spirits, then, cannot be treated only as a category of social bonding to country. As an agentive process it is implicated in every other type of social relationship as well. This becomes clear if a correlation is made between the sites on the body at which the brilgi are progressively cut and lunggun (or dambaj ngama), the pulses or flutterings in various muscle groups which I discussed in Chapter 3.

Combining these two sets of data together, the first indicating the body sites in which the imago of various relatives enter the body-ego, and the second ordering this entry in terms of the series in which the brilgi were cut, we arrive at the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body site</th>
<th>Relative</th>
<th>Cicatrice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>umbarran</td>
<td>hip</td>
<td>gurndi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emandi</td>
<td>shoulder</td>
<td>idja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wambur</td>
<td>lower back</td>
<td>gurndi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mandu</td>
<td>stomach</td>
<td>malangi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oyen.gu</td>
<td>calf</td>
<td>abi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amala</td>
<td>buttocks</td>
<td>ngadjji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anugu</td>
<td>biceps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nungga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngamun</td>
<td>chest</td>
<td>malangi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>knee</td>
<td>gayangi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>malanban</td>
<td>armpit</td>
<td>rambarr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wanjari</td>
<td>thigh</td>
<td>waya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2. Interpretive Cycle of Cicatrisation.**
An interpretive uncovering of the significant stages in the Ngarinyin life cycle is possible from these data. It will be noted that the scarification series as interpreted here makes no distinction between genders just as the application of brilgi is applied to both sexes. Van Gennep remarked that in such practices “the human body has been treated like a simple piece of wood which each has cut and trimmed to suit him; that which projected has been cut off, partitions have been broken through, flat surfaces have been carved –sometimes as among the Australians with great imagination” (1960:72). This is the case here, though the “simple piece of wood” which he describes is in fact an extremely complex one when we come to consider the elaborate meaning structures which are attached by Ngarinyin people to wood when it serves as an extension of skin and the whole body (see below on waya [Chapter 8], angga jilinya and mayangarri [Chapter 6]). In terms of the body image which such a “cutting out” of the person creates, this scarification process seems to concretise the desire for a bounded skin. Schilder informs us that the experience of our own skins as a separating surface is by no means given to us naturally because, the outline of the skin is not felt as a smooth and straight surface. This outline is blurred. There are no sharp borderlines between the outside world and the body (1950:85).

The Ngarinyin person undergoing scarification can be conceived of, then, as both being “opened up” to the world and simultaneously “carved out” of it as a distinct being (cf. Tamisari 1998:271; Myers 1986:117). The inflicting of pain to different parts of the body, corresponding to different relatives, “organises” affect in a very distinct and undeniable way, since “when we suffer from an organic pain, the model of the body changes immediately in its libidinous structure...The aching organ becomes a centre of renewed experimentation within the body” (Schilder 1950:126; cf. Leder 1980). These relationship inscriptions map out a social organising of affect of the person in the following temporal sequence:
1. waist/hip  sexual relationships between man and woman/marriage.

Nyowal is a Ngarinyin verb meaning "to stick, to join, to adhere". It has a synonym nyambalag, which was glossed to me as "like a stain, like how wife stick to her husband" (DM).

2. shoulders  fatherhood/ wanjina status marked by the vertical lines of rain streaming from the shoulders which is also where the wanjina carries features of the country such as caves and hills. The father's dreaming of children long precedes physical conception and the child essences are often said to be carried on the father's shoulders until conception takes place. These scarifications were explained to me as "what we carry, what we bring along with us" [DM V3: 1].

3. lower back  incorporation of the maternal imago into the body-ego manifesting as menstrual pain indicating female sexual maturity. Given what I have said above concerning the ambisexual nature of these cuttings, I note here that two men who didn't have children said that they "couldn't get good for banggudmal", meaning that they didn't achieve this male procreative function.

4. stomach  motherhood. The maternal affection which is embodied at this site in the body was expressed by men in the pressing together and rubbing of stomachs particularly between MB and ZS.

5. calf  emergence of children, specifically embodying sibling relationship represented by symmetry of calves, the first dioscuric pair, differentiated identity emerging from unifying trunk/groin of the parent.

6. buttocks  locus of infant's identification with mother, indexically representative of point of contact with mother's hip or shoulder and implicated with 3. above as the buttocks are continuous with lower back.

7. chest  mother's brother relationship representing psychical equivalence of mother and her brother, located in body site which identifies the maternal breast with male nurturance, embodying mature status in law, "where we are open to what's coming...we have spilled out blood for

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82 Stanner described body scarifications as "ineffaceable signs designating stages in the socialisation of (fn. Continues o.p.)"
honour and now we face the problems..” (DM, V3:1). The cutting of the manambarra scarifications mark out a man as marriageable and ready to engage in wurnan ceremonies. The horizontal scars have white ochre rubbed into them symbolising fatty substances as nurturant maternal milk (see Sec.4.1.1 above on moiety symbolism of white; also Thomson cited in Tamisari 1997:22fn.). These two forms of exchange assert a man’s equality and autonomy at the same time as they embroil him in a cycle of indebtedness which will last the rest of his life (cf. Merlan 1997:112). It is worth noting here, in advance of my discussion of wurnan (Chapter 5 below), that Thomson recorded the term for ceremonial exchange partners in Arnhem Land as kumur maarnda (lit. “sternum those two” which he glosses as “breast to breast” or “face to face” [1949:76-77]). Thomson goes on to explain that the spiritual power emanating from such exchanges is to be understood as the “power to respond” (ibid.78) to the long term nature of the relationship, a desire or urge to give as distinct from a simple response to a demand. This desire to respond spontaneously, notwithstanding the encompassment of each partner within a fundamental cycle of exchanges, can be understood as an example of what Laing called the “inducement to embody” the other. In this respect the “sternum to sternum” exchange partners express what Levi-Strauss, drawing upon the work on childhood experiences of sharing by Susan Isaacs (1933), called “a wish to be potent in giving” (1969:86-87).

The symbolic presentation of the imago of various relative’s in the subject’s body-ego refashions the child’s first experiences of intersubjectivity and makes explicit the fractal nature of the person in this psycho-physical world by showing us that the Ngarinyin person is “never a unit standing in relation to aggregate, or an aggregate standing in relation to a unit, but always an entity with relationship implied” (Wagner 1991:163). The cutting of others onto self, and the cutting of self out of others, allow us to map out the process of constituting the person through exchanges which create and reproduce relationality across the whole social matrix (cf. Tamisari 1998: 255). Importantly, these exchanges always take place between sets of dyadic partners, just

man” (1979:121).
as the first exchanges of identity take place between the partners in the mother/child dyad. The father/son dyad, for example, mirrors the reproductive relationship of mother (mother's brother)/child (sister's son), since it is the father who is regarded as "carrying" the child on his shoulders (or in angandu, the soft part of his chest), both as infant and as anguma, just as the wanjina carried caves, the reproductive matrix of people and country, on his shoulders, the mother carried the child internally, and the mother's brother carried his sister's son (a unified personage at clan level reckoning) on his shoulders in the course of initiation. I defer further elaboration upon of the crucial issue of exchanges between these relatives until my discussion of the wurnan ceremonial exchange cycle in Chapter 5.

4.5 Adoption: The Person Transmitted (1)

The fact that a classificatory relationship may link one with a FFB/FFZ in another clan may mean that one is born into, or actively "grasps" as I have argued above, a dual set of symbolic species/phenomena. Such a relationship is one of the ways in which a person may succeed to a clan estate in which there are no living members left. This abi relationship was first remarked upon in print by Rumsey (1996) and has since been confirmed by further research.

People also succeed to clan countries through adoption. The practice of adoption, particularly of boys, is common throughout northern Australian Aboriginal societies (cf. Thomson 1949:12, 3fi.). Ngarinyin people call the practice "dalja", or in Aboriginal English, "growing up" (cf. Coate and Elkin 1974:115). This is not an arbitrary or merely contingent practice. People emphasise, for instance, that this is how somebody from outside the region "gets his big name, joi ingira\textsuperscript{8}, that is to say, gets a patrilineage name.

Traditional law and custom dictated that an actual or classificatory father's brother would adopt a child in a variety of circumstances, including the death of a person's actual father. This is the case with the Ngarinyin man Da.J. whose actual parents (also Ngarinyin) died young and he was "grown up" by his mother's sister, W.N., and her husband, the late Mu.M., a "correct" classificatory father. Da.J. thus

\textsuperscript{8}Alan Rumsey (pers.com. 2000) explains that this term literally means "let it become great for me" or "let me become renowned".
retains custodianship to both his actual father's country, Warrgalingongo/Manjilwa, and to Brremararra, the same moiety estate of his adoptive father.

Another case in which adoption might take place is where the actual father is in a murlal, "wrong way" (non-socially sanctioned) relationship to the mother (in which case a classificatory father's brother would be derived from a proper potential husband for the child's mother). Such an assignment to a "right line" father would thus place the child in a particular and socially sanctioned clan and moiety category. The same social process is used to place people who are married into a particular clan country, but by birth are from outside the region. That is to say the father, if coming to dwell permanently within the wanjina-wunggurr social sphere, is assigned a clan which makes him a "right way" partner for a woman within it. This was the case with the father of D.F, whose father was adopted into "top" Galarungarri clan despite his grandfather being a Kija person.

This same social reckoning is used to assign clan membership to the children of a non-Aboriginal father (or an Aboriginal man from a distant region) and a local Aboriginal mother, as in the case of the Ngarinyin man C.D., whose actual father was from Queensland. Because his mother belonged to Liyarr clan, Wodo moiety, C.D. was adopted by Larrikin Molorlai, a man of the Balalanggarri clan, who was in the socially correct relationship to C.D.'s mother to have been C.D.'s father. This adoption into correct clan membership is said to have gone some way towards consoling men whose promised wife had been taken by a European or Aboriginal man from outside the wanjina-wunggurr social sphere.

A further circumstance in which adoption might take place is where a man having no male descendants asks for a boy child from another man of the same moiety and in a classificatory brother relationship to the child's actual father. Such a child thence forward holds rights to the clan countries of both his actual father and his adoptive father. The Ngarinyin man N.P. holds such rights to his actual father's clan country, "top" Galarungarri, and his adoptive father's (Alec Wirijangu) country, Wodoyngrari. In this instance Paddy, now a very senior and knowledgeable man, holds the rights even to songs dreamt by his adoptive father and takes a particular interest in the area of Wodoyngrari. This is another of the ways in which succession to deceased clan countries takes place.

Though the lines of transmission are similar, a distinction can be made in general between the adoption of infants/children and the succession of adults to
deceased clan countries. In the case of succession this can happen through a
classificatory father’s father, abi, relationship, or through a classificatory father, irra, relationship.

4.6. Naming practices and clan-based social identities: The Person Refocused

The preceding section has shown how indirect exchange relationships utilise
different clan groupings’ spatial positions in order to regulate social relationships and
the flow of goods throughout the Northern Kimberley. Given that today only the
members of a small number of these clan groupings can be said to live in close
proximity or even have regular physical access to their clan estates, what incentives
and opportunities are there to keep alive knowledge of clan countries and the
interdependent relationships between them?

My data suggest at the outset that for those under forty years of age (i.e. the
first generation of Mowanjum born Ngarinyin) knowledge of named clan countries
has become somewhat attenuated. The degree to which this is true is made difficult to
gauge by the fact that many of the bush raised generation, just as their juniors do,
continually raise the issue of importance of wunggurr place to their personal and
social identities. I interpret the junior generation’s attenuated knowledge of clan
countries as a result of the lack of opportunity to get to know country as a network of
linked countries for which particular people have specific responsibilities. This is,
understandably, more the case for those living in Mowanjum, Derby and Wyndham
than for those living in Ngarinyin communities on remote cattle stations. Certainly
those in their twenties and thirties are much more likely to be able to speak about the
location and name of their wunggurr places, which are a regular topic of conversation
amongst older relatives, than to name their father’s clan country for example.
Nevertheless, there is a persistence in younger Ngarinyin people of certain modes of
orientation towards country expressed in naming practices.

One of ways in which clan groupings have maintained a social identity in the
contemporary context is through the transformation of named clan groups into groups
which share a “family” name. Each of these family-named groups continues to be
regarded as having a particularly strong association with a particular tract of country.

The potential for the transformation of some types of bush names into family
names was always implicit in customary naming practices in that, out of the many
names that a person possessed, one would tend to be a name which had been derived
from the mother, so that Gawanali, for instance, denoted "offspring of the woman Gawan" (cf. also Coate and Elkin, 1974 and Lommel, 1952). However this suffixing name signifying "offspring of a woman---" needn't have referred to the mother of the actual person with that name since the person in question may have taken that name "ready-made" from a classificatory father's father. Thus a person may be known by a name derived from a classificatory father's father's mother. In his fieldwork at Mowanjum and Kalumburu in 1963, Lucich found that family names were also being derived from "the father's Aboriginal name ('bush name') as at Mowanjum, or from his djoi as in the case of Kalumburu. The djoi was a specific name for a patrilineage which consisted of a person and his or her genealogical agnates" (Lucich 1985:453). He further commented that "although the emergent nuclear family pattern appeared to be consonant with the introduced living arrangements in huts and small houses, it depended (like the tip of an ice-berg) on the traditional organisation" (ibid.).

Ngarinyin people also bear wunggurr names (section 3.2.5 and Love 1936:182), which are referred to in Aboriginal English as "bush names", and often a range of nick-names referring to some personal idiosyncrasy or memorable event (e.g. Waya-maya for a man who was speared with wire-tipped spear, Orugudi ("no ears") for a man who has always been partly deaf). In addition, since the movement onto cattle stations, government depots, and missions, various family names have been derived from European names, often from the manager or even from the name of the station. In some instances, the imposed European name has been subsequently used to name a natural feature in the landscape which a station boss has become aware is the traditional country of one his Ngarinyin workers. E.C., for example, took his second name from the name of the station, Ellenbrae, where his working life was centred. This station name is in turn, according to local Ngarinyin, an anglicisation of the traditional name Alumburay. His first name, Campbell (probably given by a white boss at Kuranjie, Jack Campbell), was given to a creek, Campbell Creek, which runs through his father's country at Guranji. Campbell's younger brother, C.P., had his European second name (an Anglicisation of one of his Aboriginal names, Jedman)

84 Love is interesting in this regard as he points out that "[M]any of the wunggurr place-names are the names of parts of the body, and are named after some fancied resemblance to a part of the body of some storied animal....Njimandum, which means Her-shoulder, the name of a rock which is called the shoulder of the wedge-tailed eagle; Ndjalim, which means Her-lip, the name of a tongue of land running out to sea, which is called the lip of the rock python etc." (Love 1936:182).
bestowed on Chapman Creek, which runs into the same tributary as Campbell Creek in Guranji. Campbell also had the *wunggurr* - "bush name" - *Yiyon*. This receiving and bestowal of European names can be seen, in this instance at least, to involve a complex form of recognition of links to country which even European bosses have been induced to recognise.

In like manner, Ngarinyin genealogies show in the last three or so generations that the European convention of having a first name and a "family name" has been adopted by many people. This development was encouraged by welfare authorities after 1962 when it was deemed convenient for the newly available child endowment entitlements to be calculated through the mother and the mother's second name was ascribed to her children in bureaucratic documents. Thus the manner in which the "family name" has been adopted does not necessarily conform to the Anglo-Australian custom which is fundamentally a patrilineal naming system. Many Ngarinyin people still take a family name from the mother's name or sometimes the mother's married name from a previous husband (first marriages usually being a "right way" union). P. N.'s children, for instance, take the family name Nenowatt, from his wife's first husband. Paddy's *wunggurr* name, N., has personal connotations unique to himself, which would make it an inappropriate family name for his children whereas Nenowatt is Paddy's wife's first husband's mother's name. This instance shows too that many of the older generation have taken not a second ('family') name but rather a first ('Christian') name and continued to use their bush name as a distinguishing second name (because of the duplication of Paddies, Maisies, Mollies and Jackies, names which were given to the bush raised generation by European supervisors of one kind or another).

Despite these changes in personal nomenclature, it can be seen from Ngarinyin genealogies that certain family names constantly re-occur in the groups of people associated with certain clan estates. Whereas the concept of cognatic kin (i.e., traced through both men and women) is in some instances moving into an ascendency over the notion of clan groups, it can be shown that this change is taking place along lines derived from local custom. These family groups are regarded as being closely associated with specific, well-bounded areas of country. The senior generation of the *Ty.* family, for instance, take their "family" name from their mother, *Dadayu*, but the next generation take *Ty.* from their father's family name (e.g., Justin *Ty.*), that is to say from their father's mother's name, but each of the children and the grandchildren are
equally regarded as identified with the clan country Wajinngongo. When people speak of "N. mob" for instance they are talking about people who belong to Galarungarri country, or in some contexts those who belong to Galarungarri and Barurrungarri, adjacent, same moiety estates whose members share the contemporary community at Marranbirdingarri under the leadership of Neowarra. Similarly when people talk about "Dambun mob" they are referring to the senior man C.P. of Liyarr clan country and his adopted children. These permutations of possible naming combinations are one way in which clan identities are asserted in the contemporary social world, and retain their grounding in specific dambun estates. In other words, the social usage of names can be seen to speak to a connection behind particular groups of people and certain tracts of country.

Another way in which these dambun-based identities are made explicit is that many family groups orient themselves towards their traditional countries wherever possible even in settlements which may be hundreds of kilometres from their traditional lands. Lommel, in 1938, reported on the same tendency for groups to situate their camps in an orientation which reflected the relative positions of their traditional countries (1994:279; cf. Blundell 1978 on spatiality of camping arrangements in the bush). This phenomenon has been explored in relation to the "old" Mowanjum site (Freeman 1974) where the arrangement of the housing of family groups replicated the traditional warnan spatial organization of the clan countries. This spatial orientation was replicated with the shift to new Mowanjum in the late 1970s. In present day Mowanjum, for example, the households of the senior Galarungarri, Barurrungarri and Gandiwal men are located in the northernmost part of the settlement just as those clan countries are in the northernmost sector of the wanjina/wunggurr region. The Brrewanggudu household is situated south of, but adjacent to, Galarungarri just as it is laid out in the local social geography of dambun. The southernmost camp is occupied by the families of Wororra Jiliya clan members and this too is how their country is structurally laid out in relation to the others. In the contemporary Dodnun settlement the actual orientation towards clan countries of the new housing arrangements is inverted by one hundred and eighty degrees but the structural relationships between them maintain their relational patterning.
4.7 A system of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage: The Person Transmitted (2)

One of the markers of the kinship system of the Ngarinyin lifeworld is the practice, noted in passing above (Sec.1.4.3), of transforming the ego-centric relationships of kinship into socio-centric identities in clan groups which then relate to each other by a pair of reciprocal relationship terms (cf. Elkin 1964:80, and my discussion of same in Chapter 3). The most important use of these social categories is in the marriage system, where the real distinctiveness of the north Kimberley kinship system becomes most apparent. In this system a single kin term is used, in certain contexts, to refer to an entire patriclan and this marks out the marriageable clans for each other clan. As I have discussed in Chapter 3., Rumsey (1981) has pointed out that Elkin generalised this tendency too widely and that in most interpersonal contexts, amongst which we must include assignment of actual marriage partner, that is to say in the egocentric contexts of kinship, a distinction is certainly made between adjacent generation members of the one clan. Thus, where Elkin (1964:79) was puzzled to find that his informants gave the same term “KANDINGI” (GARNDINGI) for a man’s MB, MF and MBS, Rumsey was able to learn, as have I, that Ngarinyin people were using the term mamingi for MF. The male members of each clan were indeed expected to marry women who fell into the preferred category of “father’s mother” but this didn’t mean that a man’s preferred marriage partner was anyone of these “father’s mothers”. His ideal partner/s would be women from this category who also belonged to one of two particular clans, usually adjacent clan groups (cf. also Blundell and Layton 1978:235). This preference emerges from a system of alternating generational marriage between the male members of one clan with women from a set of four other clans. A man’s father would marry women from one of a pair of opposite moiety, usually adjacent clans and his son would be expected to marry from the other of that pair. Thus a man’s mother would come from one clan, his wife from another, his sister would marry into another again and his daughter into yet another, thereby creating a set of relationships between five clans which would be reproduced by at least five partially overlapping other clans, like a series of hands linked each by one finger (see Fig. 6 below).

For example, men of the Brrejirad clan traditionally married women from the Brrewanggudu or "bottom" Warrgalengongo clans and Brrejirad women married men of the Jibilingarri or Garnjingarri clans
The model outlined in Blundell and Layton (1978:233) discusses this actual cluster of clans, which I will use to illustrate how it works in practice in some contemporary relationships:

1. M.H., Brrejirad, calls Jo.M., and other members of the Garnjingarri clan, Gurndi (husband). M.H.’s sister would be a potential wife for Jo.M.’s brother and they relate to each other in these classificatory kin categories calculated in terms of marriage relationships between their own patrilineal clans.

2. The Garnjingarri woman, Jo.M., married a Wayangarri man and consequently their daughter, G.J. is herself Wayangarri. G.L., Brrejalngga clan, has his mother from Garnjingarri because his father’s clan ideally received Garnjingarri women in marriage. These two cases are examples of the prescribed model of alternating generational marriage of Garnjingarri women to Wayangarri and Brrejalngga.

3. Be.J, a man of the "bottom" Warrgalingongo clan, took as his wife Do.M., Brrejalngga, a contiguous opposite moiety clan of the correct father's mother category. C.B., from the next descending generation of Brrejalngga women, married J.A., of Brrewanggudu clan in accordance with the ideal traditional model.

These relationships of consanguinity and affinity are represented in the diagram below. In addition I show how a number of other clans which lie in adjacent areas and which are related to these core clans but without cluttering the diagram it is not possible to show all the connections between these clans. All the letters represent what the nominal ego in Brrejirad clan would call both the promised women and the members of the clan they are promised to. The bubbles emerging from each of the larger ellipsoid shapes are representations of the marriageable women from each of the named clans and the directions in which they would be promised to men of the other clans.
Fig. 6 A typical clan marriage cluster.
This system of preferred marriage between a man and a woman of the same clan that his father's father married is expressed as a socio-centric relationship. Expressed in egocentric kinship reckoning it is the marriage of male ego to a classificatory FMBSD or FMBSSD (both of which are called FM) (cf. Blundell and Layton 1978: 232).

While the great majority of marriages prior to, and during the early stages of mission and government settlement influence, conform to the model outlined above there are notable exceptions. For instance, all second marriages for women, while often enough conforming to a pattern of marriage of a widowed woman to a surviving brother of her husband, are asserted to have been a matter of "free choice": prescribed patterns could be disregarded as long as they fall in to the broad category-correctness demanded by moiety exogamy. Thus it is possible to meet senior men who are married to someone they used to call (a distant classificatory) "mother" before marrying them in a second marriage (cf. Scheffler 1978: 414 and my discussion of the same in Chapter 3). Others accept this seemingly strange situation because it is a second marriage and is to someone of the correct moiety. The pattern of second marriages is somewhat obscured by the difficulty of telling whether any particular union was a polygynous or successive marriage. The Brejalgingga man Bal Bal Wudangunda, for instance, was married to four Garnjingarri women, some or all of which marriages may have been contemporaneous. All four marriages conform to the ideal model of marriage to a woman of a man's father's mother's clan.

Secondly, certain clan groups were regarded as being predisposed to murlul (forbidden) unions on account of the activities of their wanjina ancestors in the larlan. The stories associated with these beings are sometimes concerned with "wrong way" liaisons which have established a pattern of repetition in the members of that wanjina's clan. In this sense, some people and some groups were expected to act "outside the law", thus keeping alive the legitimacy of prescribed marriage rules for the majority of people. Such cases could be described as exemplary transgressions, reinforcing notions of "proper relationships". After a period of being avoided and criticised, if the couple withstands community complaint and recrimination, such a

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85 Blundell and Layton report a figure of 89% of marriage bestowals prior to 1932 conforming with the ideal model of inter clan exchanges (1978:236)
union will usually be accepted and justified with the philosophical attitude; “that mob always been like that”.

In the contemporary situation, enormously increased mobility has meant that younger people have been able to choose partners from more distant communities such as Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek and Wyndham - thus marrying outside the wanjinawunggurr region. On the one hand, this has meant that the issue of "wrong way" unions is less critical because the partner from a distant community is not likely to be in a forbidden category from the viewpoint of the wanjina/wunggurr domain’s marriage laws (though even some of these relationships can be highly disapproved of since older people can readily transpose the North Kimberley moiety and kinship order onto the four and eight section system which predominates on the desert fringe86). On the other hand, each union outside the system of ascribed inter-clan relationships removes a marriageable person from the pool of potential "right way" partners thus increasing the pressure on the system of promised, or at least approved, marriages. For the majority of the most recently married generation the rule of moiety exogamy is still observed but the system of "promises" between specific clans is much less intact. There is, however, a set of inter-clan relations associated with the marriages of living members of the older generation, which continues to play a part in everyday life, as will be exemplified in Section 4.7.

On the following page, I present the data which I have discussed above on the fractal constitution of the Ngarinyin person through a network of relationships in relation to two particular individuals. Here “the person as human being and person as lineage or clan are equally arbitrary sectionings or identifications of [an] enchainment, different projections of its fractality” (Wagner 1991:116). The “different proportions” of these individuals are explained upon the following pages (pp.173-4 below). The embracing figure of wunggurr is used as the horizon of focus at each level, from the foetalised image within the microcosm of the individual body, to the macrocosmic

86 This is despite Elkin’s claim that “it would really be impossible to apply the section system to the Ungarinyin terms...Likewise the sub-section system would be of no value....”(1932:317). Rumsey’s (1981) emendations of Elkin’s kinship terms, and my own discussion of the gajarangbarr relationship above, showed that generation levels can play more of a role than Elkin had realised. Blundell and Layton (1978) had also discerned the importance of the alternation of generations for marriage patterns. Wurla people on the eastern edge of Ngarinyin country do seem to have been utilising the section system simultaneously with the moiety “skins”, certainly for the past fifty years, and probably much longer, since these are the people that Kaberry worked with in the 1930s and described as using subsections (Kaberry 1939)
immanence of *wunggurr* throughout the entirety of Ngarinyin country (and which can also be potentially expanded to the whole of Australian continent, and entire cosmos).
Fig. 7 Fractal Person #1 in clan and wanjina domain matrix
In the diagram above (Fig.7):
the points along Line A represent all the named *wanjina* throughout the cultural domain.

The points along line B represent all the historic personages who have lived and died and are still to live and die in the Wajinngongo clan. Here R.T., R.T.’s father, Mogayad, and R.T.’s son, R. Jnr. are named.

The points along Line C are all the named *wanjina* who belong to Wajinngongo clan. Mogayad appears twice along this line, as a historical person at the intersection of Line B, Wajinngongo people and at the intersection with Line G, the child spirits in one waterhole. These two component parts of Mogayad’s personage are triangulated with his *abi* (SS). R. Jnr. to form the outline of one segment of a patrilineage of alternate generation persons who are regarded as being consubstantial with each other. As historical personages die they become assimilated to named and then unnamed *wanjina* as Line C moves over time in the direction of the broad arrow. Thus, at this time, Mogayad is in the process of becoming *wanjina*. Eventually R.T and his son will also become *wanjina*.

The points along line D are all the people who belong to Barurrungarri clan which intermarries with Wajinngongo. Hence R.T’s mother, Dadayu, from whom the family take their name, *Ty.*, is represented at a point of triangulation between her husband Mogayad of the Barurrungarri clan, and her son, R.T. The segments along Line F, all clans, thus represent vectors of marriage between the clans. The line D representing Barurrungarri clan forms one facet of the triangle of R.T.’s social personage, joining his historical person with his *wunggurr* conception event. This point along Line G, all the child spirits in one waterhole, is triangulated with R.T.’s *abi*, the upper alternate generation personage from whom he received one of his names and became a Wajinngongo *wanjina*. Line D is also an aspect of the social personage of R.Jnr. because he would also take a promised wife from Barurrungarri just like his FF. His classificatory FM would become his wife.

The points along line E represent all the spirit children in the known world. Any number of perpendicular lines for different spirit centres could be drawn intersecting with this line.

Thus Line G represents all the child spirits in one waterhole from which R. Jnr. has emerged, as well as his father, R.T and his *abi*, Mogayad.
The green triangle unites R Jnr., his *abi* and his *abi’s wunggurr*. This expanded triangle contains R. T as an enclosed subset because both R. Jnr. and Mogayad are R.T.’s father. The scale of the personage is necessarily bigger between these alternate generation persons.

Fig. 8 below shows Fractal Person #2, the son of Fractal Person #1. The shift of Line C is one generational move forward in the direction of the broad arrow, putting R.T’s son in the focus of *wunggurr*. All other relationships maintain their relative positions.

Note that Line E extends indefinitely and extends beyond the triangle representing the *wanjina* domain since all other Aboriginal cultural groups in the continent seem to have or to have had child spirit and Rainbow Serpent beliefs. The body of *wunggurr* could thus be drawn at any scale along Line E.
Fig. 8 Fractal Person #2 in clan and *wanjina* domain matrix
Chapter 5. The wurnan, exchange relationships; the person expanded

"A man can't sit in a corner and eat everything he's got to himself. That's more the gardiya (white fella) law" Paddy Neowarra

Operating in a parallel fashion to the system of inter-clan exchanges in marriage is the wurnan, a network of exchange routes linking clans and individuals in a system of indirect and delayed reciprocity. That the two systems are emically viewed as being alike if not identical was conveyed to me by several older women who stated explicitly that they called their gurndi clan, that is the clan from which their husbands came, "our wurnan that one" (L.W. and B.A.). Such statements make it clear that wurnan and marriage exchanges are regarded as analogous to each other. Blundell also noted that

sacred boards, women, and trade goods 'go by wunan' not only in space, but the order in time of their exchange among clans is clearly specified by the prevailing wunan model.....Exchanges among clans are ordered in such a way that they may be viewed as a translation of the wunan spatial model into a social exchange model (Blundell 1978b: 6; cf. Blundell and Layton 1978a).

As in the marriage system, a clan takes from one set of clans but gives to another, so these exchange networks are organised in a directional way, in a serial order along which objects are passed throughout the region.

The wurnan over-arches a number of different socio-cultural regions in the Kimberley and beyond, operating as it does both at very small scale intra-group and large scale, inter-group levels. The desire of active individuals plays a crucial role in the exchanges, for it is at this level that desire is articulated (cf. Munn 1986b). Keen described the equivalent (and probably inter-connecting) Yolngu system of exchange as being constituted through individual agency since "each adult is at the node of a nexus of exchange with every category of close relative and with some more distantly related exchange partners" (Keen 1988:275). This system of ceremonial exchange enables desired objects to be transmitted through pre-determined trading routes but these are more than "channels" for simple economic transactions.\(^{87}\)

\(^{87}\) Thomson noted that for north-east Arnhem Landers, the ceremonial exchange cycle "is not in any sense barter although circulation of goods on a large scale results" (1949:77).
objects make their way from north to south and east to west thus bringing into contact with each other, even if vicariously, different language groups and social systems. Through the principle of delayed and indirect reciprocity *wurnan* trading partners create social obligations and alliances which bind them to future transactions and allow for the transmission of new information and social institutions. Things as diverse as songs, ochres, second-hand clothes and scraps of tin and steel have made their way through these routes over the years. In 1993, Rumsey and four senior Ngarinyin men plotted these exchange networks between clans (Rumsey 1996). Their mapping of the "channels" in these exchange relationships is reproduced in Fig. 9 below.

It is significant that not all *wurnan* exchanges take place between clans of the opposite moiety, just as the links created by marriage exchanges ultimately are not only between opposite moiety clans when considered in the wider kinship context of exchange relationships such as those shown in Fig. 9. For instance, I showed above that Brrejalngga and Brrejirad clans are both of the same moiety (Wodoy) but that the relationship is an exchange one because Brrejalngga is *rambil* (WM) to Brrejirad, providing the reproductive source for Brrejirad men’s wives in adjacent generations. Thus the vector of exchange is considered to be along a line which gives primary salience to the clan of the woman who *gives birth* to a man’s wife rather than to the wife’s father or brother (*waya*), who, of course, are of the opposite moiety like a man’s wife. In Rumsey and Neowarra’s diagram, the *wurnan* exchange on one side is also between Brrejirad and Brrejalngga, two adjacent same moiety clans who call each other *rambil* in one generation and *gaja* (MM) in the adjacent generation. On the other side the *wurnan* relationship is between Brrejirad and Wayangarri, another clan which is called *rambil* by one generation of the men of Brrejirad and *gaja* (MM) by the other. Interestingly, Rumsey notes show Brrejirad and Wajawajangarri linked through *wurnan*, two same moiety adjacent clans which Blundell and Layton’s data (1978: 235) show to be treated as a single pair of clans with shared marriage relationships to four other opposite moiety clans to whom they give and receive wives. In Rumsey’s notes to this drawing, it can be seen that Galarungarri ("top") is the next clan in the *wurnan* line to Brrejalngga. Galarungarri also call Brrejalngga *rambil* and *gaja* in alternating generations. Galarungarri then passes to Barurrungarri which are related as *abi* (brother). Barurrungarri then passes to Dilangarri which are related as *idja/amalngi* (F/FZ-S/BS). Dilangarri passes to
Manggararrigona which are related as *abi*, the same relationship characterising Manggararrigona and Agulangongo, their *wurnan* partners.

Fig. 9 Paddy Neowarra's drawing of *wurnan* links between clans (from Rumsey 1996:7)
On the other hand, the example I gave above (pp.175) of Ngarangarri clan women (Wodoy) calling Winyuduwa (Jun.gun) men whom they marry "their wurnan" is an example of opposite moiety clans calling each other "their wurnan". This same relationship can also be deduced from Rumsey's notes to the drawing above. Wayangarri, who as we have seen call Brrejirad their rambarr (WM) in one generation and gaja (MM) in the other, call their wurnan partners in the other direction, Garnjingarri, ngadjji or garndingi (M or MB) in one generation and waya (WB) in the adjacent generation.

Thus, there are marriage clusters of both same and opposite moiety which "pass wurnan" between them just as particular same moiety clans pass rambarr and gaja (WM and MM) between them before a "leap of current" is made across the moiety gap in the promising of wives. Thus each clan country is situated in a "channel" on either side of which is situated:

another arin ("body" or clan country) of the same moiety which is related to as abi (brother) and which shares marriage links to the same group of affinal clans or,

a clan country which provides (in a patrilineal sense) one generation of a clan with a wife and the adjacent generation with a mother, a clan which is therefore called waya, or garndingi, or

a clan country which provides one's wife in a matrilineal sense, one's rambarr, which, as we have seen above, can also provide (through gaja, MM) the adjacent generation with a mother.

The map below (Map 3) is a conflation of a number of different ways of looking at country. The base map will be recognised as the one reproduced in Chapter 4, showing the moiety shapes, mamalarba and mornarba overlaid upon a clan map in which the clan epicentre is represented by the small circles with numbers in the middle. It is not relevant to our present purposes to show which particular clans are which since it is the relationships between them which concerns us here. Over the moiety shapes, I have drawn in the wurnan segments which Rumsey and Neowarra (1996) showed as links between many of the clans in the region. This produced the jagged series of lines, with directional arrows showing which clans made wurnan gifts in a major west to east branch of the exchange routes. Naturally, this jagged series of straight lines are vectors only and do not represent the actual course over which
wurnan would have been carried, which would have followed valleys and river courses. Thus the tracks of the journeys would have responded much more closely to the contours of the country, also taking into account the position in which the wurnan gatekeeper would have been living at the time, and the locations within the clan countries of recognised Barurru (law grounds) for such exchanges, such as Monggowa, Nyaliga, Bijili etc. Nevertheless even the straight lines linking clan epicentres tend towards a distinct patterning.

In the second stage of the process, I have then systematically coloured the line segments to show what type of kin relationships exist between each of the particular clans which are linked by wurnan exchanges. The colour key on the map shows the relationship pertaining between the clans as wurnan partners, rather than an egocentric view of a person from one clan of all the other linked clans. Thus, at a clan level, each clan is assumed to be calling the other either the one relationship name, or the two names which are available to the members of the adjacent generations of each clan. Thus, the green lines represent both a mother and a wife link for the members of the trading partners clans, the orange lines both a mother-in-law and a mother’s mother link, and the blue lines all the patrilineal links. The thin pink line, representing another branch of the wurnan running in the opposite direction (east to west), links clan countries for which I have not marked the nature of the kin relationships pertaining between them.

It will be observed that the coloured lines linking clans, the wurnan segments, follow rather closely the contours of the moiety shapes. It will also be evident that each time there is a linking green line (the M and W links), there is a crossing of the moiety boundary. On the other hand, the orange (MM/WM) segments and the blue (F/FF/B) segments tend to mark out the boundary of the moiety shapes. I have included the location of the major wanjina gallery Wanalirri because it is from here that the distribution of wanjina across the entire region is said to have occurred and its position in a relatively narrow land bridge of mamalarrba country seems to be suggestive in a way I will explore in the following Chapter 6. I have also included the major wurnan site Nyaliga to show its significant spatial positioning as a nyornarrba nodal point reaching into the heart of mamalarrba.
Map 3.
One sector of *wurnan* channels overlaid on moiety blocks

- MM/WM
- F/FF/B
- W/M

- Mamaladba
- Unmarked Segments
- mornadba
- Wanalirri
- Nyaliga
While maintaining their over-all directionality, the *wurnan* channels can be re-routed to take account of the location of new communities. The law ground at Bijilli near the settlement of Dodnun, for example, plays a crucial role in current exchange relations despite the settlement having existed in the general area only since the post-War period. As the holders of important ritual objects, the Dodnun residents D.D. and T.D. formed a ritual partnership with W.P. who acts as their "manager" or "player" in the ceremonial activities associated with the Bijilli ground. The status of being one who "holds" objects, or country, is framed in terms of the nurturant care attaching to the authority exercised in this arena of men's sociality (cf. Myers 1980a: 119). This role places a responsibility on the participants to care for the country where the ritual objects are stored before they are passed along to their partners in neighbouring communities. As members of the Jün gun moiety association of clans relating to each other as "brothers, fathers and sons", the ritual relationships are underpinned by prior relationship between the clan countries which are jointly holding the objects of exchange (cf. Blundell and Layton 1978). Significantly, although D.D. and T.D. are said to be the holders of the objects, D.J., on whose clan country this ground lies, is asserted to be the "real boss".

There is an integral connection between the relationship to countries which are forged through the initiation ceremonies and through ceremonial exchange networks. When initiates are sent to a far-flung community to "go for law", ritual exchange objects are often sent back to the community to which the adolescents belong. While this exchange is delayed rather than direct, the exchange remains one way in which person and country are identified in the sense that a new social identity is created through initiation and the objects are provided as a kind of "compensation" to the country and people who have "lost a child". This is certainly the case for the law ground at Bijilli. P.C.’s links to the law-ground at Bijili emanated from his having taken over his older brother’s role of initiator for a wide region of country. His services were thus in much demand and he engaged in long series of negotiations with initiation bosses both outside and within the region.

In other communities created only since European settlement, such as the large encampment of Ngarinyin people which used to exist at Kimberley Downs until the 1980s, the camp itself was located adjacent to important *wurnan* trading locations. At Karunjie station, the community was located at what was regarded by local people as a "safe" distance from important *wurnan* storage places. The site for a new
community planned for Durack River Station gains considerable local prestige from its proximity to a major wurnan intersection, Monggowa. It is at the inter-group boundaries that the position of "gatekeeper" (one who holds the “seat” for a segment of the wurnan) is most important, since these individuals come to embody the social and cultural differences which are being both transcended and maintained through inter-group exchanges. A senior man at Mowanjum held such a position until his recent death. This man formed the conduit with the desert communities and oriented his camp towards those places. The power of the wurnan to maintain social stability through "ranking" individuals and communities in relation to each other is enforced by the sanction of expulsion from the wurnan which effectively leaves a man "outside the law" and thence socially and physically vulnerable. Someone who feels he has been “left out of business” can also bring relationships between wurnan partners to crisis point by threatening to “close the road” in his segment of the exchange route, thus bringing all exchanges to a halt since it is impermissible to deliberately bypass one sector of the exchange complex. Such closures may result in periods of stagnation in wurnan exchanges lasting several years, fuelled by the resentment of one man nursing a grievance of perceived neglect. Since these days the segments are actually linked by physical roads the threat of a ceremonial “road” closure has the possibility of inhibiting the movement of people between adjacent communities.

The wurnan remains the strongest traditional social institution still operating across a wide area of the Kimberley in terms of inter-group communication and organised exchange. As such it carries enormous social prestige which is enhanced by the secret/sacred nature of some of the exchanges which form its basis.

The wurnan, in linking people to clan countries other than their own, provides one of the means by which succession to a deceased clan’s estate may take place. The ordering of the wurnan as a series of “seats” belonging to senior clan members means that when a man dies the vacant position is taken up by another senior man from that same clan. But where there is no senior man left in that clan, it is common for a man

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2. One of the consequences of the prestige arising from the secret/sacred nature of the wurnan is that it has become a strongly identifying feature of Kimberley Aboriginal traditional political life vis a vis the colonial political structures which have been introduced over the last hundred years. Amongst these we must count the “post colonial” Land Councils and other forms of political organisation (such as ATSIC) arising from the era in which self-determination was official Federal Government Policy (1972-1996). That policy has now been replaced by the much more conservative and market-oriented jargon of “self-management”. (fn. Continues o.p.)
from the adjacent, same moiety clan to take his place and thence to assume responsibility for the care of the country of the deceased clan. In this way, two same moiety clans may merge into a single estate over time, though maintaining their separate identities for several generations (cf. Blundell 1975 and pp.183 below re. clan fusion and fission).

This appears to be a process which is currently taking place, for example, with Guyunongo and Wajingongo clans. In these two contiguous, same-moiety clans, only one man is actually descended in the paternal line from the Guyunongo ancestor. But people now speak in terms of these being "one mob", with the Drysdale sector being called "top" and the east of the Russ Creek sector being described as "bottom" Wajingongo.

It is quite likely that such a process of fusion has also occurred with the uncharacteristically large clan estate of Barurrungarri. Senior people have described how Barurrungarri can be conceived of as a fusion of different areas; "all belong Walamba (Red Kangaroo, both a Wodoy moiety and Barurrungarri clan totem), but different sections". The sector belonging to N.K., for example, is derived from the country of his two paternal grandfathers, Wandagu and Garlmuandud. This is the area around Mandu (Mt. Bradshaw), Red Kangaroo Stomach Place. Another sector, closely linked to M.M., is centred on Winjabad Wula Wirringarri, on the upper Mitchell River, where the Red Kangaroo, Walamba, was butchered and cooked. M.M. is linked to this country through her father's father, Burrimbalu. Yet another sector is an area close to present day Doongan Station, Manggararrigona. Morphy has noted in the Yolngu case a similar phenomenon in which

[i]n the case of clans which contain more than one lineage, normally each lineage is most closely associated with a distinct area of land. .... When asked people will play down the significance of such divisions, putting them down to individual choice and personal responsibility, asserting that in fact all members have equal access to clan lands and ceremonies.... It provides the basis for creating separate identities which may result in subgroups acquiring separate names (1988:266).
N.P. has explained the nature of the *wurnan* in this way, and I quote at length here because Neowarra has a most eloquent way of encapsulating the relevant issues from the point of view of a *wurnan* partner.

All us Kimberley Aborigines are connected through the *wurnan*. This is how we trade one thing or another right across the Kimberley and down into the desert. All sorts of things, not just secret thing, but meat and sugar-bag, clothes and motorcars and money too. Or I might need a special type of wood for something I'm making or bamboo. All these sorts of things I can get through the *wurnan*.

When we want to pass something onto our partner we can send a message stick, *mag*, to let them know that's what we 're going to do. Sometimes, these days, we might use the phone or a fax to let them know to get ready.

We can trade red ochre, *jajal*, this way. Usually it comes from Warmala side or Waringarri over Carleton way. We send back *jaguli*, pearl shell. Other people might ask me to bring them white ochre from my country for painting a background.

In some parts of the country several of these trading lines join up and these become famous places for making *wurnan*. There are places like this at Kimberley Downs and on the Hunter River.

If I'm making a present to someone of kangaroo meat, I won't cut its tail or foot. This is called *ngurli*, a gift to someone, and not cutting the foot or tail makes it clear that this is a gift. I'm giving up my rights to it by sending it this way.

We sometimes send a package, *ngwawarra*, spear tips wrapped in paper-bark, as far as Miwa, Gulaja or Ivanhoe way.

It's rude to ask for a return gift straight away after somebody gives you something. But you can't leave someone waiting too long either, because their partners will be waiting to share with the man who gave you a gift in the first place. [Ts. V.7.55]

5.1 Demand Sharing vis a vis Ceremonial Exchanges.

Kimberley Aboriginal ritual and economic life are clearly not viewed as dichotomous realms of social life, even though gradated distinctions can be made
between the modalities in which exchange takes place (cf. Povinelli 1993:138). The transactions which occur between groups and individuals through the *wurnan* channels have always involved pragmatic, ephemeral economic objects such as meat and hunting implements at the same time as ritual sacred/secret objects. McCarthy cites Elkin's conclusions, drawn largely from fieldwork with Ngarinyin people in 1927-28, to the effect that

the making of gifts - foods, ornaments and weapons- is really part of the
kinship system, forms a necessary adjunct to betrothal, marriage and initiation, and especially to the settling of grievances and quarrels; indeed it occurs at all large gatherings of natives.....recent researches in north-eastern South Australia, north Western Australia, the Daly River district and elsewhere, have revealed that the economic customs and institutions dovetail into the kinship, ceremonial and legal aspects of social life (1934: 12).

McCarthy includes a map showing the North Kimberley trade lines and listing the objects exchanged through Ngarinyin country as "stone axes, red ochre, stone spear points, bamboo spears" (McCarthy 1939: 436). In some cases, as McCarthy suggests, a single object might have compressed into it both economic and ritual qualities. An example of this was in the transmission of quartz spear-tips which might be used for simple hunting of kangaroo or used for a revenge killing involving dangerous magical properties. These quartz spearheads were also from time to time sent in paperbark wallets (cf. also Thomson 1949), *nguwarra*, as far afield as Carleton Hill in Mirriwung country, where they would be received as presents with both ritual and pragmatic qualities. Another example of the compression of ritual/economic properties into an object is that a gift of chewing tobacco passed onto another person might contain ritual qualities from having been sung by someone seeking to make the recipient a sexual partner. It is clear that other elements of the economics of everyday life (such as the supply of available foods) are seen to be intimately bound up with beliefs distinctive to this cultural domain such as the belief that repainting the *wanjina* images regenerates country (see Chapter 6) and thus recharges human social relationships.

From what Ngarinyin people told me and the evidence collected by Lucich (1968, 1986) and Blundell (1975,1978, 1982) mainly from Worrorra people, *wurnan* is locally conceived of as an overarching system of sharing between relatives in predetermined relationships which includes both ritual and quotidian exchanges.
Ceremonial exchanges are often conducted in terms of everyday items, such as food and blankets, being a kind of short-term compensation for the ritual gifts, ceremonies and objects, which will in the long return from another direction. P.N. says that,

sometimes, if I need ochre for my paintings that I sell or else for a ceremony, I can make a private wurnan. I can get in touch with my gumbali in Kununurra and he will talk to his mob to make sure that it's ok. Then we can have permission to do a private trade without going through all the partners in between. Then when I see him next I can kill a kangaroo for him. Later on he might need something from me and he will let me know [Ts. V. 7 59].

Another clear example of this ceremonial gift for immediate or only slightly delayed quotidian gift occurs in the yearly wet season initiation ceremonies where clothes, cash and other presents are given to performers at the conclusion of the ceremonial cycle. In these ceremonies, ochres are also provided to the dancers and other participants by those who are visiting from distant countries replete with ochres. Presents are exchanged for these ochres. This is the case for the recent initiation ceremonies at Junjuwa and Looma where Ngarinyin people were invited to perform the ceremony. P.N. says that,

after we go to other communities for ceremonies, we will come back later to receive gifts from them during a "smoke", after all the business is finished. Everybody can relax then. People give us clothes and food and blankets for bringing our ceremony to them. Maybe to Looma or Fitzroy Crossing or Kununurra. Ceremony and everyday things are mixed up together (P.N. Ts V.7. 65]

Culturally legitimate demands for food, clothes and money which are placed on relatives are actualisations of kinship-based obligation networks persisting in the realm of the modern cash economy. This is particularly pronounced in the gifts which are due to a man's in-laws. Lucich, conducting fieldwork in Mowanjum and Kalumburu in 1963 found for instance that

the system for giving gifts to a waia (father-in-law) was named embadi.....gifts (which) were made up of durable goods such as mirrors, tomahawks and clothes. Previously, they had included spears, spinifex wax, pearlshells and hair-belts. If a man shared food in the settlement he was
expected to give portions to his wife's parents, his own parents, and his immediate neighbours, in that order (1967:196).

At small-scale intra-familial levels, the carcass of a killed animal must be split up between certain defined relations in very specific ways, with the back-bone going to one category of relations, the forelegs to another, the hind legs to another etc. Blundell also found that

members of a hunting group distribute meat in terms of their relative order in the Wunan. Thus the head goes to the top clan, the tail to the bottom clan (the hind limbs are also divided in this way) (Blundell and Layton 1978:8)

While the shape and route of wurnan exchanges is predetermined, these relationships have to be re-charged, re-invigorated by actual practices of sharing. As I noted above, the wurnan system is itself patently able to undergo ossification (though the process is perhaps already, in a local sense, "ossified", the term wurnan being suggestively similar to wurnorr, a word meaning "the bone of", in this case, the social world). Such stagnation results from a failure of participation by particular living people for one reason or another, but it is important that the conceptual modeling of the exchange system does not ossify such relationships from the beginning (cf. also Myers 1988:58). In this respect, Thomson offers cautionary words to the effect that the social charter between interdependent groups

is not all impersonal, for as a clan member [a person] fits into the kinship network, in which, although his relationship to all the people in his own and neighbouring clans is laid down when he is born, and his behaviour and obligations to these people clearly defined, these acquire a reality, a vital significance, because they are personal and deal with real people (1949:34)

Merlan has usefully distinguished two different modes of organising social relationships within the all-embracing structures of kinship;

In the first type, there is a presumption of familiarity and relatively easy access 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...In the second type — here exemplified by 'avoidance' relations — there is a presumption of distance or lack of familiarity, in the context of an over-riding sense of 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 (1997:113-114).

Merlan’s typology distinguishes between relationships with a formal expectation of a return gift such as those between in-laws and wurnan partners and those in which “reciprocity is not strictly reckoned” (ibid: 108; cf. Sahlins 1968 on generalized exchange) such as between parents and children. The latter type of relationship is that in which demand sharing is most characteristic. Kin in these relationships are encouraged to assert their autonomy by asking for something and the one who is asked asserts their autonomy within the web of continually acknowledged interdependency by waiting to be asked (cf. Macdonald 2000:96-97; Peterson 1997).

Wurnan can thus take place at different levels around the same object. Meat, whether bush meats or “killer” (freshly butchered bullock meat), for instance, is first split up between family groups in a fairly formal manner and then taken back to the family fire-place for cooking at which time familiars partake in an ad hoc manner from their own allotted portion. P.N. says that,

around our own camps, in our own families and in our own country, we make wurnan too. If someone kills kangaroo or emu, he's gotta split it up through the sharing law, give one side to his in-laws, another to his parents, some to his next door neighbour and then look after his own kids too. Even if there's not much to go round, everybody must still get a taste. Same for fish or turkey or any sort of thing [Ts. V.7:68].

Here P.N. speaks of a process which involves both formal exchange in which the potential for inducing “shame” through neglecting a more distant relative is operative, and informal demand sharing. At Dodnan, for example, the truck upon which the home killed beef was distributed would circle the camp with slabs of meat on beds of green bushes and each camp would be visited in turn and given different portions depending upon their respective social status and who had killed the beast. Of course, this never proceeded to everyone’s satisfaction and those who felt they had been “cheated” in the process of distribution would voice loud complaints. This sense of outrage was not so much a matter of the quality of the piece of meat as an item to be consumed because many older people, in particular, would be provided with some cooked meat from a close relative from another household. Rather it was the shame of
being treated as a “rubbish” person by being publicly given a poor cut of the meat on a particular occasion. Thus people who consistently complained that they “got nothing, burrayi, only head part” could be seen chewing on a couple of rib-bones a few hours later. Concealment of one’s good fortune in hunting, fishing or favourable distribution of killer was a matter of pride and self-assertion against the demands of those with legitimate demands on one’s person.

Thomson (1949) lucidly depicted the manner in which sacred and secular exchanges were seen to be interconnected in Arnhem Land. He refers in particular to the kind of exchanges taking place between MB-ZS and MMB-ZDS, the closest of all trading partner relationships. Here the crucial aspect of the relationship is the desire to give, “the force, the ritual urge, (stronger even than the desire to retain and possess gerri) to pass them on and either to increase thereby his own prestige...or to acquit himself of an existing obligation in the quarter to which he sends it” (1949:79). The “ancestral power” of marr is essentially the “power to respond” and the “desire to give” (see above), which imparts to mundane objects “a halo of glamour and romance by reason of the way in which they have been acquired; because they have marr” (1949:80). Such an impetus to give, argues Thomson, induces production of fine artifacts of human manufacture and expands distribution networks founded upon the prestige of such items. Thus each ritual gift has “a productive capacity within it” (Mauss 1954:43).

This urge to give (laterally) across geographical distance can also be fruitfully compared to the urge to give (lineally) across adjacent generations. It is clear that a man gives country and the images which belong to it to his sons. It is also apparent that the intra-familial distribution of goods in the wurman occurs as a system in which male children receive gifts according to their seniority amongst siblings (Rumsey, unpub. field notes Sept. 11 1975). A man can also be seen to give his “mother” to his son as a wife by arranging a marriage for him with someone of the same clan as his mother. In these respects, Munn has noted that

each man plays successive roles of heir and donor. As heir he is recipient of rights over objects which have been controlled by previous generations, most

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89 “The idiom of shared identity that is sustained through exchange provides the very basis of the criticism which may ensue...conflict arises as those who feel neglected make accusations that they have been rejected or disregarded as ‘relatives’” (Myers, 1988:58).

90 Material wealth, goods.
immediately by his father’s generation, and is therefore in a passive position. ...As donor, or potential donor, he moves into the position of authority, becoming in this respect ancestor-like, a transmitter (or potential transmitter) of objects...permeated with his own will (1970:153).

I would add that in the Ngarinyin system of gifts, the fact that a man is already his own father, mitigates the potentially shame inducing sense of abiding obligation but the nurturant aspect of fatherhood remains clearly apparent and speaks to what we might call, after Mauss, the “reproductive capacity” within each gift.

5.2 Mythic underpinnings of the wurnan

The foundational myths of Ngarinyin social life centre on the institution of the wurnan and the introduction of the system of institutionalised sharing between moieties as well as between and within clans.\(^9^1\) The first series of stories concerning the introduction of the wurnan are those which concern the moiety heroes, Wodoy and Jun.gun and how they came to bring mayangarri, sacred objects into the world of men (see Sec. 4.1.1.2 above) after stealing them from the original fashioner of such objects, Wibalma. This man lived alone with his blind wife (or mother in some versions of the story) constantly making such objects from anggarrun (IronWood) and then storing them in his own cave workshop. His wife negligently or deliberately, it is never quite clear, allows the moiety heroes to steal the boards and Wibalma, upon recovering from his homicidal rage, is eventually placated and persuaded that their actions were all for the best that these objects should be distributed amongst the clans. He goes on fashioning them in his cave indefinitely. Older people claim that all these boards in any case “blang wongay (women) in beginning but they bin get blind by wili wili (whirlwind) and man steal ‘em then...and hold ‘em ‘til now”. Wodoy and Jun.gun, despite their theft, are seen to be acting lawfully by preventing the accumulation of ritual power in the hands of one man. The stealing of the boards is an

\(^9^1\) F.D. McCarthy (1939) reviewed the literature on Aboriginal trading relationships across Australia (and with Melanesia). He concluded that there was extensive evidence to show that barter

"was carried on between contiguous and distant hordes and tribes to secure raw materials, finished articles, corroborees and songs, produced or not by one of these groups, occurring or not in their respective territories, and brought by one or more members of one group to another; such barter was (fn. Continues o.p.)"
approved act of assertion preventing the domination of Wibalma. The boards continue to be life-giving and are referred to by the generic term *mayangarri* (the distinctive names of actual boards are highly secret/sacred) which senior Ngarinyin people say derives from the term for vegetable foods *mayi*.

The next story cycle is set after Wodoy and Jun.gun have departed from the scene. Interestingly, their departure from the stories concerning the institutionalisation of clan sharing practices comes after their having figured so prominently in the stories concerning the introduction of moiety exogamy (Chapter 4) and the theft of the boards from the third party Wibalma. This shift of focus is quite significant. The direct reciprocity between moieties characteristic of the marriage system and also of the introduction of *wurnan* ritual exchanges (cf. Blundell and Layton, 1978:241-242) was expressed in mythic terms as the battles between the members of the dyad, Wodoy and Jun.gun (see Chapter 4). However, there are indications within the mythopeia concerning exchange that direct reciprocity is also wrong in *wurnan* transactions. Blundell and Layton cite a Worrorra man’s story in which Wodoy presents Jun.gun with a sacred object and Jun.gun, much to Wodoy’s rage, tries to reciprocate with the same type of object instead of with “billy can and sugarbag” (Blundell and Layton, 1978:241-242). Thus, direct reciprocity (immediate return of same type of thing) even between the moiety heroes is rejected. This may represent an emergence in the moiety stories of thematic materials counter-indicating the direct reciprocity which was instituted between Wodoy and Jun.gun when they agreed to exchange daughters instead of marrying their own. The previous discussion (Sec. 4.7 above) of marriage relationships made it clear that this type of arrangement in which men, regardless of whether they were from different moieties, were prohibited from directly exchanging daughters (or sisters) with each other.

In the *Jeburra* stories, on the other hand, the focus is upon clan groups, each of which are said to have been represented at the “Kamali table”. Clan groups, as we have seen above, do not engage in direct reciprocity but rather in a form of asymmetrical, indirect exchange, principles which both the *wurnan* and the marriage systems are conceived of as most properly embodying.

carried on at recognised 'market' places, feasts, ceremonies, and other gatherings, besides occasioning special journeys" (1939:178).
The stories of moiety exogamy and moiety *wurnan* exchanges (direct exchange) and clan exogamy and clan *wurnan* exchanges (asymmetrical, indirect exchange) are not essentially contradictions of each other, though. The issue is more one of a shift in scale. While the complementary dyadic relationship between the moiety heroes, Wodoy and Jun.gun is one in which they exchange sisters and exchange blows in the course of instituting sociality, the relationship, as I have argued above (Sec. 4.1), is never a symmetrical one. There is an emergent hierarchisation between them which manifests in killing, in their different bodily shapes and their different moral perspectives (cf. Petri 1954). This hierarchisation even spills over, in the Worrorra story presented by Blundell and Layton (ibid.241-242), into the beginnings of indirect, asymmetrical exchanges between them. If Wodoy and Jun.gun act together to steal the boards for distribution amongst men, they can be considered as a pair of symmetrical brothers *vis a vis* Wibalma. Once they come into focus as a pair of moiety heroes, though, they are engaged in the sort of battles which manifest an unequal relationship, and in this sense can be considered as older and younger brother, or even father and son since one of them, Wodoy, is always seen to be working from a privileged position of power which he uses to attempt to transform the other.\(^2\) It is possible that the refutation of direct exchanges between them in *wurnan* practices, the refusal to accept a same type gift, is a symbolic obviation of the fact that men of different generations from one clan (Wodoy and Jun.gun in this case seen as a F/S pair) cannot take their wives from the same clan, cannot “give each other” their wives. A woman who is “wife” for one man must be “mother” for the adjacent generation man. Thus the gift of the reproductive capacity of one woman (wife/sacred board) should be reciprocated not with an isomorphic value but with the nurturant qualities of a different kind of woman (mother/sugarbag).\(^3\) This principle of distinguishing between wife and mother is, as I have shown in Chapter 3, crucial to the creation of sociality, in respect of which Devereux has noted about kinship in

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\(^2\) The tenor of this relationship is partly consistent with the nurturant authority obtaining between senior and junior men which Myers described as presenting an “insufficiency on the part of the junior and an activity of transformation on the part of the senior...” (1980a: 200). The fact that the two always fight to resolve issues, though, is more characteristic of how relationships with elder and younger brothers are conceptualised.

\(^3\) In a similar vein, Myers showed that in payments for transmission of knowledge “what is exchanged is not similar in kind or value. Since elders‘control’ the specialized resource, juniors can never overcome the differential” (1980a: 210).
general that "the woman must be wife or mother, but never both simultaneously" (1978:183).

The splitting of the moiety-self is not sufficient in itself to prevent the conflation of wife and mother, since these two are, from a moiety point of view, a single being, an insufficiently divided "other". In the obviation of incest avoidance, though, the two must never be mixed up\textsuperscript{94}. To the "realist" objection that Wodoy and Jun.gun cannot belong to the same clan since they are the moiety emblems of the two exogamous halves of society, it must be pointed out that this division of the world into two must at first be \textit{actively instituted} and precedes all other differentiations such as those between clans. This is exactly what the moiety tales are all about as they point to a primordial unified personage becoming first a dual-unity, then mutually interdependent fragments of each other. I have already demonstrated that this is the case with respect to the moieties in Chapter 4.

This processual splitting-off of parts of the self through which both parts come to be conceived as polar (not binary) opposites is beautifully encrypted in the story of Binbin, the albino Ancestral Kangaroo which undergoes multiple metamorphoses until, at the end of its travels from the Hunter River to the Caroline Ranges, it becomes its own opposite; Walamba, the Red Kangaroo, \textit{Warr Muj Multi Muli}. Clan differentiations are made in the process of its travels (cf. Taylor 1989:381), just as the ongoing spatialisation of the primordial splitting of the originary self, figured in the moiety division, energises a processual extension of the First Split into innumerable smaller but isomorphic splittings, which became manifest as clan \textit{arin}, "bodies/presences". This original act of creation is dramatically recounted in the story of Wibalma's angry "splitting" of the Ironwood tree, \textit{anggarrun}. When he finds his workshop has been broken into by Wodoy and Jun.gun, he takes a boomerang and hurls it at the Iron Wood tree with all his might, "hit 'em that \textit{engrain}, he split 'em, then that \textit{mayangarri} bin stand up himself". This Iron Wood is said to be what human bodies become after death so the creation of sacred objects from its body is the creation of life-giving fragments, some of which retain the shadow of Wibalma's dangerous, vengeful anger, from the violent splitting of a dense unity.

\textsuperscript{94} It is useful to recall here the findings from Chapter 4 which showed that a distant "mother" could be a wife. This issue of distance is critical since it shows that the splitting-off of wife and mother is never complete but continues to be touched by the shadow of incestuous desire.
As the *wurnan* map above clearly shows, the split-off fragments which
tropically distribute clan identities across the region, nevertheless maintain a
tendency to cleave to each other as larger conglomerates of fragments of self, the
many "commonwealths of clans" (Capell 1972:7) which relate to each other as *abi* or
*idja*. Thus they share many fragments of the originary self as shared totemic species,
often, as I have shown, differentiating themselves at only one point in an otherwise
shared ensemble of totems (hence the relevance of Trubetzkoy's heterogeneous
oppositions [1969:83ff.]). The clan in a "commonwealth of clans" also shares
marriage relationships with some of the same clans, thus indicating the surge towards
reunification through a shared sexuality. In short, the moiety division is only
relatively different from the clan division which remains dependent on the fissionary
power generated at the first great division represented by the split of moiety-self from
(m)other.

In the *Jebarra* story there is again an emphasis on the central role of vegetable
foods as symbols of human sociality. This is the central mythic complex of
Dududungarri (the onomatopoeic sounds of "where Emu stamped her feet")97; the
story of *Jebarra* and the *Gulangi* referred to by P.N.;

all our laws about this sort of thing comes from the time of the *wurnan* stone
table in the *Larlan* (Dreaming). When the *Jebarra* tried to steal the *gulangi*
(Black Plum) from the sharing table, pushing her way in and getting out of
line, all the other tribes told her to wait her turn. Everybody had to get his or
her share in the proper order. But she got greedy and stole the Black Plum
cakes. The other animals tracked her down at Bedford Downs and killed her.
You can still see her in the Milky Way. And you can still see the first *wurnan*

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95 In applying Trubetzkoy's schema to Kimberley totemism, the seemingly unrelated and arbitrary
choice of totemic designations can be shown to form a syntagmatic series. For example the adjacent
same moiety Ngarinyin/ Wororra clans Jiblingarri and Brregural share a combination of species but
are differentiated at only one point, the Whistling Duck, Jibili, which becomes the focal totemic species
in contexts where fine differentiations are drawn.

96 This condensation of clans with equivalent marriage links takes its first emotional impetus from the
maternal imago which acts a "bridge" between the infant and the lost object of desire, an imagined
introduction of the maternal presence in order to ward off the anxiety of loss. This idealised ego is
readily projected onto the close social milieu to create an image of nurturant sociality. Roheim
describes this process as "the child is separated from the mother, but at the same time tries to effect a
re-union with the mother. Therefore fission and condensation (separation and re-union) is really the
mechanism that corresponds to this primal organization" (1971: 137).

97 Morton cites Roheim on a Kukatja tradition where Emu-like Rough Foot ancestors " were born from
their own bodies and now move around by stamping their feet" (1985:129).
table out near Pantijan Station. We've made plenty of pictures of that place that we can show you anytime. Now everybody has to share what comes from the ground and the water, in the same order that we took the Black Plums from that first stone table, balalon. That's why we say we have a "rank", jarragun, in the wurnan. You have to go from the top part to the bottom part and there's a gatekeeper for every branch of the wurnan. Look out to anyone that tries to go past the gatekeeper! There'll be big trouble. [Ts. V.7: 60]

This gulangi cake ("Black Plum") which was stolen by the law-breaking Emu is a rare instance for an "immediate use" social economy of a type of dried food (Buchanania Muellieri) which can be stored for weeks. It is thus more than a condensation of the individual gulangi fruit which make up the fruit-cake. It is also a condensation of joint human labour (gathering, pounding, drying) which can be used to feed large gatherings of people during the wet season when this fruit ripens. Thomson noted that in Arnhem Land this kind of fruit-cake "appears to represent the beginnings of the practice among a nomadic hunting and food gathering people of conserving and storing food" (1949:24). The actions of the Jebarra in stealing the fruitcake thus represent a direct refutation of the social relationships condensed in the gulangi cake itself. The large gathering of the "tribes" or clan groups at a single location required a social pact of delayed gratification to amass the quantities of food needed to sustain them all in one location. An order of being served at the stone table was in the process of being instituted when the Jebarra, significantly said to have come from a distant location in the southeast, made her grab for the goods. Her sudden charge at the sacred food is preceded by her relentlessly impatient questioning, "Nyangiwa?" ("Me now?") in a language which Ngarinyin people say they don't recognise but is attributed to other social groups to the south east, "waringarri side". She is repeatedly told to wait her turn in the wurnan ordering as she is "from far off yet". This constant interruption and harassment shows Emu's hunger and impatience reaching a critical threshold. This mythic prototype of demand sharing, the

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98 Note that P.N. referred to the necessity to seek permissions through a gatekeeper to engage in "private wurnan".
99 In Bunuba renderings of this story, this is rendered as "Ngayini-ma" which would be translated literally as "I?" but the force of this is; "Is it my turn now?"(Rumsey, pers. comm. 2001).
100 Alan Rumsey has recorded a version of this story with Bunuba people, a southern neighbour of the Ngarinyin (pers. comm. 2001). Interestingly, Bunuba people do not have the same sort of clan division of country and their version does not seem to be related to the beginnings of the wurnan.
mode of familial interaction, is clearly inappropriate at this ceremonial juncture. The stone table, balalon, is said to have originally been angga, bark coolamon, the traditional vessel for containing vegetable foods (and babies) as they were collected. The organic, vegetal image of the angga becomes transformed into the "stone table", the borro ("foundation") upon which the wurnan law is instituted as an eternal emblem of Guringe, the "agreement" between the clans to institute sharing practices forever. Emu's pre-emptive strike on the foods is thus construed as having been premature in the sense that the social work of preservation had not yet been accomplished, the raw materials of social sharing were still incompletely transformed because all the clans have not yet taken their turn at the table. Only the eternal ordering of the diverse social relationships between the clans in their respective jarragun, the establishment of a dynamic equilibrium between them, would make possible the non-conflictual transactions which would make them human rather then the birds which they are pictured as in this story series.

Significantly, the Emu flees with the stolen Plum Cake to the south east from whence she came. After several different species of animals and birds fail to catch up to the thief, she is finally speared by two Sawara, Rock Pigeons, who track her down at Ganamanjil, Emu Hill, on Bedford Downs in Kija country bordering the most south-easterly part of Ngarinyin country. At this juncture of the social-cultural domains, the wurnan takes a slightly different form because the particular ways in which Kija social groups relate to country is distinct from the Ngarinyin system of named patrilinial dambun.

5.3 The Gift of Sexuality

Both of these myths evince a strong focus upon vegetable foods which become transformed into symbols of the necessity of organised sharing of resources. In the first case, the theft of the sacred boards from Wibalma, the stolen objects are said to have originally belonged to women. The fact that Wibalma's wife or mother, Nyambuliji, is said to have been blinded by gorid, a whirlwind, which allowed Wibalma to take them from her and then to fashion his own, already imparts to the boards a strongly feminine quality. Her blindness conveniently allows Wibalma to

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101 This is a very common theme in regards to sacred objects (cf. Morphy 1991:86; Berndt 1952:16-17; Strehlow 1947: 94; Taussig 1999:180).
continue to fashion his boards without women being able to view them, a necessity which persists to this day\textsuperscript{102}. Various imprecations are sung out in a camp when a whirlwind is approaching and looking set to cause havoc with blankets, utensils and kicking up clouds of dust. One of these runs: \textit{guuuuu rambarr adada gurrmanya} – “stay away, sit down over there, you mothers-in-law”. If mothers-in-law are conceived of as whirlwinds, and, as we have seen above, as bough-screens which “blind/shelter/screen off”, then what is taken by Wodoy and Jun.gun from Wibalma are the symbols of his daughters’/wives’ sexuality and fertility and what was stolen from Nyambuliji while she was blinded by the whirlwind (unable to look) was the same thing, her daughters’ reproductive and sexual resources\textsuperscript{103}. Wibalma had tried to store the boards all away for himself, refusing the sociality of others. Perhaps this accounts for the ambiguity about whether Nyambuliji (lit. “the blind woman”) is Wibalma’s mother or wife. She once possessed these boards herself and thus she can be understood as the mother of Wibalma’s wife, his \textit{rambarr}, “the one who is screened”. I have shown (in Chapter 3.) how both wife and mother come to a man, in different directions, from the clan of his \textit{rambarr}. A second order substitution creates the ambiguity about the identity of Wibalma’s female companion.

The feminine quality of the boards is underscored by the boards being known, in their most generic appellation, as \textit{mayangarrri}, a word glossed by Ngarinyin people as “belonging to vegetable foods”. They are regarded as “life-giving” and “full of Wunggurr”, evidenced by their lustrous fat smeared surfaces which keep them “living”. In Chapter 6, I show how vegetable foods which grow underground are regarded, in particular, as emblematic of the \textit{wurnan}. Older people repeatedly asserted that “\textit{garrnangggu} (yam) and \textit{jarrgun} (bush potato) all blang \textit{wurnan} because everyone share that tucker”. Their association with \textit{angga}, women’s “u”-shaped bark coolamon, as the holding body for the gathered vegetable foods, highlights the feminine symbolism intrinsic to such foods.

In the division of labour, the collection and preparation of vegetable foods is primarily a woman’s task for Ngarinyin people, despite the fact that this gathering of bush vegetables is now considerably diminished by the availability of relatively cheap

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{102} In a Papunya story with similar thematics, the husband, rather than the wife is blind (cited by Morton 1985:129).
\item \textsuperscript{103} Roheim noted of the ancestral Aranda women who held sacred objects that “an \textit{alknarintja} woman means a woman who ‘turns her eyes away’…” (1971:156).
\end{itemize}
and easy to prepare carbohydrates such as flour for damper. Nevertheless, such tasks as shopping, making damper and bread fall squarely upon women who continue to gather bush fruits such as gulangi and guloy whenever they are near a source of them. In the ranges country these fruits are often available right in the settlements themselves. The gulangi cakes which were produced by washing, pounding and drying the fruit, and then mixed with "sugarbag" (wild honey), are strongly evocative of condensed female labour. This labour promotes the possibility of convivial sociality, just as freshly baked bread and newly cooked damper from the coals always elicits a gathering of young men and women around the fire\textsuperscript{104}. The pounding of the fruit and the subsequent mixing of it with honey are a further focus upon female reproductivity and sexuality\textsuperscript{105}. In wurnan exchanges, a Baler Shell filled with honey was presented to a partner with ribald comments concerning its female symbolism (see Sec. 6.5 below for a discussion of honey and wanjina). The moiety heroes, Wodoy and Jun.gun, it will be recalled (Sec. 4.1.2 above) also instituted the marriage system of direct exchanges of women between moieties by fighting over the stupidity of Jun.gun in trying to cook honey and marry his own daughter (cf. also Blundell and Layton 1978).

In the Jiebarra story, the theft of the Plum Cake is made by a female Emu who escapes from the first sphere of social exchange in which the clans are formulating the law of sharing. She absconds with this symbol of condensed female labour and sexuality tucked under her wing only to be speared to death, thence becoming embodied in the dark hole of the Milky Way, the spears still visible in her body, forever grazing on the ground beneath the gulangi tree which the forms the Southern Cross (cf. Morton 1985:120; Chapter 6).

Merlan was correct to point out that the sexual dimension of exchanges is most prominent in the affinal relationship of proximity marked by avoidance in the rambarr relationship, rather than in trade relationships which focus on geographical distance between partners who nevertheless call each other by familial kinship terms

\textsuperscript{104} Love noted that "the camps of young men, who have no wives, will share in the vegetable food, which it is specially the province of the women to provide, and the married men, too, will receive food from other women than their own wives" (1936:73).

\textsuperscript{105} Munn seems to have come to a similar conclusion when she writes that "[If we take the boards as being progeny of the women and as also containing the women's substance within them, then what the men take over is the objectified form of the 'women-children'—that is, they take control of the immortal, objective aspect epitomized in the sacred boards" (1970:156). (fn. Continues o.p.)
(1997:120). I would argue, though, that the latter is best understood as a symbolic obviation of the former. The nexus of close affinal relationships marked by avoidance in the Ngarinyin domain is characterised by the adjacent positions of clans, or aggregates of clans, which are defined as *rambarr* to each other, those which are linked by the transmission of female sexuality/fertility. But by extending outwards from this physically close but socially distant field of relatedness, the *wurnan* is able to refashion sexual desire into the desire to give and receive objects which have been given that “halo of glamour and romance... a personality which lifts them above other objects” (Thomson 1949:80). *Wurnan* partners can live in the anticipation of receiving objects which increase their charisma, and enhance human fertility and sexuality, inverting the relationship of physical proximity and social distance into one of physical distance and social closeness. This is achieved through expressive acts of giving of the self, the expansion of desire into country and widening circles of relatedness. Thomson’s teachers told him in this regard that “*marr* like desiring, it is like strength (*dal*), yearning” (1975:5). The “work of culture” (Freud 1933), in this sense, is to eroticise and animate all relationships through continual mobilisation of the current of desire. As Blundell and Layton’s senior Worrorra teacher told them

*A yangga* (Native Bee) made sugarbag travel all over the world; a good harvest for everybody. Sugarbag traveled all over the world by *Wunan*, like a steamer going from one island to the next delivering stores (Blundell and Layton 1978:242).

The concealing containers in which *wurnan* gifts are given, from the honey-filled Baler Shell, to the spear tips wrapped in paperbark, to the sweat-stained old shirt in which red ochre is passed on, all exude a powerful sexual embodiment. The paperbark, *wulun*, (*wulun nyindi* is an idiomatic reference to woman in Ngarinyin) wallets, *nguwarra*, which PN discusses above, are bound with red-ochre stained string just as the bones of funerary packages are presented to the maternal relatives for cradling before second burial. In the following chapters (6 and 7) I detail the mythic dimensions of this enclosure at some length in order to further explore this feminine dimension of the *wurnan*. 
Chapter 6. Cosmological entailments of *wanjina*, the Rain Beings

"How an organ is activated is shown in its effects, whether it works as container or contained. Knowledge about this is therefore simultaneously knowledge about internal capacity or enablement, and about external efficacy in interaction with others" (M. Strathern 1988:128).

Plate 2. Nyalanggunda: *wanjina* and *wunggurr* as a single body in the process of differentiation/fusion.

Members of the Ngarinyin group share, along with their neighbours the Worrorra, Wunambal, Gambre and Unggumi, an identification with a set of images and beliefs which concern the indigenous notions of *wanjina* and *wunggurr*. These beliefs and images are recognised by neighbouring Kimberley Aboriginal people as distinctive to the Northern Kimberley peoples discussed in this thesis. While variants of the Rainbow Serpent motif and associated beliefs are evident in Aboriginal cosmologies across Australia (Radcliffe-Brown 1926; Mountford 1978:24), in the Northern Kimberley region, as Elkin (1930b) saw, the rainbow serpent beliefs take on a distinctive cast through their interaction with the *wanjina* complex.
While *wanjina* and *wunggurr* are analytically distinguishable from each other, in local beliefs and practice they are not entirely separate entities. It can be said that *wanjina*, being named and localised “spirits of place”, are held to belong to specific areas of country and have narratives which describe their travels and encounters in the *Larlan* and how they happened to become the ancestral beings for particular patrilineal groups. *Wunggurr*, on the other hand, is a more diffuse life force animating and underlying the particular manifestations of its power which find expression in all species of things including the *wanjina*. Some local expressions, however, utilise the terms *wanjina* and *wunggurr* interchangeably in contexts where powerful forces emanating from country are being discussed in general. A further set of terms, Gulingi (properly translated as “rain” but also a personage or group of personages indistinguishable from *wanjina*) and Galaru (a sky-snake personage particularly associated with the more dangerous aspects of cyclonic rain and lightning) are also at times used to refer to both *wanjina* and *wunggurr* (cf. Maddock 1978:14-15). One further term, Wondaj, is used to refer to an aspect of *wunggurr* which becomes incarnate in the Rock Python. The representation of *wanjina* and *wunggurr* often occurs together alongside the representation of natural species in the same painting galleries. Indeed, in some of these painted images of *wanjina* the outer band of red paint (sometimes banded with white) around the head, is said to be the snake body of *wunggurr*. In yet other paintings, such as at the Nyalanggunda painting site, the *wanjina* head is emerging from two Rock Pythons’ bodies. The late D. M. explained the relationship between *wanjina* and *wunggurr* in this way:

Every man or girl they come out from each *wunggurr* water. *Wanjina* gives us back. Then we know where that child come from. Everybody know. And that is where the land is because all the power connected. We find children from water. That’s why we’re water people. We spirits hide in the water come out in the open. We all belong water because *wanjina* belong water. He not a dry *wanjina*. He belong rain (Pathway Project Transcripts, 1992).

This section of the thesis presents a detailed description of both the imagery and stories of *wanjina* in order to set the cosmological scene for my later analysis of how Ngarinyin people conceptualise and experience country in terms of bodily imagery.

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106 Elkin noted that “the rainbow-serpent...is apparently a generalised power who can be thought of in different ways according to his different functions...yet ...these beings are ‘all one’, ‘all the same’” *(fn. Continues o.p.)*
wanjina, being the most prominent figures in the local cosmology, are simultaneously regarded as bodies of rain and bodies with human-like dimensions. As abstractions from the field of human experience, the wanjina, artefacts of received knowledge, are condensations of a particular kind of intersubjectivity (Schutz and Luckman, 1974). At the same time, like all abstractions, they are emergent from a less differentiated level of “oceanic consciousness”, in the sense that Ehrenzweig (1967) uses it to denote the process in which a figure becomes emergent from a ground. As emergent schemata attracting all sorts of fleeting, inarticulate perceptions which give them definition and meaning for each succeeding generation, the wanjina are availed of a certain fluidity which allows them to remain central to local understandings of human experience. The indigenous acceptance of human interaction with cosmological forces which allows, even prescribes, an ongoing renewal of the wanjina in the social field is explicitly remarked upon by contemporary people who are expected to maintain the vividness of the paintings. The wanjina firmly plant the life of the human body at the centre of the Ngarinyin experience of country, operating as anchoring points of the ego, grounding human subjectivity in particular places. Radiating out from these pluralistic centres, the subject projects him/herself across a known world and thereby patterns relations with significant others in this oriented world. This matter was taken up in the previous chapters which dealt with the role of wanjina in social ideation and organisation, and which, for the sake of the argument, were artificially segmented from this cosmographic chapter. In the process of becoming identified with certain named and located wanjina, the living embodied subject, in projecting him/herself out into the world from these particular places, naturally encounters resistances and opacities which are clearly articulated in the wanjina cosmology as the “limits of our understanding”, that which beyond “we cannot go” because of wilmi, the “mists” which prevent most human beings from seeing any further (cf. Mowaljarlai and Rumsey (video) 1994)\textsuperscript{107}. This sense of limitation is important to the purpose of this chapter which is to show how beliefs and images of the wanjina allow experiences of both containment (budbu) and scattering (buladnga) to be articulated. I argue that it is the dialectic between these poles of experience which generates the symbolic forms themselves. In this respect I draw upon a formulation of Ernst Cassirer who wrote:

(1930a:279).
The crucial element of every symbolic form lies precisely in the fact that it does not have the limit between I and reality as pre-existent and established for all time but must itself create this limit – and that each fundamental form creates it in a different way........The more widely we extend the scope of this phenomenology [of mythical consciousness] ....the more evident it becomes that for myth the concept of the soul is no stereotype into which it forces everything that comes within its grasp but is rather a fluid plastic element which changes in its hands (1955:156).

The following sections of this chapter draw out the distinctions which can be made between wunggurr and wanjina but, in keeping with the above, are not intended to create an impermeable partition between the more general nature of the first and the particularistic qualities of the latter (Petri 1954:107-108). As I will demonstrate below, the general/particular antinomy (cf. Levy-Bruhl 1935: xxxvii-xi) is a heuristic device which is not always explicit in the indigenous material discussed. Both in the visual imagery, and the wide-ranging conceptualisations of wanjina and wunggurr, any particular instantiation of wanjina can be found to "contain" fragments, if not the entire body, of wunggurr and any particular instantiation of wunggurr can be found to contain at least the potentiality of wanjina within its body as a dividual (Strathern 1988). Later in this chapter I utilise Wagner’s (1991) elaboration of the notion of fractality to discuss the integral relationship between whole and parts as single entity at different levels of “magnification” but always maintaining a conceptual holism which is animated by differentiating forces (cf. Maddock 1978:18).

6.1 Wanjina

The heuristic distinction I drew above between the unitary nature of wunggurr as opposed to the individually named and differentiated nature of wanjina is immediately evident in the wanjina cave painting galleries themselves. The wanjina is very seldom presented as a solitary figure even in one clan’s painting gallery and each of these wanjina usually has its own name. Large groups comprising of as many as thirty individual personages might be painted together across the rock surface. At times they appear with their heads at different angles to each other and of very

107 Morton remarks that the Aranda regard the life which is visible in the Milky Way as “a form of life about which they can know little or nothing due to its inaccessibility” (1985:121).
different sizes and colours, forestalling any "natural inference" of a either a single perspective from which they may have been created or any single moment of creation. In some places the images of *wanjina* are represented only with heads (or head and shoulders) while at others they are represented with complete bodies including hands and feet. At some galleries, partial and complete *wanjina* images occur together.

In the galleries at Wanalarri and Mogayad, a long series of vertical *wanjina* heads and shoulders are placed equidistantly in a linear formation emanating from (or ending in) a much larger, horizontal body mass which envelops the lower bodies of the linear series of *wanjina*. This type of formation in which smaller *wanjina* figures emanate from the body or cluster around a larger, more focal *wanjina* figure is quite common. In some galleries the entire assemblage may have been renewed at the same time but often there is a great variation in the clarity of the images in any one gallery. The angles of the rock surface also present different planes upon which the images appear. All this variation of colour, size, texture, and clarity of the *wanjina* imagery within a single cave gallery is a powerful counterpoint to the quiet and sheltered stillness of the sandstone cave itself which is commonly a hollowed monolith rising from the surrounding country. The immediate Gestalt is one of movement and interaction between the figures within a dark, cool and extremely confined space. These relationships of movement and multiplicity between the figures have been described by senior people as the "life of a *wanjina*’s family" or "tribe". People point out the "sisters" or "father" of a particular *wanjina*, as they do at Ngegamarro for instance, though there is seldom any distinguishable marking of gender on the body of the *wanjina* themselves.

The *wanjina* cave paintings are regarded by Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wunambal/Gambre people as the "shadow" or imprint left by the *wanjina* after their creative travels across the landscape. The word which is used for shadow is *anguma* which also denotes a person’s “spirit” or “soul”. The nature of *anguma* is discussed most often in the context of the “finding” of a person’s conception spirit by their father. In the section below on conception beliefs this will be drawn out more fully to show how a person’s relationship of consubstantiality with their *wanjina* is implicated with this *anguma*. The stories which are told about the *wanjina* speak of the belief that the *wanjina* are visible today because they pressed their bodies into the rock-faces of this country during the earth's formative period while its surface was still soft. This imprinting aspect of the *wanjina*, the final merging of its body with the soft surface of
the earth, requires some elaboration in terms of the symbolic significance of mud and water in this psycho-physical world. To this end, these two substances are below paired with the *wanjina* image as a single analytic category. Sometimes, rather than paintings, the *wanjina* left behind other sorts of markings, such as the footprints which are said to be visible in the rock at Ayngngulura. N.P. tells how "*wanjina* walked through that flat ground, through the opening and made his print behind him for us to see". At the painting site known as *Yalgi andi* the qualities of this primordially soft world are still very evident. Here an extensive series of cupules appear in both vertical and horizontal rock faces. These small hollows, *dagula* or *bindingarri*, are said to have been created by the action of the "sweat of *wanjina*" falling onto the soft rock in the *Larlan*. The deep and glossy patination on the cupuled surface has a smeared effect as though it were still in a molten state and serves to vividly maintain the sense of the softness of the rock. A viewer has the sense of seeing a "snapshot" of not just geological but of cosmogonic time. This scene immediately raises the question of the nature of time in the Ngarinyin life-world but this question will have to deferred until the exploration of the qualities of *wanjina* has proceeded much further. For the moment though we can say that the visible impressions of the "sweat of *wanjina*" which have been left on the rock mark out a space in which Ngarinyin people reflect upon the relationship between their contemporary presence and that of an originary epoch which still embraces them. The intersubjective experience of time in this particular life-world, as in any other, derives from the quanta of inner duration (which) are dependent upon retention, impression, and anticipation. These arrange themselves one after the other in characteristic rhythms, which are determined by the tension of consciousness that happens to be prevailing at that time (Schutz and Luckman, 1974:56).

Here these "quanta" are the markings left by still living beings which inhabit the life-world through one's consociates and animated places in country. This question of the nature of the (inter)-subjective experience of time in the Ngarinyin life-world has important implications for my argument, flagged in the introduction, that

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108 Tamisari interprets the significance of the ancestral footprint as lying not only "in its (re)-embodiment of ancestral presence and the movement, but also in its quality of visibility [which] brings to the fore a dynamic dimension of the idea of the body" (1997:39). In this she takes a cue from Munn who saw the footprint as evoking "a sense of passage, of motion and mobility connected with bodily movement..." (Munn 1973:137-8).
untrammled creativity is not restricted to some bounded “time of the ancestors”. Although there is a named entity, Larlan, for the ancestral epoch, it is equally clear that present day people are able to participate fully in these acts. Wagner (1986) has been able to point to an appreciation of the ever-presentness of the creative time in Munn’s work on Walpiri iconography (1973). The past and future of “mythic” or “organic” time, he writes “are but images, transformations or transpositions of an equally projective image called the ‘present’, and every bit as metaphorical” (1986:89). Like all metaphors (transfers of meaning between domains) this involves a scale expansion and contraction of the subject’s embodiment which allows the “assumption of a creativity intrinsic to the action of the creative times” (1986:23). The motility of creative beings in their wanderings is interspersed with moments of closure, rest, sleep, depositing of bodily essences and dreams which map out the next projective segment of the track (cf. Munn 1986:29). There is an oscillation between closure and scattering which never ceases to constitute the human subject. The child’s ontogenetically earliest experiences of unity with the maternal body and the eruption of scission and the momentary recoveries of this imaginary modality of symbiotic being, continue to reverberate throughout the body-ego for the course of life (see below for an expansion of this idea in psychoanalytic terms). The Walbiri person drawing a story in the sand does not, argues Wagner, replicate the actions of the originary beings by reversing the order of scale from macrocosmic ancestor body to microcosmic body by re-tracing the design. Rather, the contemporary drawer of designs is engaged in a “sensory enrichment”, a full embodiment, which enacts a “communion with, or a realization of djugurba as following upon the precedent of the original creative acts…” (1986:22).

So it is with the “re-brightening” or “retracing” of the wanjina. The painter is the wanjina himself, pressing himself into the soft cosmos after his creative wanderings. This period of resting and merging with the mud or soft rock attests to what Schilder called “the tendency towards dissolution of the body-image. When we close our eyes and remain as motionless as possible the body-image tends towards dissolution” (1950:287). The cupuled, “greasy” patinated surface in which the

109 Munn noted a similar process of disinvestment of the boundaries of the self, the narcissistic self-closure characteristic of sleep and dream, before creative action could occur, wherein “the ancestor first dreams his objectification while sleeping in camp. In effect he visualizes his travels – the country, the songs and everything he makes- inside his head before they are externalized” (1970:145).
Plate 3. Soft rocks at Yalgi-andi

_wanjina_ has dropped beads of sweat continues to be still wet, “still soft” in the “now that remembers or re-imagines itself into (and out of) other nows” (Wagner 1986:90). The matrix of stone into which these sweat holes are drilled is laid out as a snapshot of moments of inner duration.

In some instances the _wanjina_ became embodied in a boab tree or in a rock formation that requires no human curating to maintain its visibility. The painted _wanjina_ images are regarded not as the artistic work of the ancestors of present day people but rather as autochthonous creations, actual ancestors, whos images have merely been maintained by human agency: "kept bright" (cf. Morphy 1991 on _bir’yun_) by a ritual re-painting. This re-painting, “touch ‘em meself” in Kriol, is believed to have profound ecological and social consequences as far as maintaining the natural and social balances of the cosmos (Mowaljarlai and Malnic 1993; Mowaljarlai and Rumsey 1992, Rumsey and Mowaljarlai 1994; cf. Crawford 1968; Blundell and Layton 1978). N.P. explained that:

In _Winjin_ (Wet Season) time when that _wilmi_ (mist) come out from the stone in early morning, _jurri_ we call it, the ‘smoke’ goes into the paint and renews it and its just like it paint up again so we can go always go back and renew it [Ts. Vol. 3:22]
In this sense even the act of “re-touching” is not initiated by humans but by saturated air emanating from the sun warmed rocks which gives a new life to the painted images\textsuperscript{110}. There is indeed a very noticeable glow in the paintings at this time of year since the white huntite particularly and the other kinds of ochre absorb moisture readily, enriching the colours, restoring to them something of the vividness which these paints display when wet. In this process both water and stone are believed to be part of the body of \textit{wanjina} which are held to be to be living beings both within the landscape and within the skyscape (see Plate 4). The \textit{wanjina} are primarily identified with \textit{cumulo-nimbus} rain-bearing clouds (\textit{Gulingi} or \textit{angguban}) which move across the country in the Wet Season, \textit{Winjin}, (December through to April). Ngarinyin people differentiate several types of rain and corresponding stages of the Wet Season. First of all is the \textit{jalala bibibi} “green grass peeping out” or the \textit{awe wan yiri}, “scattered showers, clouds coming”. This rain is “not full yet” and is said to be made when \textit{wanjina} “put his track, walking around”. The middle part of the Wet is called \textit{jawad}, “heavy rain” and \textit{winjin}, “cyclone rain” [V3A, 156]. Late in the Wet occurs the \textit{gulingi angudungudu}, “rain from rib of \textit{wanjina}”.

\textsuperscript{110} This is consistent with Basedow’s noting in the Victoria River region (adjacent to the Kimberley) a painting showing an ancestor with his penis in a fire and a column of smoke ascending into a woman’s vagina (1925:292) which Hiatt cites as a possible symbolization of fire as “male generative power, and smoke its medium of transmission” (1971:80)
After the *wanjina*’s peregrinations through the Wet Season, he “lays himself down” in the form of the deep fresh water pools to which the running rivers contract as the Dry season (March through to November) approaches. The *gulingi*, cloud bodies of *wanjina*, are visible as fairly distinct entities when seen on the horizon. As with the head and shoulders of the *wanjina*, they are flat-bottomed but with towering, glaringly white upper sections. The direction from which the clouds are coming is often taken to be an indicator of the activity of a named *wanjina* dwelling in that direction. As the clouds move closer together they become darker until finally the cloud mass becomes a single black and grey mass overhead at which point the clouds break and the rain falls. This thunder cloud aspect is the point at which the distinct and usually benign *wanjina* becomes the massive and potentially dangerous body of Galaru/"wunggurr." Capell recorded the following *wanjina* myth in 1938 in Ngarinyin country:

Galaru came forth from the water. He dug for water, it came out this way, and this water stayed. He went away and became a painting. He talks, he goes up and stays half-way. (When) there is a big cloud, he makes rain fall. (When) there is water above, *wanjina* stays on the ground (1972:26).

This statement captures well the act of emergent differentiation between *wanjina* and *wunggurr*/Galaru. Having arisen from the water at the bottom of which *wanjina* and
wunggurr dwell, Galaru then made a hole in the earth to release the water from within it, creating a deep waterhole and then "became a painting". That is to say he lay down inside the cave next to the waterhole and pressed himself into it. Galaru later awakes and replaces wanjina in the sky but at the same time is himself a wanjina. When contemporary Ngarinyin people speak of the mouthless wanjina "talking", they are referring to the loud thunder which precedes the rain, the only sorts of sound that wanjina make. The phrase "he stays half-way" speaks of the low-level clouds now hovering over the earth. wanjina meanwhile remains "on the ground", in the cave in which he has painted himself. Just as the water produced when Galaru punctured the earth "stayed" in one place so too does wanjina "stay on the ground". In this sense Galaru/wunggurr can be understood as the active "dream" of the sleeping wanjina, a projection of the wanjina which awakes talking/thundering and "goes up" into the sky but is never quite separate from ("stays half-way") the reclining body of wanjina in the cave. This oneric mirroring between wanjina and wunggurr is explored at greater length below. For the moment though it is worth noting that Lommel reported on the Wunambal belief that "Ungud finds the soul of a Wondschina in a dream in the water" (1996:16).

There is a plethora of examples in which wunggurr embodies yarri, dreaming activity in general. The process of "dreaming" songs, for example, requires a composer to travel in a dream on the back of wunggurr through the air and deep beneath the water to Dulugun, the land of the dead. The composer’s body nevertheless remains on the ground where it is cared for by the composer’s assistants. His sleeping body remains connected to his wunggurr self by buyu, a long thin invisible thread connected to his erect penis or navel, which is colloquially known as "radar" because it is an invisible ray which locates and keeps flying objects in view. Given that the entire cosmos is believed to be founded on such generative dreaming, the problem is grasping whom, in the wanjina/Wunggur dyad, is dreaming whom. This relational problem is replicated in the reciprocity of dreaming child spirits between the father/son dyad in this social world (sec. 4.3 above).

111 Munn noted that this sense that ancestors "became the country" was common in Walbiri and Pitjantjatjara beliefs (1970:148).
Plate 5. Charnley River, broken up into permanent pools, at the end of the Dry.

After the deluge in which the individuated cloud masses (wanjina) become a single body of dark thunderstorm (Galaru), a reverse process occurs. The cloud mass breaks up into individual clusters and the wanjina return to their resting places in their own countries. This is a process which finds its most extreme articulation in the recountings of the story of Wanalirri in which a primordial flood of world-destroying proportions overcomes everything and everybody, after which the wanjina which had gathered for war returned to their rightful places in country. This cosmological event is replicated in floods of the Wet season and in the radical contraction of the river systems as the Dry season moves in. There is again a "breaking up" of the visible body of wunggurr into distinct pools. The long moving ribbons of river courses, which are visible from the elevated rock ledges in which many of the wanjina caves are located, slowly break up into large, relatively isolated rock pools, the ngawan or "living water" which never disappears no matter how dry the season. Ngawan is a polysemous Ngarinyin word which can also denote the "water-skater", an insect which, despite the fact that it is only ever observed walking on the surface of water, is
said to live at the bottom of all water-holes and to be able to “hold” living water for an indefinite period, re-emerging with the onset of rains. This small insect is said to be able to hold wumod-ba, the “cold water” at the very bottom of water-holes. The ngawan is thus sometimes referred to as wurnod-di, “the bone of the water” (literally “its bone”), as much because this is the eternal part of water which never dies as for the “bony” exoskeleton of the insect. The cave paintings at Marirawala near Guringe contain painted representations of this ngawan. The emphasis in the description of the ngawan upon the inter-relationship between depth and surface of the waterhole is intriguing. North-western Australia is home to the largest known variety of species of amphipods – small, blind, colourless and translucent crustaceans which live their entire lives in the dark waters at the bottom of underground aquifers. For ecologists they serve as important indicators of water quality and where they are absent, the water supplies are under threat of exhaustion or pollution. This ancient life form, predating the break-away of the Australian continent from Gondwana, embodies many of the qualities ascribed to the wanjina - its fetal, white translucency, the emergence of a spiky, shell surface, and its mirroring of another version of itself on the surface of the water-hole as found in the wanjina/wunggurr conjunction.

While the body of wunggurr is believed to be never actually dissected, but rather parts of it become submerged in the earth, people do remark explicitly upon the contraction of running rivers to still, permanent pools in which wunggurr is believed to be most powerfully concentrated. Most older people won’t swim in these pools for instance and if they do, they usually bathe only in the very shallow water around its periphery.

6.2 Mirror Worlds

Beneath these pools, it is said, there are also whole “worlds- big dry ground” in which wanjina dwell, worlds which are mirrors of the airy world above the pools but contained in world-sized caves complete with game and vegetation beneath the water holes. These worlds, which are also identified with dulugun, the realm of the dead, are believed to have something like “trap-doors with lid” which allow entry and exit for those with the knowledge to do so, such as barnman, traditional healers and composers [NB3b128]. According to several of my older teachers a man can enter and exit this realm through these “trap-doors” as though in a “lift” (i.e. an elevator). The sensation of vertiginous descent is said to be very similar. In regard to this vertiginous
descent and what it reveals about the experience of the body and its gravity, Schilder has pointed out that "in progressive movements in quick elevators...there are dissociations in the heavy mass of the postural model of the body, and part of the heavy mass leaves the body in the form of a phantom" (1964:294). Mowaljarlai (Lommel and Mowaljarlai 1994: 283-287) described to Rumsey events surrounding the healing of a man from leprosy by his entry into one of these mirror world-spaces beneath a waterhole. According to Mowaljarlai, "a man who had healing powers came to that *wunggurr* place, snake place, punched a hole there with his heel, with foot, and he made a window....hollow ground, it just went down in a door..." (Lommel and Mowaljarlai, 1994:285). The *wanjina* reflected in, or living within, "spirit water" is described as *ngalad wunggurr wadada* ("*wunggurr* lay down as a reflection"). Ngarinyin people are long familiar with the use of water as a mirror. Charcoal, *ngalad*, used to be thrown in water to make a dark reflective surface which men used as a mirror to strip away body and facial hair with wax balls. Although sharing many features these mirror worlds are not, however, identical to each other, just as a man is, in interpersonal contexts, not a reflection of his FF but of his FFB, someone who is "same but different". Indeed the very notion of identity is thwarted by the incipient seriation of the world through the surface of the water-hole. The emergence of named and distinct *wanjina* from the undifferentiated (if only intermittently visible) body of *wunggurr* through the medium of a watery reflection alerts us to the fact that any act of mirroring is also a creation of asymmetry in the same way that I have described that between the moieties.

6.2.1 The Mirror of Walanganda

The night sky is also said to be replete with pools of fresh water which are most visible in the body of the originary *wanjina*, Walanganda, the Milky Way. The mass of this galaxy is said to be the body of Walanganda lying across the heavens, with his head in the North and feet in the South. Within this body (of white mists which are also water) are pools of "dark, sweet water" [V.3A:78] which are pointed out in one dark hole in particular just to the east of what we call the Southern Cross. All fresh water on the earth is said to have come from water which originally "fell down" from these dark pools of fresh water in the body of Walanganda. The
whiteness of the body of Walanganda is said to come from the smoke from the cooking fires of the moiety heroes Jun.gun, who was cooking yali (female kangaroo), and Wodoi, who was cooking jebarra (emu) in the Larlan. [V3b:114]. Again, in the story of Gumalerrri, the Morongongo clan ancestors are said to have been cooking a kangaroo as an “offering to Walanganda” when they saw wilmi, white fog, and ngarngaramindi (“white salt-water foam”) coming up at them (see pp.258 below for an interpretation of the body image as “foamy”). They were terrified and threw a barnamarr, fighting stick, towards the mist. The fighting stick stuck in the mud and became a marker for the separation of salt and fresh water along the Prince Regent River (V.3a:69). Once again, jurri, “smoke” (literally “mists”), and wilmi, fog, are associated with watery vapours which pour themselves into, and congeal into, the watery body of Walanganda himself. The “smoke” emanates not just from the wood of the fire but from the juices of the bodies of ancestral animals being cooked. In one version is said that the tail of the kangaroo being cooked “exploded” sending up the white smoke into the sky. Jebarra is pointed to in the Milky Way next to the deep fresh water pool. The Southern Cross is alternatively said to be the footprint of this emu or the gulangi (native black-plum) tree which Emu is eating from. As I have
discussed above (sec. 5.2 ), this is the fruit which Emu is said to have stolen in the first creation of the wurnan exchange system between the clans.

In the Walanganda wanjina painting in Jibilingarri country, the wanjina and a smaller second figure, identified as “his son”, are represented on the roof of a cave (Plate 6. above). In the burnished rock floor immediately below them is a dark, well-polished depression which is said to be the wunggurr pool visible in the Milky Way itself. Here the wanjina and his son are perpetually “mirrored” in the “water” which forms part of Walanganda’s own body. Judging by the detritus of black decayed vegetable matter in this depression it is clear that during the Wet this hole gathers rain-water striking the edge of the cave. Parallel red lines emanating from the wanjina body are said to be the swirling mists making up the galaxy. Importantly, I was told that these lines of celestial mist also formed an angga or coolamon which is traditionally used for carrying vegetable foodstuffs gathered by women, babies and, according to Love (1936:158), also the bones of the dead. The curved outside surface of angga are usually decorated with the same kind of striated red lines, carved into the wood. Love noted that at Kunmunya “the mother will often paint her child with stripes of red ochre” (1936:118). This confluence of the red ochre lines forming the bodies of wanjina, babies and angga supports the interpretation of the wanjina being both container and contained, subject and object melded into a single being.

As well as the mirroring occurring between the celestial water-hole in the Milky Way and the heavily patinated hollow in the rock there is a mirroring between the representation of the starry mists making up the galaxy and this object of everyday use, the angga. This is intensified by the fact that garnmanggu, yams (foods gathered into a coolamon, are also represented on the cave’s roof. These yam paintings are probably the most commonly represented plant species in wanjina caves. They are usually painted in an extremely animated way with the filaments of their hairy upper bodies often shown to be waving and bristling with energy (Plate 7 below). Because of this movement with which they are imbued, these often man-sized, long and bulbously shaped yam personages take on anthropomorphic dimensions. The yam figures at Ngegamorro and Langguman galleries are good examples of this anthropomorphism of these root vegetables (see Plate 7). In both

\[12\] Morton cites Roheim regarding the Emu-man having “ascended to the sky in smoke” (1985:126).
these paintings there is a striking resemblance between the waving filaments of the yams’ upper body and the radiating lines of the *wanjina*’s “hair”.

Plate 7. Yam painting at Langguman

When a perspective is taken on the overall shape of the Walanganda cave structure itself, it can be seen that here is one of the “mushroom” shaped stone formations which are frequently used as *wanjina* galleries. These particular sandstone formations are shaped as an “axis mundi”. The wide expanse of flat-bottomed cloud mass forming the roof of the cave contracts to a thick stem running down to the rock floor which, in this instance, is explicitly said to be a body of water. There is a pouring down of the roof to the floor just as, in the West Season landscape, the dark funnels of rain linking the ground to billowing cloud masses can be seen moving across the horizon. Several of my older informants regularly spoke of rain falling from the “roof” before correcting themselves to say ”sky”. There are strong morphological resonances at work here between this mushroom-shaped rock formation as an upturned “hollow place”, the hollow of “water” in the floor of the
cave, the dark waterhole in the Milky Way and the common elongated-“u” shaped angga. I point these resonances out in order to highlight a suggestive symbolic equation. At one level of analysis, there are powerful links between certain features of wanjina and human babies (see pp.226 below). The appearance of the primary wanjina and “his son”, emergent from a matrix of lines which are said to be the lines of an angga as well as the mists of the Milky Way, suggests an act of autopoiesis through reflective watery surfaces. M----, one of my older teachers, achieved a similar symbolic equation in a dream which he narrated to me.

In his dream he heard a voice coming from a sandstone outcrop. When he investigated the source of this voice he found a doll-sized black woman standing up inside a coolamon which is standing on its end, wrapping around her upright body. The “doll” became a wanjina.

There is yet another overdetermination at work suggested in this dream: the angga itself as wanjina body. The common type of angga found in this area is, as I noted above, made of a light corkwood, yanggal, which is easily cut in curved sections from the tree. The outside is then painted with red ochre and cut with parallel lines, creating an effect of alternating red and white lines (i.e. the bare wood showing through where the red has been scraped away). The curved end-sections are marked off with a transverse cut line and painted with white ochre. The inner curved surface is usually painted in plain red ochre. When stood on its end, as in M----’s dream the affinity with the wanjina body is clear (see Plate 8 below)

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113 Munn noted the autopoiesis in Walbiri myth in which ancestors had “the power to create one’s own identity without limitation…” (1970:145).
The presence of the yam bodies in the Walanganda painting strengthens this sense of autopoesis since these underground tubers are emergent from the matrix of stars which is also the curved body of a coolamon. The night sky/coolamon in the Walanganda painting is mirroring the fertility of the earth from which new life *bun wurumara*, “pushed itself out (through the cracks)”. Yams here emerge from the starry “ground” in the same way that spirit children emerge from the water. Both are believed to have “strong *wunggurr*”. Crawford reported that yams were said to come from the group of spirits called Warulu, who make yams “when they defecate” (1968: 94). A yam spirit called Ungamin is always represented with a large penis resulting from being tortured by the Warulu for stealing the largest yams (ibid.:94).

In the same region as Walanganda painting, the mountain known as Gurowani in Brrejirad country is said to be where yams “sprout, replant himself” [V. 3A, 66]. References to this self-replication were made many times to me and brought up in any conversations about plans for horticultural enterprises which are forever being formed by various resource agencies and station managers. Rejecting the idea as too onerous, older people would say to me “We don’t have to carry bucket of water, yam look after himself”. Indeed, in the mirror world of the *Larlan* yams were said to grow straight out from sandstone. This imagery refers on the one hand back into the time when the
world was soft but is carried over into the present with the remark that they could grow out of the “hard rock”. A similar conflation of the two sides of the mirror is made when people talk about *agula* as “only make tracks on rock, no mark where he walk on sand”. Even when in the realm of present realities there are beings, such as yams and rock-devils, which are able to invert the order of things and carry this inversion over to the human side of the mirror\textsuperscript{115}.

Walanganda appears to have a particularly marked relationship with *garnmanggu*, yams. In the stories collected by Capell in the late 1930s there are several tales of Walanganda in which he lays down to become a painting and yams always accompany his presence. In at least one instance the yam is painted inside his belly because he has eaten it before lying down in the cave. In another, yams pile themselves up into a mountain next to Walanganda. The part of the story in which the yams are inside Walanganda’s belly is told immediately after the mention of the *mayangarri* sacred object, which Walanganda had stuck to his hip. Capell (1972:57-58) and Love (1935:228) have both pointed to the probable relationship between *me*, vegetable foods and *maya-ngarri*, sacred objects, which are represented as accompanying Walanganda in cave paintings and in the Milky Way. These objects are said to contain the most powerful concentration of *wunngurr* (“life force”) available to human beings.

Human bodies in sleep are said to “follow” (i.e. turn in relation to) the rising and setting of the Milky Way (V.3 78) as it moves through the night sky. Young married couples, for example, need to be vigilant about this because they should never lie facing upwards at the Milky Way for fear of seeing the *maya-ngarri*, sacred boards there. This is a direct expression of a relationship between the Milky Way and the fertility and abundance of desire of young married people, an intimation of immensity which Bachelard describes as being attached to a sort of expansion of being that life curbs and caution arrests, but which starts again as soon as we are alone. As soon as

\textsuperscript{114} Morton has pointed to a similar autopoesis in the central Australian *altjira* (Dreaming) which Strehlow translated as the “eternal, uncreated, sprung out of itself” (Strehlow cited in Morton 1985:111).

\textsuperscript{115} Alan Rumsey, in a critical review (2001) of a metaphor of a binary opposition first proposed by Deleuze and Guatarri (1987), has pointed to latent similarities between the supposedly different paradigms of reproduction between arboreal and rhizomatic life forms (such as yams exhibit). Interestingly, both the “arboreal” forms associated with *wanjina*, boab and *ficus*, grow in a rhizomatic way. Indeed the boab can be readily pictured as a huge yam.
we become motionless, we are elsewhere; we are dreaming in a world that is immense. Indeed, immensity is the movement of motionless man (1969:184).

The mirroring of the terrestrial world in both sky and water is condensed in some older people’s experience of flying dreams. I have been told that, when dreaming, these people feel they are “floating on their backs” looking skywards but seeing the “trees, water, everything” as though floating above the earth looking downwards.

Roheim’s analyses of central Australian myths associated with the Milky Way (1972:69-86; 1971:65-67) are now well-known (if not widely endorsed). In a nutshell, his psychoanalytic interpretations of the Aranda and Pitjantjatjara mythic corpus depicted the Milky Way as locus of an eternal punishment/eternal wish fulfilment of incestuous desire provoked in the child’s fantasy of the “primal scene”, the image of the coitus of mother and father transposed through the child’s identification to the intercourse of mother and son (Roheim 1969:193; Morton 1985:139). The Northern Kimberley stories about the Milky Way show a few explicit features which might link this tradition with the desert one. However, the theme of inappropriate appetites evidenced in the Jebraa story, and the fact that she became enshrinced in the Milky Way after her fatal spearing by the law abiding wurnan partners, resonates strongly with the materials Roheim analysed. He notes that for the “western neighbours of the Aranda we find that the importance of this emu-footed sky being gains considerably in importance” (1972:69). The “Pitjentara representative of this species” is a man “with a beautiful body and feet like an emu” (ibid:71). Like the Ngarinyin story of Nyambiligi, the blind wife of the first, selfish fashioner of mayangarri, the Pitjantjatjara myth of the Milky Way also involves a blind woman who lives with two men who fed her emu without enough fat. She despatched them forever to the Milky Way when they followed one of the last of the emu in order to hunt and kill her.

In the Ngarinyin stories, the punishment of the Jebera, condemned by her selfishness like Wibalma, the maker of objects, is her eternal visibility\textsuperscript{116} in the night sky, gorging herself upon the gulangi fruit in their raw, non-socialised state. Failure or refusal to recognise proper sequencing in both the sharing of foods and the sharing of sexual and reproductive resources is a pronounced theme throughout Ngarinyin
cosmological materials. The clearest enunciation of this theme, unifying the two most important aspects of resource sharing, is in the stories of Wodoy and Jun.gun where the proper sharing out of daughters or sisters and the immoral/shameful redundancy of cooking honey are explicitly utilised as moral injunctions against incest. The presence of shame-inducing but fertility-giving objects (remarkably the same word; mandagi in both Ngarinyin and Pitjantjatjara) in the Milky Way, “stuck to the hip” of Walanganda, and stuck cross-wise together in Pintupi myth, strongly suggests some shared features between the desert cosmologies and those of the North Kimberley. We will recall here that the hip, to which the object is stuck, is the site on the Ngarinyin body at which the sexual relationship between husband and wife is articulated. The “stuck cross-wise” of the desert image seems to indicate the same thing. We will also remember that Merlan (1997) had divined in the Arnhem Land concept of shame a covert acknowledgement of the relationship of “abiding obligation” endemic to the son-in-law relationship to the mother-in-law, who provided him, in the most corporeal way imaginable, his own sexual partner. Roheim (1972:84) notes that in an esoteric Aranda tradition the Southern Cross is regarded as the cross of a ceremonial emblem, waninga (what Ngarinyin people call warranggi, string crosses, “the bones of the ancestors”\(^{117}\)) which actually takes in the entire Milky Way. This is the gulangi tree of the North Kimberley overlaid with the secret/sacred nature of the mayangarri. The theme of greed and unmitigated desire leading to a state of being stuck in an asocial world runs deeply through the stories and beliefs about the Milky Way, from the Jebraa’s exile, to the injunction against young married couples staring up at the mayangarri in the night-sky which is combined with the relative social isolation to which they are subjected (Chapter 3).

Morton (1985:149-50) and Hiatt (1975:155) have both offered qualified critiques of Roheim’s often unsubstantiated readiness to accord such a conflation of pleasure and danger to the conflicts of the primal scene. Morton does, however, allow that the imagery of the Milky Way ancestors makes explicit both the moral bankruptcy and powerful allure of self-closure in which “eternal pleasure is equal to

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\(^{116}\) Myer’s remarked that in the Western Desert “The concept of shame is usually associated with the discomfort of being observed by others in the public domain, especially at being seen to do something that is poor etiquette, ill mannered, or wrong.” (1976:141).

\(^{117}\) For the Yolngu of Arnhem Land sacred objects are said to be the ancestor’s bones (Tamisari 1998:253).
death and annihilation" (1985:149). The child's phantasised identification with the parents in coitus must undergo transformation and reorientation as the child is socialised, and yet these primal phantasies continue to energise the sexualisation of the adult's world, just as all life on the earth falls ultimately from the deep, dark holes of "living water" in the body of Walanganda, the primal wanjina. These waterholes are the eternal reservoirs of narcissistic libido which continue to provide the fount of all relationships with an "other". The "profound ambiguity" (1985:149) which Morton described as being characteristic of this imagery is attributed to the necessity of social beings coming to realise that

[L]iving in the world is both a matter of growth and development on the one hand, and give and take on the other (1985:150).

Merleau-Ponty, drawing upon the work of Klein, described this psychical transformation as the overcoming of psychological rigidity, prior to which two images (the "good mother" and the "bad mother"), instead of being united in relation to the same person, are arranged by the child with the former prominent and the latter completely concealed from himself. Ambivalence consists in having two alternative images of the same object, the same person, without making any effort to connect them or to notice that in reality they relate to the same object and the same person (1964:102-3).

The transformation of ambivalence into ambiguity, so that the subject comes to realise that the "good" and "bad" objects are aspects of the same being, rather than split off from each other as partial objects, is a work of psychical growth which Klein described as the attainment of the "depressive position" (1950). "Ambiguity", argued Merleau-Ponty, "is ambivalence that one dares to look at face to face" (1964:103). Thus the Jebbarra encapsulates the desire for immediate gratification which will forever be "found out", made visible, in all human desire, becoming most visible at night when the narcissistic enclosure of dreams intercedes and the facticity of distinct otherness recedes with the daylight. Rather than interpreting the injunction to married couples against looking at the mayangari in the night-sky as only an avoidance of looking at ambivalence "face to face" (an interpretation which would be most consistent with a view of culture as a series of psychical defence mechanisms) I

\[118\] Morton remarked that for the Aranda "when the Milky Way becomes patchy or darkened....the earth-born ancestors spill forth to flood the earth with light, populate it with animals..." (1985:168).
suggest that the injunction is one which enjoins lovers to look towards each other rather than lying on their backs, oriented towards the primal phantasy. Their bodies in any case cannot help but be "turned" by the rising and setting of the Milky Way just as primal narcissistic phantasy will continue to "turn" the axes of all desire. Whether or not the shared features of the stories about the Milky Way are a result of relatively recent cultural contacts/transmission between western central desert and Kimberley peoples or a long held commonality based upon treatments of the same psychical materials is, however, beyond the investigative scope of this work.

6.3 Flow and Stasis

Just as the unbroken ribbons of flowing water in wet season rivers break up into isolated pools in the Dry season, the differentiated bodies of the different *wanjina* can be seen to be fragments of the now only intermittently visible body of *wunggurr*. The snake-like haloes (occasionally explicitly represented as such) around the heads of the individual *wanjina* can be seen as visible parts of a continuous whole in the light of the way Ngarinyin people speak about the body of *wunggurr* as always being complete but often only visible as "islands". The fact that the dark-fringed, black "eyes" situated within the white-ochre "face" of the *wanjina* are said to be, amongst other things, permanent pools of fresh-water fringed by pandanus, suggests that here are islands of dark water within larger "islands" of light coloured sand-stone which is itself also thought of as water (see sec.7.3 below). This is just how the shapes of land and water can appear during the wet season when the flat plains around the rivers flood, leaving behind islands of stone. If we were to heuristically join the red bands of snake body wrapping around the *wanjina* heads in any particular cave gallery we find that the sinuous line of the snake/river creates horse-shoe-shaped islands or heads of white stone/white water in the bows of the river course. Within these islands of stone darker pools of water are situated. This is completely congruent with the way Ngarinyin people speak about the black "eyes" of the *wanjina* as also being the darkest, heaviest parts of the rain-clouds, the "just about to fall down water" welling within the great white cloud mass. This imagery of "islands" is also reflected in traditional patterns of lived-in space in this part of the world. During the West Season,

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119 This seems to be the operative principle of love magic too. The gift of a "porcupine foot" (i.e. echidna paw) is said to make a woman "turn towards" a man rather than "show her back", opening out (fn. Continues o.p.)
people often moved to high promontories of stone, either the extremely rugged west coast cliffs or sandstone higher ground which lifts out of the surrounding black soil river flood plains. During the Dry, on the other hand, living areas were often centred around the deep permanent water-holes. There is a movement back and forth between islands of stone amidst water to islands of water amidst dry stone.

The actions of moving and laying down performed by the *wanjina* in their travels in the *Larlan*, by the rain clouds (also known as "the travellers") each wet season, and by the flowing rivers gradually contracting to isolated pools, are all perceived as processual moments in the continual re-animation of Dreaming forces which works towards everything in the country becoming *yorro yorro* (sic), "everything standing up alive" (Mowaljarlai and Malnic 1993)\(^{120}\). Ngarinyin use the image, *we awani*, for this "laying down" of the *wanjina* as they pressed themselves into the soft jelly-like surface of the earth in the *Larlan*.

Living people are those who have emerged, "been pulled" from the *wanjina* body (in the father's conception dream) and thus brought forth into the world through the reflective surface of the waterhole through which the *wanjina* originally gave birth to itself as a reflected image\(^{121}\). Mowaljarlai used to say that the Ngarinyin verb *bun*, means "pushing up like a sprout. We *bun* the country, *dambun*, live in it, sexy place.....like baby opening up vagina...where we come out" [V.3, 1]. Older people often speak of their experiences as *wanjina* as "the time when I was Wanjina, baby one, where I came out into the country."

The recurrent imagery of ancestral beings laying themselves down in the caves is reinvested with meaning by the lying down position of the painter who traditionally re-touched these paintings at the beginning of each wet season. Often this requires the painter to lie prostrate beneath a low hanging rock roof which doesn’t allow room enough to sit up straight let alone stand upright. The anthropomorphic image which is renewed on the rock in this way thus comes to mirror the painter and the dimensions

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\(^{120}\) I suspect that the term *yorro yorro* has been incorrectly rendered by Malnic in this work. Various Ngarinyin people have been unable to recognise the term but have pointed out that I "must mean" *yayiyurru* which they glossed as "everything standing up in a bunch" and likening this state to the appearance of bananas on a stem. The term is consistent with the ritual gathering of men in a close circle before ceremonies and yelling out "Yay!" in unison, prior to dispersing to their respective tasks. I have witnessed this in burial and initiation ceremonies.

\(^{121}\) Coate and Elkin (1974:279) suggest that the vocative form of the Ngarinyin word for father, *irra*, is also translatable as "the puller" i.e. the one who pulls the child-spirit from the waterhole.
of many of the *wanjina* do approximately reflect human bodily dimensions. Ngarinyin people see these rock caves, into which the painter squeezes himself, as actually being cloud formations, stating unequivocally "that rock there - its a cloud" (see also Mowaljarlai and Malnic 1993; Mowaljarlai and Vinnicombe 1996; Crawford 1968). Indeed the convoluted shapes of the white and grey sandstone and quartzite rocks standing out from the flat surface of the surrounding land readily yield up such an interpretation with their whorled and hollowed morphology. In some of them, there are curving struts, spars, wind-tunnels and long narrow light shafts which are also plainly visible in the biomorphic cloud structures above. In the act of spraying the retouched painting with mouthfuls of water, the painter *giyug* ("pushes") himself into the rock/clouds just as the *wanjina* did in the *Larlan*. Further, Ngarinyin country is said to be made of "greasy (*mil*) rocks not dry one" (V. 2, 21). This sense of greasiness is enhanced in painting caves by the heavy patination caused by contact with human bodies over millennia. In many instances this patination is so thick that it is dangerous to try to walk over the stones because of the slipperiness of the surfaces. In section 4.1.1.1 above I explored the mythic dimensions of fat and grease. The many quartzite fragments scattered around the cave living sites are said to be hailstones, petrified water, transfixed between a watery and stony state and capable of becoming soft again in the hands of healers. I have already discussed (Sec 5.3) the large white "Baler shells", paper thin, translucent and shaped like an elongated skull which are left filled with water among the bones in these same caves in order to provide comfort and coolness to the spirits of the dead relatives which have been interred here. This reservoir of water is renewed by visitors over time.

A common Kimberley Kriol expression which Ngarinyin people use for the time before they were born is "me still longa water yet". Another expression in Ngarinyin which Coate remarked upon is "*djala wili minu wali*" - "he is not out of the water grass yet" (Coate and Elkin, 1974:157). The spirit children, *anguma*, which are said to be about the size of a finger, are attached to the long green weed -*jala*- which grows in the water-holes and they will leap out onto men who look into the water and lodge themselves initially in the hollow between the collarbone *anganda* (cf Lommel, 1996:33). In running water this green weed fans out and moves like hair. This has been explicitly compared, by G.W. and others, to the visage of the *wanjina* which has been described as being surrounded by streaming hair as though floating in water. After the father has dreamed of the child and been told its name by the
anguma, he will often carry the spirit-child wrapped up in his own hair for up to a couple of years before the child actually gets conceived. The hair bun was also the place where men traditionally carried spare spear tips and other personal objects.

People have pointed out to me the tiny pulsing veins in the semi-translucent bodies of delwa, a small gecko associated with rain-clouds. This pulse is also pointed out in the fontanelle of new-born babies, i.e. in the membranous space between the parietal bones before they weld together\(^{122}\). This gecko, delwa, with its throbbing pulse and new-born babies are regarded as living bodies of wanjina. New born babies, with their almost visible internal structures and only semi-shaped external shell, are the closest human form to the wanjina, an identification which is supported by their inability to talk, their reclining, pliable, soft and watery bodies and the oscillating continuity between their dreaming and waking states. A common compliment which is used for any good looking person, baby or adult, is “wanjina anume” (“made in the image of wanjina”). One man explained to me that this was like “gardiya say when a baby is born ‘spitting image of his parents’- well that’s anume now”. Jebelerr (baby-talk) is regarded as being particularly good for attracting fish, since a baby’s connections with the creatures of the water are still only partially severed\(^{123}\). Strong associations are made between the inarticulate sounds of babies and the thunder sounds produced by the mouthless wanjina through its nose. These sounds are onomatopoeically reproduced either as a low long mmmmmmmmmmm, or a percussive gurgling noise like gugugugugugow.

Wanjina are believed to be personified in contemporary living persons, who identify with a particular wanjina by referring to him as "I" or "me" when narrating stories of him in the larlan (ancestral past). For example, when L.G., a Ngarinyin man of the Brejalg nga clan, narrated the story of how his wanjina was bitten on the upper arm by Bamali, a King Brown snake in the larlan, he points to his own right arm and talks of the place where "King Brown bite 'em me". One of his names, Nyajngo,

\(^{122}\) “There are in fact six fontanels at birth, with the anterior fontanel being the most noticeable and longlasting…..The anterior fontanel, which pulses visibly and makes any baby seem yet more fragile and vulnerable, actually enlarges for the first two months after birth. It then shrinks, and finally closes. The actual time of its closing is notably variable: anywhere between four and twenty six months.” (Smith 1970:283).

\(^{123}\) This identity between wanjina and babies recalls the amnion rites of the central desert, the Engwura/Inkura which were first noted by Spencer and Gillen (1899:213, 272; Spencer and Gillen 1927:224-5), in which “the great, ancestral Achilpa Inkata’s Ambilia-ekura was full of Churinga and (fn. Continues o.p.)
comes from this action in the larlan. In a similar vein N.P. tells how "my father carried that Gayun.gu (Mt. Barnett Range) on his shoulder right up to Manggurarrri (near Doongan Station). When he was carrying that ranges, that’s larlan di, my grandfather found him there at Manggurarrri- that’s why my father got that name Manunggu, its the same meaning as Gayunggu". Here Neowarra is referring to his father as a wanjina. The emphasis upon the shoulders as the place on the body where country is carried recalls for us the fact that it is the father/son relationship which is figured at this bodily site in muscle twitchings, and also the place where child essences are often seen to “sit”. Thus, the wanjina can be seen to simultaneously carry his country and the clansmen who will care for it, including transmitting responsibility for that country through the generations. This concept of “carrying” country and the burden of transmitting Law to the younger generations will be discussed in Chapters 8 and 9 below. A similar image has been described by Myers as focal amongst the Pintupi, where responsibilities of sacred knowledge are associated “with phrases denoting some sort of physical object and indicating a weight burden, or responsibility for the ‘holder’” (1980a:199).

Similarly, N.K. takes one of his names from the female ancestral kangaroo, Nyenowarr, which is believed to have given birth to his actual father at Warr muj mulimuli in the Caroline Ranges. N.P. takes his name from the black rocks, nyawarra, in the Munja area where “my father found my spirit when he was walking around that time”.

In the case of the Wajinnongong group’s wanjina site at Ngawerri, the principal wanjina is said to be Mogayad, which is also the name of the father of Reggie, Barney, Dicky, Nugget and Mary-Anne T. This instance underscores the fundamental identity which is believed to inhere in the relationship between a patrilocals group (clan) and the wanjina which came to rest in their particular country. Lommel (1996:17) found similar expressions among the Wunambal in 1938.

The maintenance of a fully vitalized natural and social world is regarded by Ngarinyin people as something which is achieved through a regular presence upon country and the conducting of the appropriate ceremonial rites. Indeed the presence of the "right people" for specific country is in itself believed to "brighten" country and to

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spirits, or Kuruna associated with them, just as the bag inside the mother is full of the baby child” (Spencer and Gillen 1927:224-5).
release the inherent fecundity of natural forces. This condition of abundant vitality is, as noted above, the condition of country known as yayiyurru, "everything standing up in a bunch". Senior people say that the country recognises its own by ngalug, odour and the familiar sounds of these people's voices (cf. Povinelli 1993:142; Tamisari 1997:43). Conversely, the absence of people from country is believed to cause diminished supplies of native fauna and flora, waterholes and rivers to become dry, and what could be described as a "melancholy" or "depression" of the country in the same way that a person who is lonely or "sorrowing" (marari) for a particular place might experience it. Both paintings and country are said to become faint and lack-lustre through the absence of regular human contact. My teachers maintain that what were once extremely fertile breeding grounds for waterfowl at Munja, for instance, have become depleted during the recent period of only sporadic occupation.

One of the ways in which this ecological balance is maintained is through the attention which is given to maintaining the "brightness" of the wanjina paintings which occur in each of the clan countries. Evidence from senior Ngarinyin people suggests that the care and ritual repainting of wanjina paintings is not restricted only to those who belong to the clan country in which the wanjina painting occurs. Persons of both sexes feel a ritual obligation to countries where they have a strong connection deriving from one of the number of potential links (i.e. patrilocality, mother's country, wunggurr). It seems that socially mature persons other than clan members (but still belonging to the cultural domain) could be invited to repaint an image in another person's clan country. The fact that such persons would then be given gifts (ngurli) such as kangaroo meat or sugarbag by those with a more direct responsibility indicates the persistence of a concept of primary responsibility for sites and surrounding countries. The right to repaint in a person's mother's country's gallery seems to be activated especially in a situation where a person was seen to be "standing alone", their clan relatives having died out. This person would then assert their right to dwell with the group living in their mother's country and obtain rights to paint the stories belonging to that country. In ritual rights and obligations in relation to deceased clan countries the issue of being of the same moiety as the deceased clan is important just as it is in issues of succession to country.
6.4 *Wanjina* as Both Container and That Which is Contained

Further to the discussion above of the strong resonance between the coolamon and the body of *wanjina*, particularly Walanganda, there is another facet to this resonance deserving of exploration here.

*Plate 9. wanjina at Liringu*

*Jungari* or *Larrgarri*, the boab tree (*Andansonia Gregorii*), is regarded as having a particularly strong affinity with *wanjina*. It is said that one should neither hit a boab tree nor play with its leaves. Magical killings can be effected by carving an image into its bark. Particular specimens, such as the one at Dadaningarri, are held to be especially dangerous because of their relationship with spirit women. Another, at
Dudgalo, is said to be the incarnation of an ancestral dog which had had its face painted in red ochre by a woman in preparation for an important ceremony. The morphology of the boab tree with its bulbous, often hollow, body, and its ability to hold water in the outer bark, all lend it certain qualities which are believed to be held by *wanjina* also.

Plate 10. Boab Tree (*Adansonia Gregorii*)

This morphological resonance is compounded by the radiating network of branches which emanate from the smooth, skin-like trunk in a manner which closely resembles the way in which the *wanjina*'s head-dress radiates from the smooth curves of the
head. The horizontal growth scars of the boab’s trunk accentuate this skin-like quality with the suggestion of navel infolds and folds of “skin” also around the branch stems. In this sense the horizontal scarring is more akin to the bulbous “nose” of the *wanjina* with its horizontally segmented and pendulant appendage. Furthermore, seen on the horizon, a mature boab tree with its crown of radiating branches bears a strong visual resemblance to the *wanjina* image.

In one important story, the Wanalarri saga, a boab tree which is actually a disguised *wanjina*, “opened its legs” and swallowed up two juvenile miscreants who had caused the wrath of the *wanjina* to descend upon them by plucking the feathers from Dumbi the Owl. The boys are trapped inside the boab body forever despite the efforts of their relatives (who now appear to be saved from the flood which was at first said to kill everyone) on the outside of the boab tree. There is a strong theme of envelopment and release here since the two boys who are trapped in the boab were said to have been the only survivors of the great flood, but having grabbed hold of a kangaroo by the tail to escape the water they are led by disguised *wanjina* to their “premature burial”. Hiatt has interpreted such acts of swallowing and regurgitation as a “dual purpose symbol, on the one hand communicating threat, on the other serving as a substitute for the natural model of female generation” (1975:157). As in the various versions of the swallowing myths and rites given by Hiatt, the two boys are “kept” but the other people of the earth are regurgitated after the flood (ibid. 149; cf. Warner 1958:257-8; Berndt 1951:39-56; Stanner 1963:6-9). This theme of entrapment is an emotionally extreme rendering of a pervasive oscillation between container and contained which characterises the *wanjina*. On one hand the *wanjina* are “contained” within the rock shelter on which their images are painted in the same way that the bones of deceased clansmen are contained within the same rock shelters (cf. Taylor 1989: 377). At the same time, the *wanjina* are “containers” of water and spirit essences and “contain” their own images in the sense that the cave itself, the rock which is cloud, is also a *wanjina* body. In the painted galleries, a larger *wanjina*, as I have shown, often “contains” the bodies of smaller *wanjina* (cf. Taylor 1990:337).

The cave structure in which the *wanjina* usually appears, itself acts as a container in several senses. At the most basic level the caves, which often served as Wet Season living areas, are hollowed out from the rock mass. They thus served to contain living human beings. The carbon blackening of cave roofs and the broken pieces of spear tips which abound in such places amply demonstrate their role here as
human shelters. Apart from living human beings, as I have pointed out above, the caves also contain the remains of deceased relatives. The cleaned and anointed bones are wrapped in paper-bark parcels, tied with string, which gradually unravel to leave the skull and principal long limb bones sitting on narrow rock shelves within the cave. Further to this, various types of sacred objects are often stored in a similar way in such caves. Each having their own “personality” and name, these objects are also anointed with grease and ochre, wrapped in paper-bark and stored as though they were relatives whose “remains” require tending and “settling”. Their “bodies” are believed to impart living essences to the places where they are stored. These small “caves within caves” thus become, over time, lined with the soft, darkening sheets of paper-bark which flatten themselves out on the rock shelves. This paper-bark is called *wulun*, a term which is used as a metonym for “woman” in Ngarinyin. This usage is based on the fact that paper-bark is used for the construction of *garragi*, “bush buckets” for gathering foods and even carrying water and honey, all seen as women’s work *par excellence*. The cave structure is often situated in a high place to keep its contents clear of flood-waters. Consequently there is a dramatic contrast between the view looking into the narrow confines of the cave and the often spectacular views over the surrounding country when one is looking outwards. This imaginative structure allows for a powerful sense of movement across the country at the same time as emphasizing the confined place from which the mind’s eye is wandering. These wide views over country were highly valued qualities of a wet season living area and the exposure to cooling winds is claimed to be important to the spirits of deceased people who are interred there also. The contrast between the sense of containment within and the diffusion of self, occasioned by looking outwards, is thus a dramatic one.

One further example of the container/containing qualities of the *wanjina* cave shelters is the practice I have mentioned above of leaving in these places *nyaliga*, Baler shells, filled with water to assist the transition of the spirits of deceased persons to the realm of the dead. Water, being the quintessential substance associated with *wanjina*, acts to “cool” the spirit, just as the south-easterly winds blowing into the cave does. The water is also a reminder of the re-birth of the person’s *anguma* through the fresh water billabongs in their country. The Baler shell is, once again, a container within the larger container of the *barnja*, cave structure. Even where Ngarinyin people have been buried in European style graves, such as at the Leprosarium in Derby or the
Derby Municipal Cemetery, these Baler shells are seen in a great abundance. At Bungarun, there are more than 400 grave-sites\textsuperscript{124} and each of them has a Baler shell attached to the rudimentary marker stone.

In the south-east of Ngarinyin/Wurla country, more than a hundred and fifty kilometers from the nearest salt water estuary and more than six hundred kilometers from the west coast where these particular Baler Shells originate, is a prominent hill called Nyaliqa (Baler Shell), which is a traditional storage place for sacred objects. This further supports the notion explored above that Baler shells, with their skull-like colour, shape and texture act both as container of vitality (of water and sacred objects) and contained (in the sense that the Baler shell becomes lodged in the same crevices and shares many of the qualities of human skull remains). This is perhaps in the very nature of all shells, which either continue to be, or have once been, the excreted part of the body of a soft organism which ultimately becomes only a hard container. When still inhabited by its living organism, the Baler shell has a soft pink colour and moves across reef and mud with a series of long fleshy appendages, “fingers” as they have been described to me. From this rich, fatty body emerge snail-like eye horns. Only when it is dry does the shell become white. This is similar to what happens to the drying bones and skulls of the dead when they have been laying for a year or so in the durrgun, rock cairns. The practice of filling Baler shells with honey and presenting them as gifts in the wurnan replaces the original fatty, liquaceous flesh with another “fatty” substance, honey, rich in nutrients and epitomising the highly concentrated social value which is also the subject of wurnan exchanges. N.P. explained to me that the honey-filled Baler shell could not be supped at by “kids, only by older people” because “you know what it look like- mili (vagina)”. This comment was followed by shy but indulgent laughter. Both ngara, honey, and nyaliqa, Baler shells, are strongly associated with femininity, belonging to both the feminine class of things in the world and the nyamalarr moiety (cf. Morton 1985:211). The exchange of these two things as a single combined object, subject to age-grade taboos, entrenches the idea that wurnan is primarily concerned with the social exchange of female sexual and reproductive powers which finds one expression in the fertility giving nature of sacred boards. Though the domains of marriage and wurnan exchanges are claimed to be “different

\textsuperscript{124} Bachelard quotes Baltrathsitis to the effect that “as late as the Carolingian epoch, burial grounds often contained snail shells- an allegory of a grave in which man will awaken” (in Bachelard, (fn. Continues o.p.)
channels” of exchange they follow isomorphic paths and women have used the term wurnan to me when speaking of the system of promised marriages, as in the phrase “X clan that’s our wurnan, where I get husband from”.

The morphology of shells in general, in which the internal surface becomes all external, lends itself in a unique way to the representation of the imaginary structures through which the human psyche apprehends itself. The theme of internal becoming external, of container becoming contained, and vice versa, is particularly strong here.

Gaston Bachelard explored the nature and phenomenology of shells and concluded that:

The obvious dynamics of these extravagant figures lies in the fact that they come alive in the dialectics of what is hidden and what is manifest. A creature that hides and withdraws into its shell is preparing a way out. This is true of the active scale of metaphors, from the resurrection of a man in his grave, to the sudden outburst of one who has long been silent….we have the impression that, by staying in the motionlessness of its shell, the creature is preparing temporal explosions, not to say whirlwinds of being (1969:111).

Bachelard’s comments are particularly pertinent in the case of the wanjina. The “withdrawal” into reverie which the wanjina makes in the cave shelter following its creative actions is continually interrupted by the emergence of new life, both human and otherwise, from this spirit centre. As I have shown above, the wanjina re-emerges from its dream in the men and women who continually retake its name and are thus bound to that particular wanjina in as much as they are an instantiation of it. In this sense the wanjina may be thought to “recoil” in the way that a creature recoils into its shell in order to prepare itself for the “temporal explosions” and “whirlwinds of being” which accompany the wanjina’s awakening in the monsoon season. The water filled Baler shells have traditionally been used for increase rituals at wanjina sites. The hollow of the shell filled with water is analogous with the hollows of the skulls’ eye sockets which lay alongside them and with the black hollows of the wanjina face which, as I have pointed out above, are the rock pools of “living water” from whence new spirit children are retrieved by the father. The Baler shell, nyaliga, also maintains

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1969:116)

125 Mountford’s review agreed that “the function of the wandjina of the Kimberley Ranges is to ensure the periodic recurrence of the rainy season and the normal increase of the animals and plants and of spirit-children” (1978:85).
a strong sense of its having been a living, moving creature in as much as theses shells were only obtainable by trade with wurnan partners or by travelling to the coastal regions of relatives' country oneself. For the ancestral Baler Shell which I noted above to have reached Karunjie for instance would have required a journey of not much less than eight hundred kilometers. This Baler Shell, then, became the stone formation repository of other objects transmitted through the wurnan. In this respect the contemporary transmission of objects in the wurnan emulates the agentive movement of the ancestral Baler Shell. Human interaction through traditional exchange routes animates the landscape in the same way that this ancestral Baler Shell was itself once an animate being moving slowly but relentlessly across the mud flats of the Prince Regent River. This kind of containment, or living memory, of motility which allows living men to enact the ancestral movement in their ceremonial exchanges, brings to mind Munn's description of the Walbiri notion of ancestral movement in which;

a kind of perpetual motion is remedied by images of permanence, yet at the same time this motion and the dynamic subjectivity it presupposes are, as it were, incorporated into permanent objects: transformations contain the ancestral being and his “strength” at the same time that they are disengaged from him (1970:143-4).

The dialectic between internal and external surfaces which manifests in the shell, lends itself in a unique way, as I suggested above, to symbolising the imaginary structures through which the human psyche apprehends itself. Fairbairn pointed out that the psychoanalytic notion of “impulses” deriving from the dynamic but inherently mechanistic theory of libido was an untenable one unless “impulses are simply regarded as constituting the forms of activity in which the life of ego structures consists” (1944:88). In other words there could be no content without forms and forms are themselves instantiations of “activity”. The metapsychological revisions of Freud implied by this model nevertheless retain Freud’s understanding of the development of a surface structure, which he called the Ego, the purpose of which is to regulate the interaction of the “reservoir” of instinctual energy, the id, with the outside world. Freud himself came to see this surface structure as being in a continuous relationship with the Id (Freud 1960 :16), unfolding from it so that large areas of the Ego remain themselves unconscious. Freud’s famous image is of the libido being a reservoir “from which the libido which is destined for objects flows out
and into which it flows back from those objects.... As an illustration of this state of things we may think of an amoeba, whose viscous substance puts out pseudopodia” (1960[1923]:53). Like the viscous “fingers” of the living Baler Shell, these pseudopodia reach out into the world, drawing in objects, rejecting others, forming the organism itself. For the symbiotic human infant, wrapped in its fetal narcissism, there is as yet no external shell, no ego. This has to be created from a progressive displacement of energy quantities from the inside of the body (particularly from the abdominal organs) towards the periphery of the body... so that the perceptual rind of the ego, containing the sense organs, may receive cathexis...... The baby’s libido position thus proceeds from the stage of fetal narcissism to primary body narcissism, a stage in which representation of the mother’s body plays a large part (Margaret Mahler, cited in Fliess 1961:23).

The mother’s body thus continues to act as the imagined external body of the newborn, just as it had for the time of the pregnancy. Her image acts as an “external ego” for the neonate. The building up of an ego unfolds from a turning inside-out which creates a surface which can resist and genuinely encounter the world as a subject. The coming into being of this surface, the building up of an image of the skin in the infant’s mind, is accomplished by the touching and caressing of the mother which brings the skin into awareness. Before any external stimuli can be perceived, the skin as an organ of perception has to be brought alive. The life of the embodied psyche is inescapably a borrowed one. The container is built up from, and continuous with, the oleaginous, soft, internal body. The Baler shell, then, can be seen as one of those “symbols that stand for themselves” in Ngarinyin mythopoeia (Wagner, 1986). The Ngarinyin imagination, the “organ” which produces symbols, symbolises itself in the Baler Shell. Just as the living Baler Shell extends its pseudopodial “fingers” to assimilate nutritive substances which allow it to secrete the calciferous stuff from which its shell is formed, so does the nascent human subject introject sensation and images which allow it to secrete, centrifugally, the defensive shell which comes to

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126 Morton has pointed to a similar conception of originary fetal narcissism in Aranda mythology concerning the inapatua “the massed, embryonic human chain on the surface of the world, and the eternal, death-like slumber... of the ancestors in their underworld domain” (1985:119).

127 This turning inside-out is just how Munn described the creativity of the ancestral realm of Walpiri people; “Objectifications are conceived as external projections of an interior vision: they come from the inner self of the ancestor into the outer world” (1970:14).
constitute itself\textsuperscript{128}. Only by its vitality coming to the surface can the nascent human subject/Baler Shell continue to live. This surface/ego/skin/shell is secreted in progressive layers, serial substitutions, with which the organism creates an increasingly more complex interfacial surface mediating self and world. Eventually only the dry shell/skull is left, the organismic vitality extinct. In the Ngarinyin psyche, the image of this organismic vitality is projected narcissistically as the transcendent anguma and wanjina itself, which will emerge again from the water holes which are the apertures of the country and the water filled aperture of the Baler shell. This transcendent spirit is thus figured as but one more substitution in an infinite series, gaining another kind of maternally derived surface when the bones and skull are wrapped in the paper-bark wallet for their second burial (see sec. 6.6 below).

In addition to the explicit stories of wanjina as container, and the enclosing (shell-like) qualities of the cave structure itself, a close study of Ngarinyin expositions of the wanjina image reveals more implicit suggestions of this containing quality. Here I will draw upon the notion of “islands” which I elaborated in the preceding discussion. The hair filaments/feathers which surround the red “horseshoe” of the wanjina head-dress are rendered in exactly the same way as the filaments (jiru, “eye-lash”) which surround its black painted “eyes”. The white ground of the wanjina face within which lie the dark pools of its eyes, is replicated in the white ground of the overall cave face or overhang within which the wanjina head lays. Rounded figures in a white ground (eyes in the face) become other rounded figures in a white ground (the head itself on the cave wall). I have shown above (Chapter 4) that red can be seen as equivalent to black in many contexts where these two colours are contrasted with white. This equivalence manifests in the cognatic words gul, “blood” and gulibangarri, “black”. The sequence from most enclosed to least enclosed then runs: red/black (the “eyes”) within white (the “face”) within red/black (the head-dress) within white (the spray-painted cave wall) within red, the unpainted rock matrix. At each boundary between red and white a bristling border of red (tipped with black dots) “hairs” emanates outwards towards the next containing shape. Further to this,

\textsuperscript{128} It is this processual generation of a casing which forms the exoskeleton, psychically speaking, of the human subject which gave rise to the psychoanalytic use of the term imago. Weiner (1995: 24) has pointed out that the term derives from the entomological term for the final metamorphosis of an insect, thus implying the always “ideal” nature of such constructs.
the "nose" or "line of power" which runs between the "eyes" into the white ground of the face is replicated in the pendulant black shape of the yilmbi ("sternum") which, in a direct alignment with the "nose", protrudes from the shoulders into the white ground of the cave wall. Both are usually outlined in red but have none of the hairy filaments of the other two features compared above.

Here is a working through of notions of feminine containment and masculine projection within the one image which impart to the wanjina its characteristic androgyny (cf. Taylor 1990:337; Brandl 1973:70). This androgyny both draws upon and underscores the condensation of genders made explicit in the Ngarinyin kinship categories (see Chapter 3.). Indeed, Ngarinyin people, in many contexts, do not distinguish strongly between the phallus of the uncircumcised male (gardu) and the clitoris of the female (gadun), both possessing a projecting member enclosed within a prepuce. When speaking English, people have referred, for example, to the "penis" of a female ancestral Turtle depicted with an abundance of eggs within her abdomen.

This conflation of genders within the wanjina image, which is replicated in the way kinship terms often fail to distinguish between genders in social interaction, implies that there is a holistic notion of personhood immanent within the image of wanjina and the relatedness of groups and individuals to the wanjina. In a loose but very real sense the constituent elements of the wanjina image can be viewed as fractals, in which the internal characteristics of the overall design themselves replicate the larger picture. In fractal images any change of scale is able to yield up the same relative proportions as the whole image. No matter what scale is scoped down or up to, the integrity of the relationships within the image is preserved. Roy Wagner has used the notion of fractality to explore a Melanesian sense of personhood (1991) which does not entail acceptance of what he sees as the hegemonic conceptual dualism of individuality/sociality in anthropological discourse (and other Western forms of knowledge). Wagner's use of fractality returns to a Melanesian indigenous usage in order to show that individual and society, far from being "parts of a whole", are immanent within each other. Any aggregate of persons, such as clan, language group, or prominent individual are but "partial realisations" of a pre-existing totality. Given my emphasis in this section upon notions of containment and scattering, Wagner's usage of fractality opens up considerable scope for an exploration of it beyond the limited usage which I have employed above to talk about the wanjina image in its multidimensionality. Indigenous notions of wanjina as constitutive of the
Ngarinyin person can also be explored through this notion of fractals. The strong emphasis upon relatedness which characterises the whole of Ngarinyin life, resonates strongly with Wagner's statement that, in Melanesia at least,

[A] fractal person is never a standing unit in relation to an aggregate, or an aggregate standing in relation to a unit, but always an entity with relationship integrally implied (1991:163).

In the Ngarinyin world this "entity" entails the totality of country wherein wanjina dwell, where the Ngarinyin language is laid down, where different relatives are distributed, and where the different moiety identified tracts of country lay alongside each other, among others. Just as the wanjina image can be reduced in scale from a mass of clouds on the far horizon to a single eye within a single painted wanjina image without loss of the integral image, so too, can a moiety group, for example, be scoped down to a single social agent without loss of the entire pattern of relatedness. A person of the Wodoi moiety, for example, contains essences derived from his mother in the opposite, Jun.gun, moiety. The interdependency between the identities derived from father's and mother's moiety, the expectation of reciprocity in marriage relationships and in wurnan exchanges in later life, simultaneously bear upon, and derive from, the interdependent relationships existing between clan groups. A member of a particular clan has collapsed into his person the totality of the characteristics of the group and thus he is known by one single term to particular other "scoped down or up" aggregates of the whole. The fact that he or she bears the name of an abi (classificatory FF or FFZ) further emphasises this containment of the whole entity within any particular formation because the entity never loses or gains "parts", but reproduces itself at different levels of specificity. Yet this is not a maintenance of a 'static social model' because the process of differentiation, as Wagner put it, "is as much a part of the holograph...as the motif itself" (1991:169). That is to say, it is social action and movement which gives the motif its shape and maintains its boundaries as it meets resistances. The cutting of meat from the whole carcass for distribution, the "cutting out" (as people say) of a portion of a pension cheque to put aside for a particular relative, or even the "cutting out" of the steers from the mustered mob of cattle serves to maintain the relatedness of the whole. Similarly, the cutting of a boy at initiation is an "elicitation of inception and nurturance" (Wagner, 1991:169) from his future wife's family (especially his brothers-in-law at this stage).
I have explored this notion of fractality at the level of sociality at greater length (see Chapter 3.) which dealt more specifically with Ngarinyin sociality and notions of groups within groups. For the moment I only wish to show how the fractality inherent to the *wanjina* image further implicates it as a symbol of the emergence of human subjectivity itself. As I have noted above, the body-ego, the sense of self, is constituted from the sensations emanating from the surface of the body which are progressively “organised” by the infant’s identifications with the maternal visage. The chaotic, fragmented experience of internal sensation is brought to the skin surface and gradually distributed over it by the caresses of the mother. Her face is the only thing visible as this almost exclusively buccal being imbibes the maternal milk. This relatively unified gestalt of the face (and shoulders), often looking down at the face of the infant, itself becomes introjected at the same moment that the breast milk is absorbed through the plugged up gap of the mouth.

The mouth is not distinguished as a part of itself by the undifferentiated infant but is experienced only as either a need, a gap\(^{129}\) of frustration, or as a continuous surface interfacing with the nipple. The breast and its contents are also indistinguishable at this early stage. The Ngarinyin word, *ngamun*, for instance, denotes both breast and milk\(^{130}\). This mother/child nexus is the first intersubjectivity, which, as Anna Freud importantly pointed out, is “an important factor in the libido economy of both” (cited in Fliess 1961) mother and child. The body image, the body-ego from which the ego grows, shrinks and expands, incorporates and rejects, just as the mother’s breast, nipple and flow of milk and the stomach and mouth of the infant shrink and expand. This continual shrinkage and expansion takes place at the same time that there is a cumulative formation of surface tension, muscle tone, focussing of the eyes and awareness of the coming and going of the breast in the infant. The foundational ego comes into being as perception becomes possible. This rudimentary ego, still all body-ego, obeys the laws of the primary process and is subject to all manner of displacements and condensations.

\(^{129}\) Such gaps which enter into the body-ego become the site of valencies which eventually allow of, in fact, demand metaphorical substitutions. Fliess asserts that “if a sequence of thoughts contains gaps that can be closed only by reading certain elements in it symbolically, then these are symbols” (1973:16).

\(^{130}\) Rumsey has pointed out (pers. comm. 17/5/01) that this use of a single term to denote both a product and its source occurs generally throughout Aboriginal languages. In Ngarinyin, for example, this is explicit in the words *ngara* (“bee/honey”), *winjangun* (“firewood/fire”) and *wulun* (“paperbark tree/paperbark”).
Plate 11. Waanangga: the Wild Honey *wanjina*

Plate 11-A. *wanjina* crescent head, eyes and nose,
Plate 11-B. *wanjina* head, face and shoulders,
Plate 11-C. *wanjina* head, eyes, shoulders and series of vertical lines representing rain

The earliest image of the body is one in which organs and functions are melded together to create barely differentiated “continents” of sensation in a mobile “sea” of diffuse affect. If we analyse the *wanjina* image in terms of body-image, and we are more than justified in doing so given that indigenous understandings and actions make
this body mirroring quite explicit\textsuperscript{131}, then we can see that, amidst all the variables in the constitution of this image, the eyes and face are always there. The rest of the body can be left out entirely but these two elements are indispensible to even the most simplified variant:

Finally there are the “full-body” \textit{wanjina} which also have legs, arms, and most elaborate head-dress as in Plate 11. (above).

These more or less elaborate Gestalten reflect the contours of the shrinking and expanding, more and less differentiated, body-ego. Lommel noted, for example, that Wunambal people told him how the \textit{wanjina} at Merrinbini still becomes ever stronger with each progressive completion of his image. When he painted himself in the Dreaming for the first time he shouted to his brothers and sisters exultantly; “look at me, how I paint myself, look here how my hands get stronger, how the picture takes shape.” He became stronger and stronger and there were tremendous rains (Lommel 1996:43).

The fact that the variously complete images (and the images variously faded by time) often co-exist in the same cave galleries means we must largely eschew an analysis based on a unilinear developmental schemata. Obviously all of these early structures remain present in the adult psyche as shifting schemata which can be reverted to under different conditions and emotional contexts. This doesn’t mean to say that the increasing elaboration of such bodily schemata are devoid of implications for the increasing differentiation of the subject’s image of her body, only that such schemata are co-present with all the most simple representations. Equally obvious is the fact that there is a transformation of the conscious and unconscious significance of these gestalten for the more or less mature human subject\textsuperscript{132}. The fact that there are secret “inside stories” about the \textit{wanjina} held by senior people is enough proof of that. In this respect it is important to bear in mind that “early infantile experiences are of special importance but we never stop gathering experiences and exploring our own body” (Schilder 1964:299).

\textsuperscript{131} To discover this meaning structure we “must imaginatively reconstruct the original procedures of the foundational seriation. We have, as it were, to place ourselves in the position of a primordial Iqwayne, who in this sense, should be understood as an ideal entity encompassing the entire Iqwayne life-world” (Mimica,1992:50)

\textsuperscript{132} Povinelli has commented in this regard that “[h]umans, born into a body already shaped by the mythic intentions of its patrilineal and matrilineal ancestry, are subject to new rounds of mythic action throughout their lives” (1993:138; cf. Rumsey 1994).
As I said above, the two indispensable elements of every *wanjina* image are the face/outline of the head and the eyes. At one level of interpretation this face with eyes is the coherent maternal visage in the act of looking down at the infant’s face in which the eyes, but not the mouth are visible. Here it is possible to take Freud absolutely literally when he claims that “a potential symbol requires often enough...not a symbolic interpretation but is to be understood at its face value” (cited in Fliess 1973:17, my emphasis). In other words, the *wanjina* face is the introjected maternal face. There is an oscillating exchange taking place between mother and child. The mouth of the child cannot appear in this primordial gestalt because it is occluded by the neonate’s absence of awareness of it’s own mouth as a distinct organ. The baby is the mouth. According to Spitz (something I have found confirmed by my own observations) the nursing infant visually perceives neither breast nor milk but “stares unwaveringly at the mother’s face” (cited in Fliess, 1961:254). This occlusion of the breast is in turn augmented by the mother’s inability to see her nursing infant’s mouth. The fact that she empathises and identifies with the suckling child is most clear when she moves her own lips into a sucking mode to emulate the baby’s actions. Thus the infant, as Laing would say, “induces” the mother to embody itself, while she induces the baby to embody her. This libidinal interchange in the maternal symbiotic equation has been very inadequately investigated by psychoanalytic theory. Laing’s emphasis upon the nexus of others within which the self is constituted brings the reciprocity between mother and child into sharp focus. He asserted that

> [g]ratifying and being gratified have their dawning origins in breast-feeding. This can be genuinely reciprocal. The baby’s need for the breast and the breast’s need for the baby coexist from the beginning. (1969:83)

I have been told (P.N.) that the *wanjina* “might have a mouth but it is on the other side” (my italics), i.e. facing into the rock surface and so we can not see it. This is an interesting explanation, in the manner of an analysis of a parapraxis, which adds further support to the theory of the occlusion from consciousness of the earliest experience of the mouth as a distinct organ. The mouth “on the other side” might well be the mouth pressed into the breast given that a rock *matrix*, especially in this cultural world, symbolises the soft surface of the remembered maternal skin.

The eye, then, becomes the organ of perception proper because it is gradually able to distinguish what the mouth cannot. Fliess called the neonatal eye the “earliest
sensory mouth”, forging the eye-mouth unit in the rudimentary body-ego, which is “perhaps the first to establish a ‘without’, although at first one not as yet opposable to a ‘within’” (1961:256). That such a “unit” exists for the Ngarinyin, something which can by no means be taken for granted, is strongly indicated by the probably cognate words for eye and mouth, emen and emendu respectively. It is also worth noting in this regard, that several psychoanalytic commentators have found that the sound m-m-m-m-m-m (the only sounds apart from percussive gurgling which are attributed to wanjina) continues throughout life to be psychologically “connected with the labial sensation of the infant expressed in the act of nursing” (Feigenbaum 1961:244) and subsequently becomes the infant’s first sound of negation, the inarticulate origin of moral judgements based upon the idea that that which is “good” is opposed to that which is “bad” on the basis of “‘I should like to eat that, or I should like to spit it out’; or carried a stage further: ‘I should like to take this into me and keep that out of me’” (Freud 1984:439).

The wanjina figure which I rank next in terms of expansion of the bodily Gestalt is that which portrays the vertical lines of falling rain trailing off indefinitely from the shoulders towards where the feet might be expected to be. This figure usually includes the yilmbi, the black pendent object hanging from the centre of the collar-bone. The yilmbi is said to be “breast bone”, the sternum, which covers the same region, anganda, where the spirit child enters the body of the father when it emerges from the waterhole. The sternum or “breast bone”, so highly pronounced in the wanjina image, evokes the interdependency of bone and flesh in a powerful manner. The breast is the softest part of the human flesh, site of the nurturant maternal relationship, and yet on the inside of this skin and flesh, the sternum is one of the hardest, strongest bones in the body, protecting vital organs from damage. The yilmbi thus comes to figure strongly the container/contained qualities of wanjina. The evanescent image of the rest of the body represented by the vertical lines of falling rain augments the anthropomorphism of the wanjina without making it completely definitive. It imparts a sense of the rest of the body beginning to materialise in the

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133 Morton has remarked that in the Arandic mythic corpus regarding the Milky Way the “alternation of container and contained is a pervasive aspect of the world as it comes into being” (1985:218). Further to this theme, in relation to the black yilmbi against the white breasts/shoulders of the wanjina, Morton cites Hamilton (1979) to the effect that “the dark (black) is normally associated with the ‘inside’ (esoteric) meanings in ritual, while the light (white) is aligned with ‘outside’ (exoteric) ones” (Morton 1985:220).
body-ego. Like the *angguban*, the travelling rain-storms which provide the external model for this image, though, the rest of the body fades in and out of consciousness.\textsuperscript{134} The shoulders are an over-determined image which also signify the breasts and the flow of rain is the milk which flows down from it (cf. Roheim 1971:198). In this sense, the “head and shoulders” of the *wanjina* can be seen as the single breast of the undifferentiated infant, the breast of the first oral consciousness. The emergence of the *yilmbi* is, in this schema, another nipple flowing downwards with milk/rain. Within a single image, then, are represented the shifting body images with which the neonate comes to picture both its primordial unity with, and emergent differentiation from, the mother. The single breast of the *wanjina* head becomes the ontogenetically later double breasts of the *wanjina* shoulders which flow with their gustatory, vivifying fluids. The body-ego made visible in the *wanjina* painting is able to retain the earlier image within the later one and the power of the image flows in part from this possibility of recapturing primordial vestiges of being within a highly sophisticated cosmogonic gestalt. This ability of an image to create meaning recursively is crucial to the whole of symbolisation, and especially to what Wagner (1986) called obviating symbolisation. Forrester observed that

\begin{quote}
psychoanalysis starts with, and always works within, an original intersubjectivity ; it then works backwards, to earlier states, whose reality and significance is only conferred upon them retrospectively (cited in Weiner 1995:51).
\end{quote}

The *wanjina*, of course, are retraced not by babies but by socially mature Ngarinyin and by exceptionally gifted ones selected for this task. Thus the sequence of substitutions does not stop at this first apprehension of the primordial body-ego. These first intimations are, however, always recoverable, at a glance and in the midst of the stories that accompany them. The act of *guuyug*, “mouth spray painting” with white paint across the *wanjina* face, is the initial and final act of the retracing of the *wanjina*. This spitting out of a milky white liquid which is said to re-animate the *wanjina* re-creates a fusion between primordial subject and object. It is the creative act par excellence in that the painter is now the *wanjina* himself pressing himself into the rock, leaving behind his image as well as being the primordial mouth and breast

\textsuperscript{134} Strehlow noted that “it is in the present, in the limitations of evanescent Time, that a man lived in union with Eternity” (1964:739).
fused together into a single entity. The white paint overflowing from the lips of the painter who has mixed white ochre together with water inside the primal buccal orifice is simultaneously the breast milk overflowing from the infant’s mouth. The original mirroring between infant and mother, the original intersubjectivity, is re-instigated. Both painter and wanjina simultaneously play the parts of the maternal imago and the nursing infant. The painter has not created something ex nihilo but has “only traced” the gestalt of the maternal imago in order to re-vivify his own body-ego from the reservoir of original narcissistic energy. The repainted wanjina, as infant, is said to be, for the time being at least, “satisfied”, “happy”. The flow of rain is guaranteed and the fecundity of country and the wanjina’s descendants assured. The inverse of this situation is the “fading” of wanjina, marari, his “loneliness” when he is not brightened by repainting, and the subsequent “drying up” of the country (cf. Povinelli 1993:159). At times this “drying up” is regarded as malice or neglect by the wanjina towards humans and there are numerous reports of, and physical evidence of, attacks made upon wanjina images with stones and sticks. In such cases the wanjina’s “original self-containment has to be negated” (Morton 1985:155). This oral sadistic rage/panic is said to induce the wanjina to no longer “hold back” much needed rain. Such praxes, in both their positive and negative dimensions, tend to substantiate the interpretive psychical model of wanjina as generative sublimation of orality. This identification with wanjina through oral incorporation is clearly expressed in the following scenario.

In the centre of Dodnun camp is a large native cypress tree which was believed to be an image left behind by Walamba (the ancestral Red Plains Kangaroo) in its travels above and below the ground. This Walamba/Cypress tree, which belongs in the Wodoy moiety, towered over the camp of P.C., the camp’s only Wodoy moiety head of household. Upon his vacating this camp and moving to the nearest of the new houses (in October 1994), his classificatory daughter, M.M., for whom the Walamba was both a moiety and clan totem, occupied the dwelling next to the Cypress/Walamba image. This Walamba/Cypress tree is the source of the name of the community, Dodnun, meaning “where the Red-Kangaroo stood up”. The smoke of these Native Cypress trees, Guru, are regarded as a cure for the “cold-sick” which afflicted the Walamba, causing him to sneeze out mucus at a nearby location, Dinjirr (“cold-sick place”).
This Walamba, like many other of the clan totems, continued to play an important role in dream life for people such as M.M., underscoring the integral role of such key symbols constituting personal identity. She narrated a dream in which she saw a gigantic Walamba, gesturing up towards the sky to indicate its size. When she approached it though it was only as big as her hand. She picked it up and ate it in a single gulp.

She regarded this dream as emanating from the Walamba painting site Warr Muj Muli Muli and as indicating that rain was approaching from the Caroline Ranges area where it was located. This dream of oral consumption in which miniaturisation and giganticisation alternate between the two protagonists in the dream can be interpreted as one in which a very fundamental identification between the two protagonists in the dream is quite explicit. The outsized Walamba becomes the outsized M.M. and vice versa. The totemic figure which originally had the same relative dimensions to M.M.’s human scale as the Cypress Pine in the camp, had the potential to devour or destroy M.M.. She is infantilised in relation to the Walamba, which is the symbol of her patrilineal nexus of relationships. And in a sense she is, as a Barurrungarri woman “belonging” to Walamba, always on the point of being “swallowed up” by her ancestral connections. At a more apparently immediate level (I say “apparently” because the common sense hierarchy of immediacies does not transpose to the dream work) M.M.’s always healthy appetite had been thwarted by the sudden and radical diminution of the Walamba when she approaches it. This is another aspect of the “mutual wounding” between father and child which I mentioned above in relation to finding conception spirits (sec. 4.3). She is now the giantess, grown huge through her hunger. This spatial dimension, inverting a (non-Ngarinyin) natural attitude that leads one to expect that things will get bigger as you get closer to them, entails a temporality also. The Walamba as seen from both a spatial and temporal distance was huge. In the “now” of the dream he is tiny.

In this dream scenario M.M.’s relationship to her clan ancestors is readily recognisable. Freud has alerted us to the fact that a figure, or figures, in a dream always represent the dreamer. As a child she was tiny in relation to the array of adult family and Ancestral Beings from which her family had sprung and of which she had
heard many stories. Now, as a senior woman, she was the greatest visible presence, the most senior person, of the Barurrungarri clan. The symbols of her identity were consumables which she had incorporated into her being to become the woman she was. From the perspective from which she was then dreaming, she was the Walamba. The particular structures of Ngarinyin kinship (Chapter 3.) underscores the reciprocity between dyadic groups of relatives. In this case the reciprocity of the father/father’s child relationship (“daddy/aunty” in this case) is brought home quite explicitly. Heuristically, we might say that the dream could have continued ad infinitum with a perpetual pneumatic oscillation of the two dyadic characters between immensity and tininess, domination and subservience, consumer and consumed.

Both these states characterised aspects of M.M.’s daily life. While she certainly knew fear of violence, regularly experienced the usually unwelcome incursions of the spirit world into her life, and was “preyed” upon by various relatives for her own resources, she was also possessed of an almost reckless courage which made her very generous; driving off storms, ghosts and unwelcome suitors with her banamarr, proclaiming for one and all to hear the moral failings of her consociates, unequivocally demanding her share of resources and emotional indulgence from those around her. As a senior woman she was not exactly “dominated” by her Ancestral connections but neither did she dominate that realm (cf. also Merlan 1992:179 on ritual power being “not [entirely] humanly manipulable”). M.M. could read the signs emanating from her ancestors (the direction of rain about to come) but could do little to alter the fact except be prepared. I agree with Bachelard that “...the word ancestral, as a value of the imagination, is one that needs explanation; it is not a word that explains” (1969:188). The particular meanings of the word “ancestral” in this psychophysical world were centrally concerned with this reciprocity between relatives, a shallow genealogical scale and the gradual blurring of the “time before I was born”, or at least of the “time before my father was born”, with the epoch of world origins. Such a blurring allowed the notion of being identified with a father’s father (or father’s father’s sister) and an Originary Being to “hold emotional water” rather than to leak like a sieve in the face of the radically different ontologies and modes of action associated with the new world order. M.M.’s dream captured, in a

125 “Finally we have the totem animal itself as a typical representative of what we have called an ‘intermediate object’. For the totemite will call his totem animal either a father or a brother or his own (fn. Continues o.p.)
most condensed form, the affective bonds linking her person and one particular subset of personages which she had internalised. The fact of the continuing potency of the ancestral Walamba, indexed in the creation of the rain storms from the area of its cave, was at once a source of satisfaction and reaffirmation (which *warl nyawan*, "enlarges" her) but also diminishes (*gola nye*, "she shrinks") the person in the face of its cosmological power.

This expansion and contraction of the body image is activated by fluctuations in desire and, as Fliess has informed us, this "is not altogether confined to reflecting the body; it is capable of exchanging parts of it mutually with parts of the object world" (1961:209). Indeed, such exchanges seem to occur more or less perpetually, although they reach consciousness only under certain conditions... *without such an oscillatory interchange of cathexis between pleasure-physiologic organ representation and object representation, we could not live normally in the outside world* (Fliess 1961:244-245, italics in original)

The "whole body" *wanjina* which are drawn with splayed hands and feet and arms and legs almost complete the image of the Ngarinyin body. The grasping hands are late addenda to the neonate’s perceptions of the breast. Once the skin has become activated as an organ of perception proper the hands become an accessory to the mouth and eye for grasping its world. Spitz (cited in Fliess 1970) has called this combination the "modality of primary perception" in which the perceptions of labyrinth (inner structure of the ear which yields proprioceptive sensation), outer skin surface and hands combine with "the intra-oral sensations to [give] a unified experience in which no part is distinguishable from the other" (cited in Fliess, 1961:256). Fliess, following a suggestion of Freud’s, believed that this modality lay the psychical basis for the ineffable sense of unity inherent to aesthetic pleasure (ibid.). When it is recalled that *wanjina* are held up as an epitome of beauty in Ngarinyin society, "*wanjina anume*" ("beautiful like *wanjina*"), and that another Ngarinyin word for "likeness" is *ngadj* (compare with *ngadji*, "mother"), there appears to be some substance to this claim.

Even more differentiated again are the Jandad figures, Lightning Men, which I will deal with below (sec. 7.7).

Diagram 3. Cross Section of native bee hive

6.5 Honey and waniina

For North Kimberley people wild honey has been a very desirable food substance. Much energy is devoted to procuring the honey of the native stingless bees and much thought and talk is also devoted to the subject of desiring the honey. This section of the thesis aims to draw out how the structures of the hives of the native bees overlap with the imaginary structures of the people who hunt them. In particular, this section looks at what these overlapping structures reveal about the nature of containers and containment in the Ngarinyin life-world.

There are four major categories of “sugar-bag” (wild honey) in this region. Ngara and Waarnangga, are called “tree sugar-bag” (made by the bee species Australolebia essingtoni and another as yet unclassified species). Namirri is “ground sugar-bag” (made by the bee species Trigona hockingsi) as is Nyunggarrgi. Ngara and Nyunggargi belongs to the feminine class, nyindi. Namirri and Warnangga, said to be “the husband of Ngara” belong to the masculine class, jiri. Ngara and Namirri belong to the Jun.gun moiety while Waarnangga and Nyunggarngi belongs to the opposite moiety, Wodoy.

Apart from the importance of honey itself to Kimberley Aborigines, the wax which forms the cells in the hive have also been extensively used for purposes such as hafting stone axe and spear heads to a shaft, repairing damaged carrying utensils such
as Baler shells, bark buckets and coolamons, and filling knot holes in wooden implements such as boomerangs. More recently the wax has also been used in making mouthpieces for dijeridus and even making repairs to carburetors and other damaged motor parts. The hives are found by taking note of the presence of bees and following them back to the nests or rock-crevice where the hive was located. I have been told that it is possible to catch one of these stingless bees and stick a feather or light piece of grass to its abdomen in order to make the tracking process easier. Stone axes were traditionally used to open up the hollow branch where the hive was located. Nowadays steel axes are used or just a sharp rock found in the locality since finding honey is an opportunistic rather than planned activity, usually undertaken by women. Sometimes the entrance to the hive would be cut open and a bark bucket, garragi, placed beneath the hole to allow the honey to drip down into the receptacle.

There are many wanjina painting sites across the Northern Kimberley where representations of “sugar bag” hives have also been made for the purposes of encouraging the increase of this desirable substance. These representations often show a cross-section diagram of the interior of the beehive.

At the Waarnangga site pictured above (Plate 12) there are two large parallel paintings of the beehive belonging to this particular bee made on the vertical face of the rock shelter. On the roof a group of wanjina are painted. The different segments of the beehive are clearly visible here.
In the Waarnangga site pictured above it can be seen that the morphology of the cave shelter itself is integral to the representation of the hive. This use of the suggestive shape of the rock structure within the painting itself is not unusual. The elongated free-standing rock in which the cave occurs is isomorphic with the images within, being itself a hive divided into segments. The vertical crack down the centre of the rock has been incorporated into the overall design. It can be seen that the vertical lines dividing the honey chamber from the egg chamber in the two paintings is a reproduction of this crack in the rock. Furthermore, the upper beehive painting occupies the entirety of one rock face which replicates the shape of the hive. The lower, much larger hive also occupies another entire vertical rock face within the cave. The overall structure then is, once again, a container (the compartments of the hive) within another container (the painted hives) within yet another container (the overall rock shelter which is also seen as a hive). Within the upper hive painting a *wanjina* image is drawn within the honey chamber itself. The presence of the *wanjina* image within the beehive cave, which, like all such caves is also regarded as being itself *gulingi*, a rain cloud, suggests that the life giving fluids within the segmented
body of *wanjina*, and within the similarly segmented “sugar-bag” itself are regarded as being analogous. That people speak of the honey chamber and the honey inside it as *arin* (“self, body, presence”) tends to support such an analogy. A woman, for example, who belongs to the Ngarangarri (Sugar Bag) clan, says that her name, Arinda, means “the honey itself”. She thus doubly participates in an identification with honey, once through her clan *gi*, Ngarangarri (and as Rumsey pointed out *arin* can be used in reference to one’s clan country) and again through her particular *wunggurr*, Arinda, in Ngarangarri clan country.

Along one of the shelves dividing the two beehive paintings at Waarnangga, there are also deposits of skeletal materials wrapped in the remnants of paperbark. At the very lowest level of the painting site a lying down *agula* figure is painted deep inside the burial recess. The human remains and *agula* figure marking out the presence of deceased persons constitute yet another level of containment. It is interesting in this regard that people say that the presence of an eagle-hawk’s egg in a nest or the presence of a kangaroo carrying young in its pouch almost always means that one is very unlikely to find “sugar-bag” and that one may as well give up the search if these things are found in the vicinity. These other type of “containers”, particularly in regard to the regeneration of life, are considered “bad luck for sugar-bag”. Ackerman reported that “[H]oney found in the mindi-mindi tree.....was forbidden among the Ngarinyin and Worora to pregnant women or those with newborn babies” (1979: 176) . Kaberry noted that in the East Kimberley, honey received in return for pearshell in the *wurnan* exchanges was forbidden to pregnant women because of its association with Kalaru (cited in Ackerman, ibid.:176).

In Ngarinyin country, a particular kind of *agula*, Emalan, is regarded as having a special affinity with honey. This character has very pronounced ears and is always pictured carrying the traditional stone axe which was used to open up the hives, *garragi*, the bark-bucket and a type of reed, *gajin*, the frayed end of which was used to dip into trees and rock crevices to draw out the honey. This rock-spirit is said to leave any possible source of honey completely dry after his visits. An empty hive is said to be the result of one of these visits. Honey has an integral role in the moiety myths of the Ngarinyin as well as those of the other Northern Kimberley peoples. Perhaps the most significant of these stories are those which concern the creation of correct marriage classes by the moiety heroes Wodoy and Jun.gun (see Chapter. 4). In these tales, Wodoy attacks Jun.gun for trying to cook honey at a place on the upper
King Edward River which is marked by a stone arrangement. Wodoy becomes enraged and kills Jun.gun with a blow to the head with a *barnamarr*, declaring: “You fool, you’ve ruined it now. Don’t you know you’ve got to eat it without cooking.” Jun.gun returns from the dead to retaliate against Wodoy, striking him a lethal blow on the head, the blood from which wound becoming the red ochre, *dalji*, which can today be found at Carleton station in the East Kimberley (cf. Crawford, 1968; Blundell and Layton, 1976; Utemorrah, Umbagai, Algarra, Wunyunget, Mowaljarlai, McKenzie 1980). These stories, as Levi-Strauss (1973) long ago pointed out, suggest a symbolic equivalence between honey and sexual fluids. This is made quite explicit in the descriptions I have been given of the Baler shells filled with honey which were presented through the *wurnan* (cf. Love 1936:217). Sexually immature people were not allowed to touch or sip from these containers which are said to “look like *mili* (female genitalia)”\(^{136}\). Hiatt’s interpretation of men’s ritual as manifesting both phallic, that is to say the “production of new human individuals...on a predominantly male generative model” (1971:80) and uterine, which “reproduce youths as men...on a predominantly female generative model” (ibid.) seems pertinent here. The reproduction of cosmic vitality, in which both groups of men and the whole of nature are regraded as being *yayiyuru*, “everything standing up together in a bunch like bananas”, is achieved through the repainting of the *wanjina* caves, and particularly through *giyug*, the spraying of the inner surface of the cave with white ochre. The *wanjina* also phallically “spears” the waterholes with his weapons of creative destruction, thereby allowing men to “spear” the animals containing their children who will, in turn, become their own fathers and *wanjina*. *wanjina*, with their heads ceaselessly emergent from and thus creating the red-ochre bow shape of the enclosing

\(^{136}\) However, no simple binary oppositions of the raw and the cooked, nature *vis a vis* culture, can be constructed from the stories of the honey which could not be cooked because in many senses honey is something, which like bush fruits and vegetables, is regarded as becoming “cooked” (in the local idiom for “ripe”) through the process of its own maturation. Significantly, the honey becomes “cooked” at around the same time as many of the bush fruits, at the end of the Wet. The body of the hive is already a stove of self-generation. Honey should not be cooked because it is, in this sense, “already cooked” and a man’s daughters and sisters must be given to men of other clans, not because this creates culture between them out of the raw materials of feminine sexuality and reproductivity, but because they too are “already cooked” in the sense that they have been promised to other men since birth or before, therefore they are already social beings from birth. The injunction against cooking honey and marrying one’s own sister or daughter can be better understood as an injunction against the redundancy of “cooking” the same thing twice, something quite different to Levi-Strauss’ notion of “raw and cooked” and of honey as “part of the heritage of humanity when men were still living in a ‘state of nature’” (Levi-Strauss 1973:73).
body of *wunggurr*, also contain the fertile *emen* (the dark eye/waterhole but also "frog spawn"). In this respect Hiatt’s interpretation of the bisexuality of *wunggurr* as being consistent with "the facial configuration of the *wonjina*" representing "the male genitalia (testicles and penis) inside the vagina" (1996: 115; cf Hiatt 1971:82) seems accurate. This interpretation seems to be fortified by the cognatic nature of the words for pubic region (*bulan*) and the verb "to encircle or contain" (*bulan-*uma-).

The example which I cite above of the "containers within containers" in the Waarnangga painting cave, is a further illustration of the point I have already made about fractality. The "meaning" of the cave structure and its associated images cannot be broken down to reveal "partial meanings", which as Wagner argues, cannot exist (1991:166). The rock edifice and its contents are grasped monothetically (Schutz and Luckman, 1973:53) rather than polythetically, "step-by-step". Even if experience is cumulative and knowledge built up polythetically, there are no "partial meanings". Indeed, it is the process of constituting the self (*arin*) of both person and hive through internal differentiation which is focal here.

The compartmentalisation of the cave site and the native bee hive are immediately evident in the first approach to the Waarnangga site where the massive crack in the monolithic rock structure already speaks of differentiation within the whole Gestalt. It is this very differentiation which animates the entity of the rock hive - a differentiation which creates interdependency between the compartments. The specialised compartments for pollen and honey and debris are integral to the totality of the hive. Any holographic sectioning of this ancestral hive reveals hives within hives, honey pots within larger honey pots. Neither the honey pots nor any of the other compartments can exist without the complementary others which form the aggregate of the whole structure.

In the hives of the various types of native bees there is an interplay between the fluidity of the contents and the hardness of the outer container, whether this be the hollowed tree trunk where *ngara* is found, or the hollow within a stone structure where *namirri* is found. This tension between the nature of the inside and the outside of the hive is reproduced in the *wanjina* figures which are also fluid bodies enclosed within the "hard shell" of the cave structure, or the lustrous and resilient body of the boab trees. Human bodies, on the other hand, can be seen to reverse this order with the soft flesh being on the outside and the hard bones, a durable (transcendent) part of the human being, on the inside. At same time both the *wanjina* and humans can be
understood through inverted representations of these typologies. For instance, *wanjina*, which are identified with the dry, hard bones of the dead as well as with babies' bodies, dwell within caves which are soft rain-clouds. Human beings have soft internal organs and fluids on the inside of their bodies (including the soft, generative marrow on the inside of the bones) as well as on the outside. What is it then about honey in particular which has promoted its focal position within Ngarinyin images of the body and of the cosmos? Schilder has pointed to the fact that

in the inside of the body we feel mainly the heavy mass...All other sensations are felt very near the surface (1964:294).

This "heavy mass" is exactly how honey is experienced to the touch and to visual perception. Its most salient quality then, as opposed to the containers which it fills, is its internal consistency, its lack of differentiation. Its sticky, viscous qualities allow it to slowly fill all available spaces, just like the enterocceptive image of the internal body mass. Again, we learn from Schilder that

the primitive postural model of the body shows a lack of differentiation of the separate parts, the impression of gravity prevailing and we deal more or less with *an undifferentiated filled bag which differentiates itself by a continual contact with the outside world*. Motility is an outstanding factor in this development (1964:296, my italics).

In the bee hive, this "contact with the outside world", this "motility", is effected by the bees themselves ("fragments" of the hive's body) which continually scatter in their foraging for pollen and return to the centre of the hive bringing with them the collected particles, *ornja* (pollen), which will produce not only the honey, but the hive itself. The creation of the cellular compartments, both at the macrocosmic levels of pollen, honey and debris chambers, and at the microcosmic levels of the individual honey-pot cells, is effected through the production of *ngarl*, "wax", as an intermediary stage in the creation of the honey. This wax is secreted from the body of the bee to form the honey-combs. This is a clear example of an autopoietic formation of self, secretions from the inside of the body creating the further differentiated body itself, and thereby creating the outside covering, or "shell", of the hive. The wax is a substance which hovers between hardness and softness, a transitional substance used to create a continuous but differentiated series of cellular bodies. This wax produced by the bees is a solidification of liquids from the bees’ bodies, in turn derived from oils gathered from plants. Later, the wax will be used to attach spear tips to the spear
shaft, unifying stone and wood with the substances excreted from the body of the hive, and ultimately from the body of the bee itself (though on this last point I have as yet been unable to find a native exegesis sufficient to show that this is focal in the knowledge of Ngarinyin people). There is at least one recorded example of a wanjina figure being drawn in beeswax onto a cave shelter and many others in which species of animal have been represented in wax (Welch 1995).

What is abundantly clear, though, is that the hive with its separate compartments filled on the inside with a heavy mass, its mobile population of barely differentiated foragers which return constantly to a richly productive and reproductive centre with their cargo of vegetable foods, the “outside” elements from which the “inside” is metabolised, serves as a highly elaborated image of the body of both humans and wanjina for Ngarinyin people. The gestalt of the body, as Schilder points out

Will be built up not in a continuous flow of experiences, but in distinct layers and levels and a higher layer will contain a new element of structuralization or organization. Motion and action are necessary for this development (1964:286).

There is a fashioning of the “outside”, the hive structure, by the generative work of the bees secreting bodily substances “inside” the hive. This building up of the overall body of the hive in layers can be seen as analogous with the building of layers of secrecy in the transmission of knowledge. As described by Morphy for the Yolngu, the creation of the fully socialised man is through a process that is “cumulative” and in which the “layering is as important as the secrecy” (Morphy 1991:77). Drawing upon Stanner’s (1967) description of the relativity of Murinbata domains of profane and sacred knowledge, Morphy shows how “the inside flows into the outside. Outside forms are generated by inside forms...” (ibid: 80). This sense of the creation of an outside knowledge from the inside, which in turn creates a “new inside”, can be usefully compared to the psychoanalytic notions of conscious and unconscious knowledge. In Freud’s words,

[How are we to arrive at a knowledge of the unconscious? It is of course only as something conscious that we know it, after it has undergone transformation or translation into something conscious. Psychoanalytic work shows us every day that translation of this kind is possible (1984:167).]
Freud went on, in this metapsychological topography, to show how the Unconscious and the "Pcs." (perception/consciousness) were in continuous "communication" (1984:194) with each other, giving rise to "substitutive formations...highly organised derivatives of the Ucs...[which] succeed in breaking through into consciousness, when circumstances are favourable" (ibid:195). This emergence of shell-like "substitutive formations" also provides, as Morphy and Stanner recognised, the possibility of further encryptions of meaning in sacred lore. Morphy's statement that "the content of the layers and the principles of ordering the content and relating layers one to another are equally important" shows us that Yolngu people themselves symbolise the process of analysis and synthesis of knowledge as part of the body of knowledge itself, consistent with Freud's view that

The form of a dream or the form in which it is dreamt is used with quite surprising frequency for the representation of its concealed content (cited in Fliess 1961:232)

Perhaps the clearest exemplification of this interplay between "outside" and "inside" in the figure of the bee-hive is in the fact that it is from the *emen/ambul*, "eye", of the hive that the scattering and return of the active, mobile, internal contents of the hive-body, the bees, takes place. *wanjina* too, as I have shown above, highlight the importance of the eye as the concentrated essence of being, the dark holes of "living water" from which all life emerges. The *wanjina* eye is the motionless, yet animated, centre, surrounded by the spiky projections of pandanus/eye-lashes, from which and to which life returns, consonant with Schilder's description of the continual change of experience concerning the imaginary centre of the ego.

There is a continual wandering of experience in centrifugal and centripetal directions...a tendency to keep the body image within its confines and to expand and extend it, to keep its parts together and to dissipate it all over the world (1964:301).

Naturally, in the human realm as well, this emphasis on the eye implicates vision as a central modality for extension of the self through the world (cf. Tamisari 1997:24-25 on Yolngu equations of seeing and travelling). The pleasure which is derived from this visual wandering has been poetically captured in Mowaljarlai's evocation of the Ngarinyin identification of themselves as "hill people", "*liny ngiya di warl ngawan-*
ngarri” – (literally “When I look out upon it I am satisfied” and glossed for me as “my spirit flows out as far as the eye can see”\textsuperscript{137}). By looking out from the high points in the ranges a person "expands" -warl- into the country before them - one becomes "satisfied or pleased" with oneself, just as wanjina is said to become at the end of a rain storm. Even more literally, a person says “I fall into”, ngawan, the country lain out before them. In such expressions as these, we have examples of how an essentially eroticised image of country and body creates a situation in which “the heavy substance of the body may be loosened, may become foamy and even permeated by holes” (Schilder 1950:298). I explore this desire for mobility and extension into the body of the country at length in Chapter 8.

6.6 Wanjin\textit{a} and Funerary Practices

In the section above I have touched on several aspects of traditional funerary practices in order to explore the qualities of the wanjin\textit{a} cave and the wanjin\textit{a} body. It is pertinent to now explore at some greater length notions of death and burial and their relationship to the image of the wanjin\textit{a}.

The relationship of continuity between living persons and the wanjin\textit{a} for their clan was traditionally underscored by the practice of interring the skull and femur bones of deceased men in the main wanjin\textit{a} cave of their patrilineal locality. Whereas most burials now take place in town or community graveyards following a Christian service, the occasional performance of traditional practices and the recounting of these practices by older members of the community permit considerable insight into death and burial.

The body of a deceased person was laid out on a tree platform (gandirri) or in a wundurrmal, a rock cairn to await the decomposition of the flesh. Once the body was covered by stones, the group of men carrying out the task gathered together in a huddle quite similar to that which precedes wangga (initiation dances from the eastern region) and, following the elicitory loud shout of one of the oldest men amongst them, the huddled circle of men responded with a similar loud cry “yaaayil!” in unison. This shout was repeated three times. Love noted that in his time, this huddled group of men “rattled their spears together and gave a loud shout. Retiring twenty yards, they rushed

\textsuperscript{137} “Everything I see is in principle within my reach, at least within reach of my sight, and is marked upon the map of the ‘I can’ ” (Merleau-Ponty 1964:162).
towards the platform and rattled their spears again, ending with a loud shout" (1936:153). In cases where suspicions were aroused about the death having been caused through sorcery a series of rocks were laid beneath the tree platform to conduct an “inquest” (cf. Love, 1936:154). A group of senior men would agree to nominate each stone with the name of a person who was under suspicion. It seems that this practice was relatively common since death by natural causes was seldom expected except in the case of very old people who had protracted illnesses. If the body fluids from the corpse dripped onto a named stone, this was taken as a “signal” from the deceased person’s spirit identifying the murderer. Lest someone should sneak back to the inquest stones to rearrange them and hide the evidence of their guilt, a small party would often come back secretly after the fluids had run and clean the stained stone so that the “murderer” would not know that he had been identified. This would make the work of the avenging party easier, safer and more private. Nowadays, the “inquest” doesn’t seem to go beyond the passing on to a close male affinal relative of a lock of hair clipped from the dead man’s head (cf. Love, 1936:156).

Once the bones were regarded as sufficiently “clean and dry”, after perhaps a year or more exposed to the elements, they were gathered and given a final scrubbing in water by people in a maternal kinship relationship to the deceased. They were then dried again with the ideal state being very white bones. The skull and long-limb bones were anointed with a mixture of fat and red ochre before being wrapped in sheets of wulun, paper-bark. This wulun has an inner surface of soft deep pink and as the European name “paper-bark” suggests, is layered in thin “sheets” which adhere to each other but can be drawn apart to create any thickness desired for the task at hand (which might include the presentation of cooked foods or making bark mattresses and wrapping babies). The paperbark wrapping then can be seen to “restore” to the bones its fleshy envelope which is here considered to be particularly associated with femininity. In this regard it is important to note that babies were also usually rubbed with fat by the maternal kin in the early days of their lives (cf. Love 1936:113).

This quality of “restorability” in the life-world has been posited by Schutz and Luckman as a crucial constituent of the experience of “the world within potential reach” (1974:37-38). They argue that the movement of the embodied subject allows sectors of the world which are no longer in actual spatiotemporal reach to become part of “imperceptibly overlapping” sectors of the experienced world because the subject thinks of these sectors as always able to be revisited. It is this sense of “restorability”
which gives rise to experiences of the “transcendence” of a world beyond the subject’s inner duration and actual reach. The subject is able to imagine a “return” to such sectors by drawing upon socially structured “sedimented experience”. This experience of a world transcending individual subjectivity is also the source of the experience of finitude (Schutz and Luckman, 1974:100). The experience of the finite nature of the human body “induce[s] men to master their life-world, to overcome obstacles, to project plans, and to carry them out” (ibid, 47). Grieving relatives participate in ceremonies which “return” the individual subject to the ancestral realm, re-unifying that consciousness with the enduring wanjina ancestor and with what people call the “eternal places” (as a gloss for larlan which can be understood as “places which can be returned to”). It is this wanjina identity which encapsulates the complex stratifications of inner duration “intersected by world time, biological time and social time” (ibid: 103). It is this stratified entity which endures as various reincarnations of the ancestral being (though the abi relationship). The wrapping of the bones of the dead in a soft paperbark “skin”, “reanimated” with the vital essences of fat and the red ochre which is ancestral blood, achieves for the participants in funerary ceremonies, a partial transcendence of the mortality of the human body.

It is not clear whether the feminine quality of the paperbark wrapping derives more specifically from a maternal or an uxorial source but the maternal aspect is certainly emphasised in the next phase of the reburial ceremonies.

It is at this stage that the parcel of bones was ceremonially presented to the maternal relatives (cf. also Love 1936:160). This ceremony involved a performance by the deceased’s non-maternal kin. I have only had two opportunities to witness such a ceremony and the following is an account of how they appeared.

Towards sunset a throng of painted dancers let out a loud cry from the place where they had been painting up. Between them they carried a large bundle of green leaves which concealed the “wallet” of fat anointed bones wrapped in paper-bark, tightly bound with red ochre string and spray painted with white ochre over its entire surface. The dancers conducted a stamping dance across the ground, kicking up considerable quantities of dust into the evening air. Between the dancers, a younger, smaller man, whose body was painted with white ochre up to resemble a skeleton, ducked and wove amongst the other dancers, running backwards and forwards. I was told that this was the spirit of the dead man who was represented through the kinetic fluttering movements of banggal, a bat. This bat is often used to figure the spirit of a
deceased person. This dancer's actions were by no means solemn. He was very much the trickster, laughing and irritating the other dancers by getting under their feet (cf. Warner, 1958:445 on "mokei" soul as trickster). As the dancing group moved closer to the group of maternal relatives seated on the ground in a close huddled group with eyes downcast, the wallet of bones was tossed high into the air and then caught again. One of the dancing group then moved forward to where a string had been pulled taught at about chest level between two wooden poles, maybe five meters apart. This dancer reached out and bit through and broke the cord, formerly made of human hair, but now made of coloured wool. The party of dancers then followed through and lay the wallet at the feet of the chief mourner, a maternal uncle or mother. A grieving cry, keening of a most heart-wrenching kind, had already begun amongst these relatives as soon as the dancers had come into view with the parcel. Now this keening intensified from these relatives, and the dancing party joined in, patting the bereaved relatives on the shoulders, kneeling down on the ground and laying their heads on the shoulders of the bereaved and expressing sympathy for their loss. Anybody in the relationship of "brother" to the deceased sat completely to one side. They are mayngarri, glossed in this instance by people present as "brother-less" (but literally meaning "he who goes without"), and were considered too close in identity to the deceased to be spoken to or offered food or touched in any way. At the conclusion of the ceremony all the participants were "smoked " by the "mothers" over a fire with bunches of green leaves thrown on to generate large quantities of white smoke. The bodies of all participants were repeatedly flicked with these smoke impregnated bunches of green leaves, special attention being given to the head and armpits. Later the parcel was taken to a wanjina cave for final interment.

6.7 Agula

One aspect of the spirit of deceased persons is believed to linger for some time in this place of interment. These are the agula or rock devils who steal (particularly babies) from humans and create havoc amongst them (cf. Warner 1958; Morphy 1991:106-107; Williams 1986:32-33 on mokuy). Agula are believed to come back for some time afterwards to haunt their widows and this is one of the reasons why widows are removed from the daily social life of the community. Agula are jealous, thieving and dangerous and it is used as a term of abuse which is thrown at people who behave in anti-social manner (cf. Tamisari 1997:19). The magpie bird, guriri, is
colloquially called *agula* because they are known to steal hatchlings from the nests of other birds and shiny objects from humans. Children are constantly warned to beware of *agula* if they are wandering too far from the family camp, particularly as evening draws on. Adults too are often thought to become victims of *agula*. A Ngarinyin man working at Mt House Station is said to have been lured away from the group he was working with on a muster and to have become lost and hopelessly disorientated for a day or two until the search party found him, badly dehydrated and dazed. These rock-devils "make a man *gawad* – mad, silly". A number of other grown men are said to have become their victims in living memory. One of the sons of H.M., for example, disappeared in the bush around Munja. He is said to have briefly re-appeared from a distance out of the bush on several occasions, showed no signs of recognising anyone then disappeared without trace. Another man was lured away on Napier Downs station and was found much later sitting completely dazed and unaware of how he came to be there. *Agula* are said to affect their victims by entering through their *oru*, "ears". They "tangle a man up" in *buyu*, a cord sometimes known as the "death-cord". Only people with access to the world of spirits, that is to say *barrman*, traditional healers/composers, are able to withstand this process and to be able to extract their bodies from this binding cord by breaking it. *Agula* have another product made from human hair-rope which is a net which they are often represented as carrying for hunting. Belief in *agula* remains extremely strong across all generations of Ngarinyin people. While fishing at a popular tourist destination one day my wife and I were startled by the screaming of one of the older women from the community whom we had brought down to fish with us. Thinking that she had been attacked by a snake we ran to the spot where we could hear her screaming. As it turned out she had been terrified by the sight of two German tourists wearing wraparound, electric-blue sunglasses. She had been convinced that she was about to be attacked by *agula*. For days afterwards she would make jokes at her own expense about her terrorised flight from these "*gardiya agula* (white fella devils)". "Next time I know," she declared.

One middle-aged woman told me how when she was teenager she worked at the hospital in Derby. She was asked to wash the body of one of her "grannies" (MM) who had passed away. She worked late into the evening, wanting to make a good job of washing and wrapping the body in white linen. She explained,

> Aborigine way, people frighten to touch body- in case spirit still hanging around. I didn’t believe that. It wasn’t my job but other girls away and I had to
do it. Anyway, I finish that job, went back to nurses’ hostel, had shower: next thing I know I wake up in mud at jetty. I’m shocked, ran home. Next day same thing happen, but now I’m out in the sea. I rang up my Dad and he ring hospital. I had to have a few months off then, just resting up. You know…. Granny happy to have me looking after her body - but she don’t want to let me go [V.5: 32].

This unbearable desire to remain with their relatives is what makes agula dangerous, greedy and jealous. They seem to be thought of as besieged by loneliness- something which terrifies and grieves Ngarinyin people. Having to live alone is the worst kind of punishment imaginable (cf. Tamisari 1997:19). Agula are usually represented with long, pointed ears, sharp teeth and with a large penis and testicles. They may, in addition, be represented with horns. This latter image appears to be a syncretic image which has combined Christian iconography with Ngarinyin imagery. Indeed, agula is commonly translated as “devil-devil”. The emphasis upon oru ened, “large ears”, was explained to me as showing how people become “led astray by their understanding”. Oru, being both “ears” and “mind”, are said to be the organ through which agula entice their victims.

A particular type of mythical bird, the Juwag, is also called agula. This bird makes its home in precipitous cliffs which are pointed out in the ranges. They are said to have a long thin penis, red legs and black feathers. They steal babies, tie them up with the string-like penis and “crack baby head and cook their brains” (v6,41). Though stories of the Juwag are used to frighten children into being quiet at night (Juwag are attracted by crying babies) there is no doubt that adults also believe in its existence. Agula are usually painted close to the area in a cave where bones are interred. This is sometimes in the same gallery complex where wanjina are represented but in other instances the agula are alone, or in a different section of the cave gallery. People say that “wanjina and agula got their own caves” [V3, 47] and that they are very different types of being.

The agula carry a person’s soul to Dulgugun, the land of the dead. When carrying the spirit of a recently deceased person, they travel in large groups across the country in order to collect the anguma of the deceased person. L---has told me how he and a group of countrymen were travelling overland from Kunmunya to Munja on one occasion. As they camped for the night, agula could be heard moving through the bush. The men called out “Where are you going?” The agula replied “Someone’s
been killed at Kunmunya, we’re going to collect him to take him to Dulugun”. “Oh, all-right then”. Next day the party arrived in Munja to be told about the death in Kunmunya. The men said “Yes we already know, agula bin tell us”. Pentony collected a dream of an almost identical event in 1938 at Pantijan:

A mob of blacks were coming from Waringarri side as if going for war. It was a big mob with a lot of men who were dead amongst them. They were coming towards the saltwater. They went inside a big house like a white man’s. All went in. I lost sight of them and could not see them anymore (Pentony, 1938: Dream No.28).

The dreamer’s comment on this was, in part:

The dream means that somewhere a man is dead. The mob seen is a crowd of “devil” ungumas (sic) going to meet the shadow of a dead man and escort it to Dulugun (ibid.).

The dreamer’s use here of the term unguma (i.e. anguma) rather than agula is interesting. If agula are the spirits of the recently dead, what is their relationship to anguma? To some degree the terms appear to be used interchangeably. On closer inspection though there appears to be a distinction which can be utilised according to context which separates agula as restless spirits of the recently dead (troublesome ghosts) and anguma as the “spirit” of living persons or the “spirit children” awaiting reincarnation. Although Ngarinyin cosmology doesn’t appear to order the creation of the world in a way that attempts to create consistency between phases of emergence of different types of beings (cf. Rumsey 2001:28; Stanner 1963:84;Levi-Strauss 1970:15), there does seem to be a sense in which some agula at least can be considered to be primordial beings, always there (cf. Tamisari 1997:19fn). This may only indicate that there is a sense that there have always been people dying and thus inhabiting the landscape as agula or, alternatively, it may indicate a sense that the vengeful, lustful, covetous aspect of human life is also an originary fount of creativity and fertility, something which would be quite consistent with many Aboriginal cosmogonic stories.

Anguma, nevertheless, have a distinctly more generative sense about them, “waiting in the wings” so to speak, for an opportune time to re-emerge from the water,
and provide the living “core” of Ngarinyin personhood. Reviewing the materials which have been presented above on certain types of agula (particularly emalan) it is clear that they are imbued with a quality of “dryness” and “lack” in their association with empty “sugar-bag”, bone depositaries, and gowarr (a “lack” of understanding or good sense). Anguma, on the other hand, are characteristically “wet” in their association with water-holes, water weed and the warm, blood-filled interiors of the bodies of living animals which are hunted for food. The fact that the animal bodies which contain conception spirits are often remarked on as having “no taste” or “no fat” does not necessarily contradict this characterisation because it seems to be the case that the anguma itself has absorbed the vital fluids and fats, the “taste”, into itself in order to achieve a particularly concentrated form of life. I suggest that the fact of the somewhat blurred distinctiveness of agula and anguma gives us an insight into the cyclicity of the Ngarinyin cosmos (cf. Maddock 1978:115), the recycling of an essential “spirit” through a man’s son’s son or a woman’s brother’s son’s daughter (see Chapter 3).

6.8 Dulugun

It was in the caves of interment that this cycle of patri-identification was recreated over the generations. A deceased person’s anguma (shadow or spirit) is believed to have rejoined with the body of wunggurr when the bones were lodged in the cave. After travelling to Dulugun, an island in the western sea (Numenbu, Champagny Island), the person’s spirit would, after some indefinite interval, resurface through a waterhole and attach itself to the person it had chosen as its new father, thus enacting the identities of father’s father’s brother or sister/son’s son’s brother or daughter described above (Chapter 3). This first part of the process of return is encapsulated in the following song:

emalan hururu gayirri
rock-devil people going through (a hole into Dulugun)
bilinjilinji gayirri rambani.
dark country going through.

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138 Tarisari notes that among Yolnu “there is no absolute separation between the positive aspect of the birrinbirr and the disruptive force of the mokuy.” (1997:18). These two aspects of the Yolnu soul appear to be isomorphic with anguma and agula respectively.
139 In this respect there is something of an inverse relationship with mokuy, which are associated with the body’s flesh while agula are dry (like bones) but desperately desire flesh, and birrinbirr, which are associated with bone, while anguma are wet and soft (like flesh) but need bone to become incarnate.
According to my most senior teachers, when a person dies one part of his *anguma* lurks among the living for while. It is said that in the first two or three days this spirit will return to the place where the person lived for a final farewell and thus doors and windows are left ajar for a day or two. Around sunset of the second or third day, a watch is kept and it is said that it is possible to see the spirit passing through the house and disappearing to the west, to *Dulugun*. Apparently all people from across the Kimberley go to this island in Worrorra country and once they have lost their distinctive identities they can all speak Worrorra, the language for this country. Afterwards, one part of the *anguma* is said to remain in the rock cave where the bones are deposited. The deceased person's residence is then closed up for several years afterwards.

Meanwhile the spirit has passed through to *Borgaj* (or *Bugaja*), located on the northwest coast not far from the old settlement of Kunmunya. Here the spirit "drops his bundle", as it was put to me, leaves behind all his spears, his wife and children, and anxieties. There is a "bell-stone" here, *blinblinya*, a balanced pair of stones one on top of the other which emits a bell-like sound when the deceased man's spirit stands on one end like a see-saw and rocks it back and forth. This is an image of the same "alternating disequilibrium" which, as already discussed (Chapter 4.) characterises not just the moiety relationship but, more focally here, the relationship of fathers and sons who provide each other with wives and mothers through marrying. The marriage of the son, in turn, provides the possibility of a return from Dulugun of his father's spirit as a reincarnation of his SS. Also found here is a hollow log which the spirit of the newly deceased blows into, creating a trumpeting sound. This hollow log contains a passageway into the other world which appears as a bright circle of light at the end of the tube, most explicitly featured in the Dulugun totem which is carried on the shoulders of a senior man during some *junba* sequences. The totem consists of two rings of river-grass mounted on top of each other, painted in white ochre. The lower ring is said to be the water-hole through which the *agula* of a recently dead man disappears and the upper ring, that through which he re-emerges "into the light".140

"Everything in a man's mind" is said to change from this point onwards. He becomes "deaf". This is assisted by eating a red fruit, a kind of "poison" which is said
to make a man’s memories slip away. The first place encountered when the spirit has passed through this passageway is Dorrge, the “place of howling water”, an island in the west which is surrounded by a “fountain of sea-water”. The name Dorrge is apparently derived from the Ngarinyin verb *dorr*, “to flow”, a reference to the movement of the swirling waters.

Over eons there is believed to be a regular sweeping down towards the salt-water of the multitudes of spirit children from the fresh-water as the river plains flood in wide swathes. With the returning tide, the spirit children move back underground beneath the river courses and settle back in one of the fresh waterholes. This oscillating movement is continual and seems to work both on the macro-temporal level of annual flooding and the micro-temporal level of the daily flux of the tides. Eventually a man “picks up” one of these *anguma* again in a waterhole. The spirit that he “finds” has re-entered the world through the waterhole which the spirit, from its view from within the water, perceives as the bright space at the circular end of the tube which was contemplated in Borgaj.

In *dulugun* the spirit children are said to be mired in, caught up in the *jalad-gu*, the green water weed which, as I have explained above, is where the *anguma*, reside in the water-holes. It is said that this green weed is a “sponge” which absorbs the *anguma* in Dulugun until they are ready to be re-born.

The identification of the sandstone caves in which the bones of the dead are placed with *an.guban* (rain-clouds ) (Mowaljarlai and Vinnicombe 1996; Mowljarlai and Malnic 1993; cf. Lommel 1952; Crawford 1968) is a crucial element in the understanding of the cosmography of this region because it is in these “watery” recesses that the *wanjina* as the living part of a person’s patri-identity continues to dwell. The symbolic equivalence of cloud and stone highlights the series of transformations which link living persons, their *wanjina* and the more universalizing aspect of the creative forces believed to be immanent in the figure of *wunggurr*.

6.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have drawn a distinction between the named and differentiated nature of *wanjina* and what I have proposed as the more unitary

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140 Morton has noted that among the Aranda “the idea that one passes through a hole to get to the land beyond the Milky Way is reminiscent of the view of the voids in the Milky way as rents or passages *(fn. Continues o.p.*)
pervasiveness of *wunggurr*. In the course of the discussion it has emerged that this relationship between the two can be extrapolated to a relationship between the more or less intimate and accessible qualities of particular *wanjina* and the rather more dangerous, or at least threatening, nature of *wunggurr*. *Wanjina*, for example, are known by the names of living people in the community (and vice versa) whereas *wunggurr* has a more anonymous existence, except for the fragments of its body which become the *wunggurr* names of particular people. *Wanjina* can be talked to by people in the correct relationship and are responsive to this talk: they can be “quietened” by this talk, or the smell of certain known bodies (cf. also Povinelli 1993) while *Wunggurr* can only be driven off with threatening gestures and words. *Wanjina* can be ceremonially induced to revitalise country and reproduce human and other animal bodies whereas *Wunggurr* is more of an accidentally encountered force which requires propitiating. This regular patterning of affect in relation to *Wanjina* and *Wunggurr* might be expressed in the following homology:

*Wanjina:* *Wunggurr*: emplacedness; ubiquity; intimacy; dangerousness

It is the interaction between these forces which produces new life and thus neither *Wanjina* nor *Wunggurr* can be said to encapsulate the sole generative principle\(^{141}\). This homology does raise the question, though, of why differentiation (emplacedness) is perceived to be productive while non-differentiation (massiveness or ubiquity) is perceived to be potentially destructive. Even the mass gatherings of *Wanjina* in the Wanarirri stories, for example, are seen to be vengeful in a way that is more characteristic of *Wunggurr*/Galaru. As a central body of myth, the Wanarirri complex offers something of an explanatory schema because it is from this great gathering of the *Wanjina* that each of them eventually spreads out to find his/her place in country to which they retire following the almost complete destruction of the humans. In terms of bodily images, the oscillation which I have pointed to above between distinctiveness and fusion, can best be understood as an endless cycle of figure/ground reversals activated through movement, rather than as a series of static binary oppositions. Just as the annual Wet season and the great floods of myth cause only islands of stone to be left standing from the surrounding masses of water, so too does

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\(^{141}\) Taylor remarks that, for Kunwinjku, the relationship between the Rainbow figures, Yingarna and Ngalyod, is a similar relationship in which “the relatively generalised, incorporative, symbolism linked with Yingarna [is] opposed to the more parochial references of Ngalyod symbolism” (1990:331).
the image of the human body oscillate between distinctiveness and an oceanic lack of differentiation. Schilder has written of

the drive to renewed experiences, the drive to completion of the experiences, the drive to build up the total libidinous structure, and finally the tendency towards the destruction of what has just been created in order to create and construct again; and all these developments are the expressions of the changing attitudes of the personality and its motility (1964:288).

Images of the destruction of the distinctiveness of the country (such as we find in the flood story), and of the body (ancestral beings extracting body parts and depositing them in country), are always precipitated by movement as the engine of destruction of existing patterns. Thus the great gathering of the *wanjina* tribes at Wanalirri, the flight of the law breaking Jebra from Dududungarri, the dispersal of the ancestral Finches when “startled” from their huddle on the ground to become the Seven Sisters constellation, *gi* for the Balalangarri (“Spread Out Mob”) clan, are all examples of creative/destructive dispersal. Similarly, the image of the body is always being destroyed by movement because it is movement which creates new experiences of the self. New emotional situations will “change the relative value and clearness of different parts of the body-image” (Schilder 1964:298). And yet many of these dispositions are recoverable from the ground in which they have been submerged by the emergence of a new figure, just as there is a certain predictability to the drowning of the flood plains and their re-emergence with the cool winds of *mowenggi*.

In a like manner, the child spirit which is carried (the figure) in the mouth of *wunggurr* (the ground), becomes a distinct personage for a time before re-merging with the ancestral realm, leaving behind a shadow of itself as *wanjina* and the possibility of being reborn through the cave mouth of its patrilineal centre. Hiatt has pointed out that mouth and womb share a common ability to admit and expel objects in a way that transforms without obliterating the object (1975:155-56). This is indeed the case with the recycling of personages in the *wanjina* cave, through the waterhole and back into the realm of the living. The fact that child spirits can be found nearly anywhere suggests that *wunggurr* is therefore ubiquitous (cf. Taylor 1990:338). This pervasiveness of *wunggurr* is the very condition of the possibility of fortuitous ‘finding’ of the scattered fragments of her body which *gi ama*, “leap out/peep out”, to the men who will be the fathers of the child essences (cf. Munn 1970:149). As a “chip off the old block” of the body of *wunggurr*, as the *anguma* of a particular person,
wunggurr becomes a momentary figure against the ground of wanjina, just as wunggurr is also represented as a "part" of the head of the wanjina image\(^{142}\). This reversal in which wanjina is ground and wunggurr figure, is made even clearer where wanjina throws out the contents of its body as weapons onto the earth, as discussed in Chapter 3. Here, the water animals, Eel, Long-Neck Turtle, and Fresh-Water Crocodile are the weapons of wanjina thrust spear-like at the earth\(^{143}\). These internal contents of the body of wanjina are bodies of wunggurr. Aru, the Eel or "water-snake" as Ngarinyin people call it in English, is the most immediately recognisable as a manifestation of wunggurr. Interestingly, this aru as life-force is also pointed to in the prominent snake-like veins of the fore-arm which are operated on during men's ritual (cf. Hiatt 1975:146).

Wulumara, the Long Neck Turtle, though, is really but a snake in a shell, a soft but sinewy, fatty body encased in a hard container. D.T has described this turtle as being "like a shield" for the wanjina when going into battle. Though wulumara is extracted as figure from the "ground" of wanjina's body to be thrown at the earth, each Long Neck Turtle also contains within its throat a wanjina in the form of an anthropomorph part of the turtle's cartilage which is extracted from the throat, cleaned and dried, to reveal a small standing figure which is said to be wanjina (cf. Mowaljarlai and Malnic 1993). The drying out of the cartilage causes it to harden (like the living bodies of babies when smoked over the jalad, "water-weed"), finally becoming brittle and dry (like the bones and skulls of both the aged and then the deceased humans lodged in the wanjina caves). The processual unfolding of these figure/ground reversals is startlingly clear in the case of Wulumara. The Turtle emerges out of the body of wanjina, its shell, striated by the never completely sealed fontanelles\(^{144}\), acting as the wanjina-like enclosure protecting the wunggurr essence

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\(^{142}\) Tamisari has noted a similar process among Yolngu, whereby clouds are said to be given their shape by "a process of breaking off from or reflecting the body of the ancestor....by which the manifestation of the snake's power is externalised" (1997:15).

\(^{143}\) My interpretation here is consistent with Klein's model of the infant's fantasised attack upon the internal contents of the maternal body, in which the excreta are transformed into dangerous weapons: wetting is regarded as cutting, stabbing, burning, drowning, while the faecal mass is equated with weapons and missiles....The sadism becomes a source of danger because it offers an occasion for the liberation of anxiety and also because the weapons employed to destroy the object are felt by the subject to be levelled at his own self as well" (Klein, 1950:236-237; cf. Buchler 1978; Morton 1985:138).

\(^{144}\) A fontanelle can be described, following Madison, as a "hollow" or "fold" in the world, the place where there occurs 'dialogue' between consciousness and thing, subject and object" (Madison cited in Tamisari 1997:40).
within, which, in turn, encloses the *wanjina* cartilage and the tiny, finger-sized *wunggurr* figure, *anguma* or *rai*, which will be found by men as child essence. Earlier in this chapter (pp. 226), I pointed to the fact that a certain small lizard, *delwa*, is regarded as being a particularly strong instantiation of *wanjina*. Given this current discussion of the enclosure of *wanjina* within the throat of *wunggurr*, in the turtle body, in the child spirit carried “in the mouth of *wunggurr*”, in the presence of the *wanjina* paintings in caves, soft “mouths” in stone, it is pertinent to point out here that another referent of the word *delwa*, is the uvula (Coate and Elkin, 1974: 128). This pendulant mass at the back of the throat is another figure emergent from the ground of the mouth with which the uvula is a continuous surface. One of the times in life in which this organ is most visible to others is as an infant when crying open-mouthed. By drawing upon a metaphoric construction originally synthesised by Mimica from his Iqwaye materials, we can see the cartilaginous *wanjina* extracted from the throat of *wulumara* as being, in this respect, just like a human infant which is “pulled” inside-out from the watery body of *wunggurr* (cf. Hiatt 1971:85 on the “penis as an instrument of birth”; Morphy 1991:75-99 on Yolngu concepts of creative dialectical play between the “inside” and “outside”).

*Goyo*, the Fresh-Water Crocodile, is also a fatty body with a soft white underbelly protected by the hardened, “scarified” dorsal skin. Ngarinyin hunters remark upon the fact that when shot or speared *goyo* turns belly-up before almost instantly sinking to the bottom of the pool. They should therefore be shot on the bank or in the shallows of the river or extracted by hand from a watery crevice by feeling around and sticking one’s thumbs into its eyes and clamping the jaw shut (a wonder to behold). This is an indication of their awareness of the double nature of the crocodile’s hard covering presented to the world and the soft vulnerability which it presents downwards to the watery world of *wunggurr*. One older woman described the creation of spirit children in certain waterholes as being the result of “crocodile go inside cave and lie down and die. After all the kids come out of his body”. The analogy with *wanjina* coming to lie down in caves (“stretch himself out, paint

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145 “The mouth chamber is an interiorised penile tract with the uvula being specifically the ‘food penis’ which pushes food into the throat and separates fluids, which are then further processed into intrabodily seminal and blood passages. The best way to think about this is to imagine that one penetrates the mouth with the hand as far as the uvula, takes this organ by its tip, and then pulls it all out. What one gets is the external penis” (Mimica 1991:44).
himself”) which thereafter become important increase sites for clan members and totemic species is strongly marked in this example.

The Fresh Water Crocodile is also said to be capable of another type of transformation, the change from a fresh-water to a salt-water being in the course of its maturation. I was told, when visiting the estuaries of the Hunter River, that the paintings at Banamba, a Salt-Water Crocodile increase site, represented this possibility; as the older “freshies” moved further out from their fresh water billabongs into the tidal estuaries they could change their nature and become “salties”\textsuperscript{146}. This double nature is what avails it of figure/ground reversals. Such reversals are predicated upon a certain experience of time.

In my discussion of the “restorability” of the world (p.260 above), I drew upon Schutz and Luckman’s (1974) idea of the subjective experience of time as being created through the intersection of inner duration, world time, biological and social time. This concept, derived from Husserlian phenomenology, can be usefully enlarged through a psychoanalytic approach to the experience of time. Fliess has shown that the psychological experience of time (equivalent to what Schutz and Luckman call the “subjective experience” of time) is embedded in the infant’s experience of “lack”, the sense of deprivation which is inevitably visited upon each nascent human consciousness (indeed which institutes the process of consciousness) as the symbiotic bond with the mother becomes frayed at the edges through the inevitable delays between the infant’s need and its satisfaction. Fleiss cited Sabina Speilrein’s earlier work on the experience of time as concomitant to “ego-object development (object including the external self) in order to establish a relation to the sucking-biting conflict, without which the concepts of present, future, and past cannot be thought………..” (cited in Fliess 1970:184). For Fliess, the infant only begins to master the instinctual rage which follows upon the shift from the oral-erotic phase of symbiosis to the oral-sadistic biting phase in which subjectivity is instituted through the attempt to master the inevitable absences of the mother\textsuperscript{147}. The infant does this through an “introjection” of images of the mother’s face which lay the ground for an ego-formation based upon identification with an idealised, ever present mother – the

\textsuperscript{146} This sort of transformation is not unlike that of the Barramundi changing from male to female as it ages (Taylor 1990:335).

\textsuperscript{147} It is interesting to note here that the Ngarinyin verb, minjala –o- “to chew” is almost identical to the verb –minjala- “to wait” (Coate and Elkin,1974:363)
maternal imago as the basis for an “ego ideal”. The experience of time, argues Fliess, is derived from the observation by this introject of the oral instinctual conflict in the “partial subject” between sucking (unification with the mother) and biting (a response to the first sense of separation). Though Fliess’s interpretation of the time experience seems to be somewhat marred by a developmentalism which would suggest the different “phases” are bounded and progressive experiences, his treatment of the phenomena is actually sophisticated in that it acknowledges the degree to which these forms of being are present within each successive form and subject to all manner of reversals and recombination. Indeed, Fliess’s model is remarkably similar in content to that put forward by Mimica for the time experience of Iqwaye in which temporal structure is

the result of the inner rhythm of disjunction and conjunction which creates and continuously generates [the] qualitative opposites as the two moments of a single unity (1992:134)

If the sucking-biting/conjunctive-disjunctive schema is applied to an analysis of the *wanjina* figure, we may be able to understand something of the instinctual roots of the usual absence of a mouth. The *wanjina* is not an essentially oral-incorporative, or consumptive figure. Like the dead which inhabit its immediate realm, the *wanjina* denies consumption in favour of its role as producer (of new spirit children and totemic species). Because it has no “need” for incorporation, the *wanjina* can be prolifically productive and enduring in a realm which is not marked by the neediness which initiates the experience of time. While each single representation of the mouthless *wanjina* seems, in this light, to exhibit certain timeless qualities, we must recall that the *wanjina* is seldom represented alone but usually as a series of beings, and often enough as a linear series of beings. If timelessness, as Matte Blanco has suggested, is characterised by “an absence of series” (1975:83), implying also wordlessness because “the structure of words and phrases is spatio-temporal” (ibid, 83), then the *wanjina* appears to meet the second criterion (wordlessness) but not the first (absence of series). We have already seen that the *wanjina* acts as an agent of generation merging (Chapter 3.), in this respect forestalling time at a certain point, around the third generation back, an act which is consistent with the psychoanalytic notion of repression of memory (of the dead) through submergence of the particular
into the undifferentiated mass of the body of *wunggurri*. Yet, the proliferation of multiple *wanjina* at each clan centre seems to hold on to the presence of time. The incarnation of a man as his FFB rather than FF relates to the same process—the splitting of the self to autopoetically create otherness (FF – FFB = eB – yB) but contained within a unifying field. Matte Blanco’s re-analysis of Freud’s notion of repression and timelessness revealed that there are two implicit models of timelessness in Freud’s writings, one of which involves a notion of “immortality...not characteristic of the system unconscious he had described, but simply ‘extremely present’” (1975:83, my italics). This is closest to the sense in which *wanjina* is experienced by Ngarinyin people and, indeed, *Larlan* is glossed as “ancient places from the beginning.”

Earlier I referred to Alan Rumsey’s discussion of “rhizomatic” modalities of reproduction inherent to some varieties of “arborescent” imagery. Rumsey discusses Ayres’ (1983) variants upon a “paradigm of differentiation” which contrasts “lineal segmentation from a unity” and “scattering or fragmentation from a ‘starting point’ or ‘center’” (cited in Rumsey 2001:28). My discussion above of the linear series in which *wanjina* are often depicted (see pp.274 above), seems to suggest that the first of these two is most salient to the *wanjina*’s mode of reproduction. The fact that *wanjina* are also “starting points” for patrilineages (no matter how shallowly conceived) is consistent with such an interpretation. In Plate 14 below, it can be seen that the lineal series of figures is emerging from between each other’s legs. Though this photo doesn’t show it, the series begins from a yam figure in the heart of the cave, extends across its roof, and exits through the lip of the cave until it finally fades out on the exposed rock surface which makes the external surface of the cave.

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148 Morton noted Stanner’s (1979:34) contention that “Aborigines see time less as a continuum and more as ‘bent’ into cycles or circles” (1985:207).

149 “The elder brother/younger brother opposition forms the basis of a theory of consubstantiality existing between man and nature” (Morton 1985:283).

150 The passage of Freud’s to which he refers to here is: “Wishful impulses which have been never passed beyond the id, but impressions too, which have been sunk into the id by repression, are virtually immortal; after the passage of decades they behave as though they had just occurred” (Freud [1933] as cited in Matte Blanco, 1975:83).

151 Matte Blanco cites Mach on this notion of permanency: “The apparent permanency of the ego consists chiefly in the single fact of its continuity, in the slowness of its changes...There can hardly be greater differences in the egos of different people, than occur in the course of years in one person” (ibid:129). Of the same issue, Levi-Strauss claimed, with characteristic pessimism, that “rites have as their impetus the intrinsically vain attempt to establish the continuum of experience” (1981:679).
Plate 14. Lineal segmentation from Yam within cave matrix

At the same time as displaying linear series, though, there are other aspects of the \textit{wanjina} which are distinctly of the first type, “scattering or fragmenting from a ‘starting point’ or ‘center’”. Amongst these I include the attributes already discussed above, such as the placement of different \textit{wanjina} in country from “nodal” points such as Wanalirri, their own bodily morphology which reflects the centrifugal or “scattering” arrangements of their head-dresses and eye filaments, the rain which falls from their bodies, and their identification with \textit{larrgarri}, boab trees (which have a radiating network of branches emanating from a bulbous centre) and \textit{jungi}, termite nests which grow in ever increasing layers from a nodal point. The examples which I gave (sec. 6.2.1 above ) of the association between \textit{wanjina} and yams, most marked in the Walanganda stories, also display the rhizomatic mode of reproduction.

In my discussions of Ngarinyin exchange networks (Chapter 5), I showed how the \textit{wurnan} is also constituted through linear, directional links between clan countries which meet at certain nodal points from which new segments, \textit{dulwan}, emerge in new directions. This is another instance in which both of the above variants of the paradigm of differentiation are present. Indeed Ngarinyin people have represented the \textit{wurnan} as a vegetal image in the painting site Alayguma (cf. Ngarjno, Ungudman, Banggal and Nyawara, 2000). Here, a representation of a \textit{guloy} tree with ripe (“cooked” in the local English idiom) fruit is shown originating in what is said to be a foot from which tracks following the main branch of the \textit{guloy} project. Emerging from half way up the central stem are two legs and feet said to belong to Wodoy and Jun.gun respectively. The positioning of these feet emerging from the main trunk is
to anthropomorphise the segmented branch and this is made explicit in the exegeses which are offered about this image, namely that it represents “new life crack open”. The upper leaves of the branch are being watered by *winjin* rain. This *dulwan* is very much in the “lineal segmentation” mode identified by Ayres (1983) but with nodes from which a “scattering” takes place.

This is again the case in ancestral dreaming tracks which form linear directional tracks but branch out at certain nodal points where several tracks overlap. The seasonal drying of the major rivers, too, leaves a series of isolated segments of “living water”, connected only through underground flows, yet innumerable small creek beds branch into the major river courses and the major river course itself undergoes an “arborescent” differentiation in the estuaries where it meets the salt-water. The co-presence of these two modes of differentiation arises, I suggest, from the common feature which they share, namely what I have referred to as the First Split (Chapter 5), the original act of fission which is indispensable to any form of reproduction, lineal or scattering – the autopoiesis through which a self is constituted, strongly manifest in the *guloy*’s “cracking open” as a signal of the fecundity of the Wet season. This is what I described earlier as “the ongoing spatialisation of the primordial splitting of the originary self, figured in the moiety division, [which] energises a processual extension of the First Split into innumerable smaller but isomorphic splittings”.

Although mouthless and wordless, suggesting an inherent timelessness, the *wanjina* has eyes which are eternally open, cavernous and febrile. This is something which is also remarkable about the huge black eyes of *delwa*, the semi-translucent white gecko which is said to be *wanjina*. According to some senior men, this gecko has another manifestation in the lizard known as *marrugudigudi/manggolarr*, the “painted face one”, which is a Wet season (i.e. actively creative) phase of *wanjina*\(^\text{152}\). As we have seen, Fliess (1970) pointed to the “eye-mouth” unit as an unconscious structure of the body-ego which displaces cannibalistic libido from the mouth to the eye as an incorporative unit, creating a psychic equivalence between the two. Lacan developed a similar, if attenuated, idea in his notion of the “specular image, the cutting off of the scopic field by the operation of

\(^{152}\) This lizard seems to be very similar to the variegated *mangarkunjerkunjer* lizard described by Morton (1993:327) as an ancestral creator which also has “eternally open eyes”.
that most relational of organs, the eye" (Weiner 1995:15). The specular image is something which is incorporated within us as surely as something which is bitten off. Through a process of selection, no matter how determined by unconscious factors, some things are brought into the self and others are kept out. We are not just “what we eat” but also “what we see”. This is the psychological grounding of the phenomenological notion of “intentionality”. We are always contemplating “something” when we contemplate. We are always directed towards some thing (Merleau-Ponty 1964:162). The buccal membrane, the infant’s first organ of perception, opens and closes as does the eye. Schilder tells us that “the cavities and entrances of the body are freely interchangeable. Vagina, anus, mouth, ears and even the entrance of the nose belong to the one group of openings” (1950:298). This interchangeability between eye and mouth is, as Freud claimed, the foundation of a discriminating subject, one capable of (m)oral choices. The very absence of a mouth in the *wanjina* draws intense attention to it. Why is it not there? Why is there a blank surface where the mouth should be? The equations which are drawn by Ngarinyin people between *wanjina* and babies glide over a major difference between them; while the *wanjina* is mouthless the baby, while certainly “wordless”, is almost nothing but mouth.

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153 This naturally raises the question: if there is no mouth, are what appear to be eyes and nose actually eyes and nose or something else? This is a reasonable question in the light of the statements made by older men that the nose is not really a nose but a “line of power”.
When the manner of representing teeth in paintings in the *wanjina* caves is considered, it can be seen that, say in crocodile and dingo, the teeth are always represented laterally, as splaying outwards from the mouth. This seems to confirm the impression that the filaments of the eyes in the *wanjina* figures have a certain “devouring” aspect to them. This is in counterpoint to the centrifugal aspects inherent to the scattering movement from the dense centre of the eye, to the spiky eye filaments, to the radiating head-dress (both *jagarran* “feathers” and *malngirri* “lightning”). In this interpretation the eyes become the locus for displaced oral devouring impulses. It is the ocular incorporation of the maternal visage which displaces oral sadistic rage to create the rudimentary ego, the “introject”. The way in which *wanjina* are represented almost only as a “face” and sometimes shoulders (possibly displaced breasts) with the remainder of the body appearing only as a “flow” of rain strongly suggest that the *wanjina* draws much of its psychical force from an origin in this kind of transcendence of oral sadism. Such a displacement also marks a transcendence of need, a sustainable “distribution” of desire both within the individual and the collective “libidinal economy”. This distribution or “spreading out” also promotes an interdependency between producers and consumers, founded upon a denial of immediate need, which finds expression through a social system of exchanges (the *wurnan*) and pluralistic “ego-centres” across country. Such an
interpretation also suggests that the maternal imago becomes incorporated into various male social agents at the centre of each clan group. Could this be reason why there is so much seemingly contradictory ethnographic data concerning whether it is patriclan members or maternal relatives who traditionally "retouch" the cave paintings, activate the increase sites? This contradiction in the ethnography is also highlighted by some reports that the bones of deceased men were not placed in a cave in their patri-clan country but in "the totem painting caves in the territory of his kakaia\textsuperscript{154} (mother's brother)" (Love 1936:160).

In this light it is now possible to draw out further the distinction between *anguma* and *agula* which I pointed to above. If the *anguma* are beings characterised by their relationship with water and the *agula* by their dryness (instanced in the "dry sugar-bag" they leave behind, the dry terrain where they dwell and their habit of leaving footprints only on hard stone), the *agula* are also hungrily devouring beings (of children, of sugar bag, of people lost in the bush, indeed of almost anything they can get their hands on) and have the sharp teeth necessary to this function\textsuperscript{155}. *Agula* seem to concentrate in themselves all the negative affectivity which the *wanjina* eschew. In this sense they are "split off" from the core values of *wanjina* as a productive being and this splitting off allows the generative powers of *wanjina* to persist. *Anguma*, on the other hand, being watery like the *wanjina*, also maintain a generative quality which is based in a denial of anti-social hunger: the hunted animal which contains *anguma* is "no good to eat", "too watery", "no fat", "no taste".

Before the question of the relationship between *wanjina*'s productive intimacy (founded upon its differentiation) and *wunggurr*'s dangerous and destructive tendencies (founded upon its intermittently visible massiveness) can be fully explored, though, a more thorough investigation of the qualities of *wunggurr* is required and this is the concern of the following chapter.

\textsuperscript{154} Interestingly Love translates *kakaia* (Worrorra variant of the Ngarinyin term *gayingi*) as mother's brother (which is an opposite moiety relative), while the most common rendering of this term in Ngarinyin is "mother's mother" (a same moiety relative).

\textsuperscript{155} This seems to support the isomorphism I proposed above between *agula* and the Yolngu *mokuy* which "are associated with the outside permanent body (flesh)...." according to Tamisari (1997:20) who, however, doesn't discern in *mokuy* the sadistic hunger which is evident in *agula*. 
Chapter 7. *Wunggurr, the Rainbow Serpent*

*Wunggurr*, the Rock Python/Rainbow Serpent is said to be most concentrated in the permanent waterholes of the area, but underlies the entire country and the sea in a more diffuse way. Landscape features, especially islands in fresh and salt water, are believed to be visible undulations of the snake body of *wunggurr* (cf. Lommel 1996:33). This has been pointed out at the major waterhole at Unggadinda (Manning Gorge) where a smooth rounded rock emerges from the water in the centre of the waterhole. This is not a stone, say Ngarinyin people, but the back of *wunggurr*. Such projecting rocks and islands are sometimes called *borro*, “foundation stones” and are believed to be petrified bark coolamon, *angga*, from the stringy-bark tree [V.3: 22/2/95] which have been explained to me as “living foundations – like human beings that turned into stone”.

The preceding discussion about the nature of the coolamon (Chapter 6) alerts us to the mythic themes of containment which are being played out here in the figure of *wunggurr*. Love pointed out that a man “may see, in a dream, a rock python coming to him, bearing a child in its mouth” (1936:181, see also Tamisari 1997:15 on a polysemous Yolngu word for “naming” and “biting”). The body of *wunggurr* which is visible in the stones emerging from a waterhole is perceived to be an upturned coolamon, the instrument for carrying babies. This container which was once “a body” of a person has now become the body of *wunggurr* which “contains” the fresh water pool. The undulations of the body of *wunggurr* create hollows and rises which hold the “living water” in country. Living bodies have become the *borro*, “foundation”, for all that exists there.

Both fresh and salt-water are said to be inhabited by *wunggurr*. The *wanjina* Nunggina and his wife Nyalgugud are said to have created fresh-water, while the *wanjina* Namarali made salt water by urinating during a great flood. The other “people”/*wanjina* are said to have become enraged when he did this and to have wanted to spear him [Notebook 13/6/97]. Wororra and Ngarinyin people employ differentiations between fresh and salt-water as distinguishing characteristics.

This author has been present when a senior woman has purposefully deployed her body in the water in order to bring rain clouds into the area of Unggadinda (“Everlasting Home”). In the thick heat of a November afternoon, she entered the
water and began pounding the water with her fists, stirring up the water with an intense expression of concentration. After a few minutes of this she returned to her bathing and fishing. Within two hours a huge lightning storm with accompanying rain hit the area. The old woman was pleased with herself and laughed with a somewhat furtive glee [V. VI:30/11/96]. The area where she conducted this personal ceremony is known as a “widows’ pool” and recently widowed women from neighbouring communities and as far away as Mowanjum would make their camps there during the initial period of obligatory isolation. Unggadinda is believed to be inhabited by two snake sisters who, as well as being incarnate in a twinned boab tree on the banks of the waterhole, also inhabit the high stony ground and make occasional trips to the water. They are said to have heads as large as two hills but are “held back by a gate, like tailgate of motor-car” which can be opened by barnman (ritually powerful) people and used to inflict or heal illness.

The dangerous aspect of wunggurr was also clearly apparent in a visit to the mouth of the Hunter River in Jibilingarri country. An enormously deep rock-hole, several hundred feet deep, occurs in the course of the river just below Guringe. It is said that this hole contains a very powerful wunggurr which is able to “suck planes out of the air” if they fly over it. I was told that a “rock trapdoor” was in the bottom of the pool which could open up and “swallow you forever”[V3b:136]. One man was reputedly spearing fish near the mouth of the pool when he saw the door opening in the bottom and ran for his life leaving spears and fish behind him. Wunggurr has a personal name here as it does in various other places where it is incarnated as a particular snake. In this case the snake’s name is Umbulbri, a snake which is said to have had cataracts and to be blind, just as the wunggurr snakes which “breed” inside the stomach of a barnman are also said to be blind. This snake is said to be “standing up pregnant” near here in the form of a white tree sitting with “her legs spread out” and to have deposited a white quartzite egg stone near the river course. This sphere of rock was regarded as something which required the utmost caution in approaching and its location is kept secret. These gambi, wunggurr eggs, occur in many wanjina cave painting sites but this one is particularly potent. These “eggs” usually take the form of elliptical, highly polished river stones in the deepest recess of painting
galleries. They are *maa-maa*, "untouchable". wunggurr passed from Galarungarri clan country through the Guringe area creating the river course and laying her eggs. Where the river opens into the sea she emerged from beneath the ground and appears as twinned Rock Python images at *Wurrngun-ngarri*, two gigantic red sandstone columns set into the cliffs of the harbour.

As well as being incarnated in various rock structures, wunggurr is also perceived to be visible in the snake body of the rainbow emerging from the earth. This rainbow snake body is seen to contain both dangerous and benign forces in that although present within the turbulent cyclonic storms it also drives away storms by "gathering" storm clouds into its arched body. Ngarinyin people sometimes compare this gathering up of the clouds to mustering cattle into portable yards, the human action which gives (circular) shape to the dispersed mob of cattle. This pastoral image in which humans have a powerful sense of not just agency but dominance is celebrated in old mustering songs which make declarations glossed to me as "Look out you mob, I'm up here on a horse now and I'm the boss". In the statements which Ngarinyin people make comparing this with the role of the rainbow in storm control, they draw an equivalence between the dominant the role of wunggurr and the Aboriginal stockmen. Recalling here that the red-ochre band around the head of the wanjina is said to be wunggurr, with its emanations of lightning figured in the protuberant shapes emerging from this band, then it is not difficult to see how these bow shapes in a wanjina frieze are "gathering up" the wanjina/cloud shapes, containing them, but by this very act of containment giving them their fundamental form.

7.1 *wunggurr* and *barnman*.

The dangerous, dominating aspect of *wunggurr* is also believed to become manifest in "wrong way" (i.e., same moiety) marriages which are described as *murlai*, a word which is used as an epithet for *wunggurr* as manifest in the rainbow. It is said that the blurring, only semi-distinctiveness of colours in the rainbow is "like *murlai*" marriages where a proper separation is not maintained between moieties. In cases of

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156 Taylor, following Tacon (1988) and Brandl (1973) points out that certain animal species strongly associated with the Rainbow Serpent are known by the Kunwinjku to be "buccal incubators", hatching eggs in their mouth. Estuarine crocodiles swallow "small rocks which stay in the animal's stomach" and which become polished stones from which the Kunwinjku make sacred objects (1990:335).
sorcery, wunggurr power is said to grow within a man who drinks the urine of certain
normally proscribed same moiety relatives such as a sister or mother-in-law. By
imbibing this urine of a same moiety female relative, which is also held to have
remarkable curative powers, a man transgresses in a very physical way the proper
degrees of separation between close relatives. This potentially dangerous power is
believed to be able to be used by barnman, traditional doctors, to heal others and
enhance their own skills. Wunggurr is said to leave deposits in these people in the
form of gulanji or onambolo, which are said to be “like bullock teeth” in that they
have a lustrous white surface and are very hard. They are sometimes compared to
diamonds but “cold like ice”. Older men have also described to me how wunggurr is
coiled up inside them, “doubled-up but like in ice”. This rendering of the visceral
body-ego of the intestinal coils as wunggurr, but separated from the main body by this
chrysalis of “ice”, like a separating membrane, posits wunggurr as a being contained
within them in a similar way that it is said to be contained within matrices of stone
and water. The implication for a local form of subjectivity is that the bodies (arin) of
Ngarinyin people are the cosmic dome of which wunggurr is the centre. Indeed I have
been told that the “country is our own flesh and blood, how can we be smacking it
up?”

Recalling that Freud found the body-ego to be a projection of the surface of
the body, and that this required some correction because of Spitz’s discovery that
these surface sensations were themselves derived from a centrifugal displacement of
internal sensation from chaotic rudimentary enterocceptions, how must we conceive of
this containment of wunggurr inside the body, “doubled up but like in ice?” As I have
said, the body-ego is not an ideational representation of a single organ but of a
combination of organs and is able to expand and contract, (warl-a /gol-a). Older
Ngarinyin men have said that wunggurr is dangerous because it might “leap out” onto
someone else but will not harm its host. In other words, it permeates internal and
external surfaces but is felt to be inside of the human body. Schilder (1950:88)
pointed out that we experience the surface of our skin, particularly at the orifices, as
being deeper inside our bodies than it actually is. If the sensation of wunggurr inside
the body is inflected with the experience of the skin of the orifices in the body-ego,
this would be consistent with the sense in which Ngarinyin people think of wunggurr
as laying below, but continuous with, the surface of the country, emerging from it as
islands and projections, the “tip of the ice-berg” as we would say. This distinction
between the visible and the invisible as analogous to the distinction between present reality and the Dreaming has been noted in many of the Australian ethnographies (e.g. Munn 1973:24; Meggit 1972:71-2; Myers 1976:159) but the relationship between them which is most consistent with my data is that described by Munn in which “the sense of value and tradition bound up with the notion of *djugurba* ‘surfaces’ or becomes visible, and so is integrated into the perceptual field and sense experience of the social world of waking reality” (1986:103). Myers also described the relative disjunction as “not one of logical opposition, because *tjukurrpa* is seen as the ground of all being” (1976:159-60). The continuous, but folded, surface of *wunggurr* is suggested in the idea that it is ubiquitous, but only intermittently visible. The carrying of the child spirits in the “mouth” of *wunggurr* fortifies the association with bodily orifices.

The “ice” metaphor is carried further in the sense that various members of the younger generation are said to have possessed this gift of *wunggurr* but to have subsequently “killed the *wunggurr*” snakes which were believed to reside in their bodies by imbibing hot drinks and alcohol which also generates “hot heat” inside the body (cf. Maddock 1978:107). These *gulanji* then, despite their apparent hardness when viewed outside of the body, are also vulnerable to ingested substances. They are said to become malleable in the hands of a good healer and to be capable of passing through the skin envelope between a *barnman* and his patient. Interestingly, the composer I worked with used the term *gulanji* in a song context to talk about “waves in saltwater”. While it is possible that he was using this gloss as an avoidance idiom, he did repeat this several times over, and later to two other researchers (pers. comm. Linda Barwick 1999). Taking his explanation at face value, the composer appears to be using a poetic sense of *gulanji* to create the remarkable image of a wave as something which is solid yet invisible, a force which creates a momentary physical instantiation which continually dissolves and reforms. The verses of the song run:

*Gulanji ngonda ngadma*

*Wururruru-yu malanda-yu malanda*

The first line expresses the anxiety of people wondering when they will be able to cross over a salt-water channel. The second line describes the retreat of the salt-water which leaves the rocks sticking up out of the water, before enveloping them again. In this sense there is a powerful metaphor linking the magical stones of the *barnman* which can pass between bodies and the stones which are left revealed by the rush and
retreat of the waves. The notion of “crossing over” is inherent to both senses of the word *gulanji*. A quality of permeability in the body appears to present itself to consciousness as being complementary to an abiding sense of permanency (the rocks swallowed by the waves but re-emerging again, the crystalline nature of the *barnman* stones). This recalls for us Schilder’s previously cited comment that “the heavy substance of the body may be loosened, may become foamy and even full of holes, or there may be a consolidation in the inner parts of the body” (1950: 298).

The capacity for flight is also attributed to *wunggurr* and this ability becomes part of the dreaming process for *barnman*. N----, for instance, the composer with whom I did most work, spoke of flying over the country on *wunggurr’s* body and looking out over the “trees, hills, rivers everything”. He also talked at length about the importance of the *buyu*, “death cord”, which leads him back to his sleeping body after a dreamt visit to Dulugun. During his performances this *buyu* is represented by a length of fishing line and stretches from the composer’s lap as he sits on the edge of the dancing ground, to the green bough screen from which the spirit dancers emerge in the twilight. The spirits move along this line as though climbing a rope. The *buyu*, then, is at once an extension of the *barnman’s* body as well as being an extension of the body of *wunggurr* on which the gifted composer travels. Travelling by flying through the air is always associated with *wunggurr* power. In Pentony’s collected dream corpus from 1938 appears this dream by a woman at Pantijan:

“An aeroplane came out of the sky and landed on the ground. A mob of blacks came around and looked at the aeroplane. They were very frightened. Then I awoke.

**Comment (by the dreamer):** This is a miriru dream. The aeroplane is Ungud. It is bad to dream of Ungud like that, for it may mean that he is going to kill someone” (1938: No. 34).

7.2 Images of Power

While I was living at Dodmun a young woman’s life was saved by the intervention of the Royal Flying Doctor Service. The heavily pregnant girl, with a suspected

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157 Munn noted that in ritual pressing of sacra into the body amongst Pitjantjatjara “the person’s identity becomes symbolically lodged in the object, just as the ancestral potency becomes lodged in the subject” (1970:161 fn; cf Povinelli (1993:165) on the permeability of the body of country and person).
complicated delivery imminent, had gone into labour unexpectedly. After a phone call to the station owner's wife and calls to the RFDS in Derby, the patient was transported on a mattress on the back of the community truck to the station airstrip just as evening had fallen. Fifteen or so members of her family, the station owner and his wife, and myself sat and stood around our vehicles, lights ablaze, listening out for the sound of aircraft motors. Before long it was passing overhead. A huge sense of relief, transcendent of all ongoing social antagonisms, was evidently shared by everybody upon watching the turbo-prop aircraft make a night-landing, guided by diesel candles, quickly and solicitously lit by the station owner along the gravel airstrip. Smiles, small jokes and expressions of camaraderie were circulating throughout the entire assembled group as soon as the plane lifted off. This sense of relief replaced the barely disguised sense that the whole scene was something of an overreaction to a minor emergency, an attitude which seemed at first to have characterised the attitudes of station people and hospital staff on the phone. The fact that some people within the community had been drinking alcohol at the time seemed to have added fuel to these suspicions. Such an initial response had naturally made the Aboriginal people present somewhat defensive and edgy, compounding their anxiety over the whole situation. The audacious power of the technical and medical personnel first of all landing, and then lifting off the plane with its ill patient, between these flimsy lines of candles, its wing-lights piercing the growing darkness, was a poetic moment creating a magnanimous, oceanic effect upon us all. Augmenting this sensation of magical action was the fact that the woman had gone into early labour immediately after a snake had slithered over her foot several hours beforehand as she sat outside taking in the winter sunshine. This event was taken to be what brought on her labour and became much talked about over the following days and weeks as people in the settlement waited for the young mother to bring the baby home and settle on a name for it.

The strangely "oceanic" effect of the emergency airlift upon those of us on the ground on this occasion displayed a mirroring between the sudden "lifting" of the gloom of intense anxiety which preceded it and a clear identification with the powerful flying body of the plane as it carried its pregnant patient to safety. The intensity of our gazes as we watched events unfold before us on the airstrip, the total

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158 Freud described the "oceanic feeling" as that in which "'I' and 'you' are one" (1985:253) which Morton explains is "a sense of total immersion in the world...[which] has as its prototype the security a child feels while 'blending' with its mother" (1985:147).
preoccupation with the actions of this gigantic mechanical body, left little room for
doubt that the experience of the plane as an image of nurturing power was widely
shared between the members of this disparate little group. Aboriginal men and
women called out endearments to the airborne mother and child. For example, the
paternal grandfather for the coming baby yelled out “My abi gone now. I’ll see you
directly. I’ll come longa Derby and pick you up”. A fractal body image is discernible
here in the bulbous bodies of plane and pregnant woman, giving rise, I suggest, to
strong feelings in the participants within this drama of being transported within the
maternal body and of being the maternal body doing the transportation. The comment
that “I’ll come and pick you up” in this context, and the sense that we had, together,
“saved the day” by driving the mother safely out here, organised the airstrip in time
before it was too dark and made all the right contacts, was a mutually empowering
one. The Ngarinyin man, who in 1938 interpreted his dream image of an aeroplane as
the miriru power of wunggurr (Pentony 1938) possessed by a “doctor-man”,
barnman, clearly experienced a similar sensation of power in relation to the infrequent
appearances of planes over the Kimberley.

A deadly King Brown snake had bitten one of the participants in the airstrip
scenario more than a decade before. A widow, she had been living at Nyanangdunda,
“rib of the snake”, the forerunner of the Dodnan settlement, when she was bitten.
Since the local station owners were absent when this occurred, the community
members felt powerless to intervene except by keening for the quickly sickening
woman. Fortunately the station owners returned the same day, alerted the Flying
Doctor by radio and had her evacuated to Derby. She recovered after six months in
hospital. This was one local instance where the image of the power of the Flying
Doctor loomed large in the consciousness of the community. The later event in which
the pregnant mother’s life was saved drew upon the previous encounter with the
RFDS plane as an archetype for interpretation. In both cases, the image of the snake
remained central as both powerfully dangerous and explicitly precipitating new life.

Miriru (or mururu) is a name for the wunggurr power possessed by the
barnman. M—explained that mururu is the “clear vision, no longer blind” which is
imparton from wunggurr. Others have described it as “strong wunggurr dreams” and
also as the “blood, juice of kangaroo”. Another word for such concentrated power is
gandiyan. There are a number of senses in which the wunggurr power of the
composer/healer is comparable to that which comes from a man’s dreaming of a spirit
child (cf. Taylor 1990:333). Both are referred to by the same term, “finding” a song or “finding” a spirit child. Both require a penetration of the screen which normally shields humans from the spirit realm. In the case of the composer, he takes the journey through the bottom of the waterhole to Dulugun where bundles of green leaves are held in front of his eyes so that he will not to be too frightened to look at the emerging dancing spirits. In the case of a man finding a child, the anguma itself takes the journey out of the waterhole and lands on the body of the prospective father. Both the composer and the father finding a child impart this knowledge first to their wives before it becomes more generally known. There is an intimacy created between man and wife by this process. At the same time both composer and father are seen to be somehow debilitated by this contact with the world of spirits (e.g. the father missing game, finding only watery food etc.). Mowaljarlai explained that when a composer “finds” a new song “it sticks in his mind like a stain, it can’t be forgotten – we say nyambalag – he doesn’t have to think about it anymore because it is fastened on to him, like a wife to her husband.”

The “breeding” of wunggurr snakes inside the body of the barnman is said to be between a “blind” male and female snake which produce a multitude of smaller snakes and the special objects inside his abdomen. Similarly it is said that the first man, amod (also known as olti), and woman, nyamod (also known as nyolgi), were formed from mud out of the body of wunggurr [V. 6:34]. These terms bear a strong resemblance to the words for male and female sexual secretions, amud and nyamud, respectively. The three terms which might be borne in mind here as having some common properties are amod, mud, amad, fat and amud, semen.

Several of the wanjina are said to have been in the process of creating homes for themselves from mud. The wanjina Mumuduwin, for example, who moved from Amalara to Garen (Grace’s Knob) repeatedly tried to find shelter from the falling rain but the cave he was creating by “doctoring mud” kept dissolving and falling apart until he finally gave up and lay down on one small mud pillow which then turned to rock. The caves at Mogayad are also said to have been created from mud which thence turned to rock. As I noted above, this process of hardening is how the origins of the stone wurnan tables is said to have been created also, through the petrification
of the bark from stringy-bark trees. These are examples of the emergent nature of hard surfaces from the soft body of the world in the first creation.

The opposite process can also occur. For example, *yamol yamol* are songs which are sung in the vicinity of *wanjina* caves to make the ground become muddy and boggy. Some *wanjina* are said to “break up the hard ground” by their stamping motions. This is the meaning of the woman’s name Jodba, after the stamping actions of the *wanjina* at Ayunggulera, her *wunggurr* place, who did just that. The Brolga which stamped the ground at Dunbeyi in the Wanailirri story also caused the ground to break up into “quicksand”. Crawford was told of certain rituals performed at *wanjina* sites in which a clay model of a *wanjina* is placed in a “baler shell which is full of water, so that, as the songs are sung, the clay turns into mud and the figure disintegrates”(1968:37). As I have noted above, these bailer shells, *nyaliga*, are filled with water and placed in all the *wanjina* caves where deceased people are buried. In the light of the importance of water and mud in the cosmogonic cycle it interesting to see that older Ngarinyin people compare this cycle to the Christian images of the Flood which have been available to them since at least the end of World War 1. Neowarra, for example, who certainly considers himself to be a Christian, has explained that “some people say we all come from Noah, everyone else drowned, but we come from man and woman sitting on an island, we come from them, not Noah”.

7.3 *wanjina/wunggurr* and Water

The *wanjina*, whose caves are often located near large water-holes, and *angguban*, wet-season clouds, are both seen to be emergent from undifferentiated bodies of water, forming distinct figures in the land- and skyscape and thence returning to the body of *wunggurr* in the form of rain (cf. Warner 1958:380-384 on the Murngin [Yolngu] Rainbow Serpent Yulunggurr as embodiment of the Wet season). The breaking up of rain clouds into falling rain is seen as *wanjinjas* re-merging with the soft rock or mud from which they were originally formed (cf. Capell 1972a: 88; Crawford 1968; Lommel 1952) and this is figured most clearly in the representations of *wanjina* which show the lower body to be composed of falling rain. The stories concerning the actions of *wanjinjas* creating the caves where they came to

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159 This process of imprinting is one of three (the others being externalisation and metamorphosis) discerned by Munn as characteristic of creative ancestral action, especially at places where these beings *(fn. Continues o.p.)*
dwell or rest by "opening up" the malleable rock face and creating hollows is a further indication of the cycle of emergence and fusion with the land and water which is a feature of the *wanjina/wunggurr* complex. The cyclicity of this process can be usefully compared with aspects of the North Kimberley system of personal naming, where a person is identified with his classificatory son's son (for male ego) or brother's son's daughter (for female ego) as described earlier (Chapter 3.; cf. Taylor 1990:336; Taylor 1987:80; Berndt and Berndt 1970:55).

The spatial interrelationships of the named and distinct *wanjina*, from which named and distinct local land-holding groups partly derive their identities (see Sec. 4.2), are a result of the mythic journeys, battles and other actions in the *larlan* after which the various *wanjina* "lay down" and "became a painting" (cf. Capell 1972). In the time of their originary activity, the *wanjina* are thought of as having had human or animal form, or characteristics of both, combining theriomorphic modes of locomotion and other physical traits with fully human personalities, desires and goals. Species such as turtles, for example are said to have left human footprints in the rock in some places while leaving turtle footprints at another place not far away. There is a sense of these actions having been completed in the *larlan*, but also an attribution of perpetual significance and a continual re-enactment of ancestral action through the identities established between living persons and *wanjina* noted above. Amphibious creatures such as crocodile, turtle and frogs seem to have a particular propensity to appear in roles which reflect the wanderings of the *wanjina*. It seems likely that the fact that these creatures are known to be able to move between one waterhole and another, to disappear into water and then to emerge at propitious times, lends them this close affinity with *wanjina*.

Frogs have a particular affinity with the *wanjina*. GL created several revealing canvasses in this regard. Alongside a series of *wanjina*, GL has shown how the lifecycle of a frog is embodied in the *wanjina*’s rain making actions. As a tadpole matures and changes through into an adult shape its leaping allows it to move skywards and thence to come back down in the Wet season showers just as *wanjina* does. He said that the mass of black frog roe seen alongside the larger waterholes when the water stops running is actually *emen*, the "eye", of a *wanjina* and that this is also what we see as the dark parts of rain-clouds. In this image, the dark water-holes made "stops" (Munn 1970:145).
which form the eyes of *wanjina* are more explicitly linked to reproduction than other exegeses of the *wanjina* figure have previously suggested.

The large waterhole near the community of Maranbabidingarri is said to have been created by a *wanjina/Red Kangaroo* ancestor but there is no less of a sense of that continuing re-enactment of ancestral action I pointed to above. This *Walamba wanjina* threw the distinctive “number 7” shaped boomerang (*banarr*) which opened up a similar shaped hole in the ground which became the waterhole, *Walagarri merbingarri*. Adults and children alike refer to the story to explain the distinctive shape of this waterhole. Nyawarra explains:

[w]hen you looking at this creek you see its like boomerang...*mandi* we call it. *Walagarri* on the right hand side the *wanjina* been used this *mandi*. This *Walagarri* now he throw it down here on this head part of this *mandi*. *Walamba* said...no I’ll stay here on that creek where he going down that way like boomerang he say that’s the *Mandi* itself.... the *Walagarri* itself and this country called *Walagarri*. This is in Barurrungarri area. *Walamba* means this is *wunggurr* that *Walamba* and he stays here and he establish here for good...he stays inside this hole, this pool (Ngarjno, Ungudman, Banggal, Nyawarra.2000:270)

7.4 *wanjina/wunggurr* and Fertility

The association of *wanjina* and *wunggurr* with fertility is clearly apparent in the affectionate calling of new born babies “*wanjina*”, and in the practice of divining where a fetus’ *wunggurr* (conception) place is by family discussions about where the mother first knew herself to be pregnant, what happened on that day, where the husband was, what he might have caught hunting or fishing that day, and thus conferring that name upon the child. The Ngarinyin man U.B. of Ngarangarri clan, says, “Ngarangarri is my *wunggurr* water. My father was carrying my *anguma* (spirit) on his body from there”. Another Ngarinyin man, N.B., told me how “a comet fell down into the water at Binjiling. My father found a crocodile in that water- that’s me now, no wonder I got grey hair early, like that comet hair and that *bunju*.” This *bunju* is the native fig tree which can often be found clinging to the rocky cliff sides leading down into the waterholes of the region. Its long trailing roots form a tangled mass reaching down to draw water up from the pool even at its lowest level during the dry season (see also Rumsey 2001:28, for a discussion of *Ficus* as an example of
“rhizomatic reproduction” in Melanesia). These hanging roots are called dawuru, whiskers, and are compared to waterfalls. It is said that these tangled masses are where the “wanjina brushed his whiskers” (V.3B: 137) thus depositing spirit-children in the waterhole.

Newborn babies are “smoked” by senior women who place on a fire the green water weed jala which is believed to be the repository of spirit children and to have an intimate association with wunggurr. This smoking is intended to “cook” or “dry” the baby in the sense of strengthening it. While the purifying qualities of smoke are evident in most Ngarinyin ceremonial actions, the “cooking” of new babies has the added element of hastening the change from a watery to a dry state of being, thus removing the baby from the dangers inherent in the wunggurr bodies of water. The transition to social being begins with this first smoking ceremony. After this time it is regarded as safe to name a child since the chance of it slipping back “into the water” is much less. Naming a child before this smoking is regarded as bad luck, tempting fate. At the other end of the spectrum of mortality, seriously sick adults are sometimes described as “just a bag of water now”.

The senior Gandiwal man, G.W., states: “We born from water, from wulu (chrysalis)”. This wulu is another polysemous Ngarinyin term. It has been described as the “colour seen in water when a man finds dream for baby”. This colour, the spectral dispersion of light in water, is regarded as having “strong wunggurr” just as the rainbow is regarded as a powerful embodiment of wunggurr. In the latter case the shimmering spectral light is just as important to the image of wunggurr as the snake-like shape which it forms arching across the sky from one point on the earth to another. A further meaning for wulu is to denote the small sorcery figures which are drawn, often in charcoal, over species represented in wanjina caves. It is said that ritual killing can be accomplished by drawing one of these figures and thinking the name of the person it represents. One of these appears in the large crocodile increase site at Banamba. This figure is drawn on the face of a salt-water crocodile. It is said that the man whom the figure represents will dream of being attacked by a crocodile and will die some time later from the effects of being attacked in that dream. These destructive/creative qualities of wunggurr reappear throughout the corpus of beliefs surrounding this figure.
7.5 Identities established between place and person, and person and person through wunngurr (spirit conception) sites.

Ngarininyin people emphasise that a person and country share wunngurr names (names derived from a spirit-conception place/event) and this speaks to an intense personalisation of the landscape. This personalisation of country is made explicit in the practice of calling country by the kin term which designates the particular clan group in relation to each other clan group (cf. Chapters 3 and 4). So for example, Mororongongo clan members call Warrgalingongo country, a same moiety adjacent clan country, abi ("brother") since the men of this clan would be related to Mororongongo clan members in this way. Abi being a reciprocal term in this kinship system, Warrgalingongo clan members would relate to Mororongongo clan country in the same way.

In an even more personal way, such kin-categorical links to country can be secondary to the relationship which is established between a person and a place as a result of the interpretive links (noted above) which are made between an event which is thought to be the first sign of a woman being pregnant and the place where this happens. The Yt brothers, R. and D., for example, both take their names from the site at Mogayad/Ngawerri where an ancestral Fresh-Water Turtle passed through. Their names are thus, Nyalali ("New Born Turtle") and Nyandad ("Old Turtle") and other people will refer to that place with both of these names. Similarly W.A. from Gibb River has the wunngurr name Mariyan, a creek crossing east of the station where he lives, and people will speak of the country there in terms of affection, calling out on approach in a vehicle "ahhh, here's W.A. coming up- poor fella".

These connections to country exist quite independently of the person’s father’s clan affiliation, though there is noticeable desire on the part of some men to trace back through an exegetic process the conception event to their own clan country. Members of clan countries where a person from another clan has a wunngurr connection do show a tender and even incorporative attitude to these people, treating them at one level as “one of our mob”, and taking pride in the fact of their being “hosts” to that person’s anguma. This may result in strong connections between the clan of the person having their wunngurr and the clan owners of that country.

While the above example shows how new links are established between clans because of a person's wunngurr connections, there are also sets of links which exist
between clan countries as a result of ancestral dreaming tracks. These two ways of making relationships between countries are not mutually exclusive, though, because in some cases these ancestral connections only become manifest in the contemporary social world when a person's wunggurr arises from a place on the dreaming track where the ancestor laid down or came to rest in its travels.

For example, the travels of the mythic Walamba (plains kangaroo) link together the countries through which it passed in the larlan. The extent of the Walamba's travels establishes links between people from the Mitchell Plateau and then southwards through to the Mandu, Mt. Bradshaw, area which borders Galarungarri country, and as far south as the Caroline Range where N.K.'s father's mother's country, Manjilwa, is situated and where a large painting site, Warr Muj Mulli Mulli, shows the ancestral Red-Kangaroo, Nyenawurr, giving birth to young, one of whom is regarded as N.K.'s father. Along the way, N.K.'s own wunggurr place was created in a cave just south of the Mitchell River at a place called Liringu.

The Walamba deposited its backbone, Wumon, and its shin bone, Dinggarl, in a hill adjacent to the painting site Warr Muj Mulimuli. These body-parts of the Walamba deposited in the landscape, in this case in Manjilwa clan country, link Barurrungarri not only to Manjilwa where these sites occur, but also to Manyarrngarri clan estate. This latter link is forged through this site in Manjilwa clan country being the conception place of a Manyarrngarri clansman. He shares this conception place with a Barurrungarri man whose links here are thus two-fold: through conception and through the travels of his clan's totemic ancestor.

Beliefs about wanjina and wunggurr continue to have a powerful salience in contemporary communities despite great changes in economic and social circumstances and the people of the cultural domain continue to place the images of wanjina and wunggurr at the very heart of their present social and cultural identity vis à vis other Aboriginal groups of the region and the non-Aboriginal world. In everyday discourse and the interpretation of events, wanjina and wunggurr figure prominently for all age groups even though the difference in levels of knowledge and specificity is obviously very marked. One of the ways in which all can participate in this shared body of beliefs is in the attribution of "uncanny" events to the actions of wanjina, wunggurr and the host of other supernatural beings which appear in this cosmology.
7.5 Wunggurr and the feeling for country

The phenomenological geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan, adapted Wright's concept of "geo-piety" (1966) to discuss "a broad range of emotional bonds between man and his terrestrial home...Reverence is the essence of the emotion, but other elements enter in varying degree: propitiation, pity, compassion, affection" (Tuan 1976:12). This concept of geo-piety is a particularly apt one in the case of Ngarinyin people's relationships to country, founded as they are upon notions of autochthonous beings like wunggurr and wanjina which in turn give rise to the sense that Ngarinyin people are themselves autochthonous to the country in which wunggurr dwells. Elements of propitiation (and its counterpart, muluru "fear"), compassion, affection, pity and sorrow (marari) are all evident in statements and actions made in relation to inherent powers of the earth and its waters (cf. also Myers 1983: 126-157). In the Ngarinyin case, I would add the complementary elements of avoidance (aramba) and eroticisation to those enumerated by Tuan, as both of these affective conditions exhibit a strong libidal investment in country which causes it to enlarge (warl) in consciousness. An intense personalisation of place emerges from the transposition of kinship terms onto particular tracts of country and this is conducive to country being treated with the full emotional repertoire which is directed at kindred.

As an example of the intimacy mixed with awe with which Ngarinyin people relate to the vitality of cosmological beings, I found that while many non-Aboriginal people in Derby evacuate to shelters during a cyclone "red alert", Mowanjum people are seldom seen to be seriously concerned (but are intensely interested) by the presence of cyclones in the King Sound area close to the community. There is a belief that a wanjina, Jindiri Balgona, emerges from a whirlpool near the head of the Sound and the pearl-shell pendant this wanjina wears is believed to repel cyclones from the area. King Sound is at the very western edge of the wanjina/wunggurr cultural domain, where this cultural complex meets that of the Bardi people of the Dampier Peninsula and there are some overlaps in the conceptualisation of Jindiri Balgona. His connection with the more widespread beliefs in the region about wunggurr though is most pronounced. It is said that it is from Jindiri Balgona that the jaguli, pearl-shell pendants, which are exchanged in the wurnan, traditional exchange system, emerge. There are narratives of an underground tunnel, made by wunggurr, connecting this whirlpool near the entrance of King Sound with Lake Gregory thousands of kilometers to the southeast in the desert regions bordering the Northern Territory. It is
said that the *jaguli* “tried to go there” through this underground tunnel but found the water there “too shallow” and had to return to their home in the western sea. The actions of the human *wurnan* partners then allow the *jaguli* to travel down into the desert, as indeed they do, as far as the South Australian west coast. The tides are believed to still ebb and flow through this underground tunnel, creating the waters at Lake Gregory, near Bililuna (cf. my earlier discussion of the tidal movement of spirit children in Sec. 4.3).

The major earthquake in the King Sound area 1997, on the other hand, was widely attributed to *wunggurr* “turning” in the ground and to have prefigured the death of a prominent senior man from Mowanjum. This is one those instances which recall Povinelli’s comment that “decisions about what events touch and are directly in contact with the Dreamtime are inherently political” (1993:138). In the station communities, I have observed older people attempting to repel major storms by holding aloft fighting sticks and talking to the *wanjina* in a half-pleading, half-threatening way. This ability to communicate with, if not control, *wanjina* (cf. Merlan 1992:179) is also evident when Ngarinyin people visit cave painting sites and senior custodians are the first to step forward and announce their presence and ask the *wanjina* to “stay quiet”. At least one Ngarinyin man senior in the law is believed by people of all ages to possess the traditional power to direct lightning which has an incarnation somewhat distinct from *wanjina* and *wunggurr* but which draws on elements of both. I address this aspect of cosmological power in the following section, *Jandad*, The Lightning Man, (Sec. 7.7 below). The devastation of Darwin in Cyclone Tracy in 1974 is still held locally to have been the result of *wunggurr* being invoked by Aborigines to punish transgressions of Aboriginal customary law and/or the denial of political and human rights to Aborigines in the north (cf. Povinelli 1993:150). During Cyclone Tracy the late Rover Thomas, living at Warman, was visited by the spirit of his mother’s sister and received in dream the now famous song cycle, Gurı́r Gurı́r, most of which is in the Ngarinyin/Wurla language and which is currently held by one of the senior Ngarinyin, Tiger Moore.

A further indication of beliefs about *wanjina/wunggurr* is the assertion made by the current generation that recent periods of drought have been caused by the influx of tourists taking photographs of *wanjina* paintings, thus causing them to “fade” and the seasons to become drier.
7.6 Jilinya - female spirits of the bush

Another distinctive category of beings which continues to have a strong salience in the Ngarinyin life-world are the jilinya, powerful female spirits which inhabit the darkest parts of the bush, particularly mangroves, tea-tree swamps and hollow trees and prey on mortal men whom they seek as disposable lovers.

These spirit women are also known as nganggudi, adolescent girls with pert breasts and a “beautiful smile.... nice looking women” or “shining women”. They are regarded as being jili, “full of colour in her body” with “shining eyes and hair”, and exceptionally lustrous skin. Merlan has pointed to similar qualities of “brightness, suffusion with colour, and colour change” (1992:181) as the main characteristics of the irresistible sexual attractiveness evoked by jarrarda love magic in Arnhem Land (cf. also Bell, 1983:166, 168-169). The jilinya are referred to as “wandering women”\textsuperscript{160} who live alone in the bush. It is often said, “she got no kids, no husband”, but sometimes stories are told where they do have children. jilinya always “live inside hill country” and are primarily active, like their male counterparts the agula, at nighttime. Jilinya are sometimes said to also have pointed ears like agula. She is wanton and “chooses whichever man she want – she follow his beauty” (cf. Kaberry 1939:267; and Merlan 1992:179 on illicit relationships conducted by ancestral beings). She is single-minded in her pursuit of men who take her fancy. It is said that if a man makes love once to a jilinya he will never be able to be attracted to a mortal woman again. They are also extremely jealous and if a man already has a woman the jilinya will not hesitate to kill her in order to seduce this man. She comes for him in his sleep, makes love with him, and then disappears at daybreak.

Jilinya are said to be like “virgin women” who continually need to be “broken”. A jilinya’s pudendum is blank skin and it is necessary to cut her a vagina with gan.gud, a stone knife. Another method of opening her vagina is to carry a bird’s egg towards her. When she reaches out to grasp it a man drops the egg and “her crack open”. Then her vagina spills out “frog and leech, all kind of thing like that”. jilinya originally “had body like a ball, closed up”. Their association with tea-tree swamps is said to be because “them body like water, they got no blood”. If jilinya are “smoked”

\textsuperscript{160} Merlan also notes the quality of “mobility and compulsion” evoked through jarrarda (1992:181).
they can become human “get their sense back”. This should be accompanied by hitting them repeatedly with a stick since as jilinya “they numb, you belt ‘em they feel no pain”.

The shape shifting which jilinya are capable of is, if not limited to this transition between human and spirit, certainly most remarked upon in this context. In this sense there are strong similarities with the transition of anguma into human beings. One well-known knowledgeable Worrorra man who died in the 1980s is said to have maintained a relationship with a jilinya for some years until eventually “she turned into a baby and that baby was his son” [V3b, 119].

The jilinya are represented in cave paintings but not with nearly the same frequency as agula. They are often sequestered away in a very secluded part of a wanjina gallery complex. Their paintings are usually hidden behind a rock and sexually immature people are forbidden to look at them and must make a wide detour of the area (thus it is not possible to reproduce images of them here). Adolescents have to be explicitly taken to these paintings in order to be introduced to the powerful sexuality which they exude. While sometimes the exegesis of these paintings mentions the fertility of the jilinya, there is often a strong emphasis upon the sexual rather than reproductive nature of these figures. Given the stories which identify them with childless young women, this is not surprising. The figures range in size but several I have been shown depict larger than life-size figures with legs spread wide and the vulva very pronounced, often painted at eye height when viewed from standing on the cave floor. The most constant aspect of their imagery is their bent knees, an explicit indication of readiness for coitus or childbirth. I have already explored (Chapter 3.) the significance of the knee in body imagery and here I refer the reader to a further exploration of the theme in my discussion of the “trembling of desire” in moving places (Chapter 8.). Some of these figures are said to have been used to instruct men in giving women sexual pleasure.

Depictions of turtle and yam often occur alongside these figures which are explained as “presents” for the jilinya. She in turn is credited with being able to feed her lovers “with good tasting food- like from shop- don’t know where it come from”. Their appetites though are also dangerous. In at least one jilinya story, cannibalism is involved:

[T]wo young men went looking for jebarra, emu, but found too much sugar-bag, eat too much, lay down for sleep. jilinya and her daughter smelled their
bodies and the daughter said "ngala (meat), Mummy!" They cleaned the hair from the bodies of the men - getting ready to cook them. *jilinya* dived down into water hole then to get something. Two blokes heard her and woke up, grabbed daughter. The *jilinya's garragi*, her bark-bucket, name *Nawonnawon*, was still sitting on the bank. It called out to her "Hey! You still got those two fella there". But those blokes chucked stones at her daughter, making stone pile, and then cooked her. Her tears ran into the water making tributaries of the river [V.6: 35-6] (see also Love 1936:123-125).

The *jilinya* embody the dangerous powers of *wunggurr*, sharing its colourful and lustrous qualities. The narration above establishes powerful connections between *jilinya* and water and this is supported by the stories of how she particularly likes to dwell in swamps and mangroves. The cannibalistic tendencies of *jilinya* (cf. Hiatt 1975:156) echo the other acts of swallowing and regurgitation which *wunggurr* carries out; the swallowing up of the dry ground in the wet season, and the regurgitation of child spirits, the swallowing up of the clouds by the rainbow and the spurting out of new green shoots which makes men vomit from its intensity.

7.7 *Jandad, The Lightning Men*

I have explored in the preceding sections the relationship between *wanjina* (as incarnated in certain stone formations and rain clouds, clan members from that *wanjina*'s country and babies in particular), and *wunggurr*/Galaru (incarnate in rainbows, deep permanent water and as an underlying principle of cosmological power inherent in all living things). I have also shown how these personages relate to other groups of beings such as *Agula*, Rock-Devils, *jilinya*, predatory female spirits of the bush, and *Anguma*, spirit children. Now I want to draw out the relationship between *wanjina*, *wunggurr* and another group of beings which are incarnations of lightning. These are *Jandad*, the lightning men, sometimes referred to as the Lightning Brothers as they are further east into Miriuwung country and further again into many parts of the Northern Territory.

*Jandad* appear in many of the same sites and in conjunction with *wanjina* images. While they often have their own "compartments" within a painted cave gallery, there is no doubt that they are contemporaneous with and regarded with as much diligent attention as the *wanjina*. While *wunggurr* is predominantly drawn with red ochres, and *wanjina* with mostly white but also significant features such as
headband and eye filaments being drawn in red, the Jandad figures are drawn with a heavy use of gumbaru, yellow ochre. Often this is complemented (rather than mixed) with, red ochre, creating an array of oranges in the figure.

Jandad are usually long figures painted in laying down positions either on the roof or side walls of the cave galleries. Their heads often have the array of radiating lines which are also seen in wanjina and indeed many other features are shared between them, such as the large eyes surrounded by febrile filaments, the absence of a mouth, and the hands which are shown with palms splayed outwards (as if in imprecation or in sleep). The body of Jandad is however somewhat different in that it is always made up of vertical stripes of red and yellow rather than the common red ochre lines of the lower wanjina body which is rain falling. These figures also tend to have disproportionately large feet which are splayed open like the hands, quite different from the occasional representations of feet on wanjina. Jandad share with some wanjina the feature of having one or two elongated oval shaped protuberances emanating from the head. These are representations of the lightning bolts themselves in both classes of personage. In some representations the entire body of Jandad is composed of yellow ochre. Here he is often shown to be surrounded by thick crescent and triangular shapes of bright yellow which are said to be mananaj, “spread out lightning” as opposed to the “fork lightning” which is drawn inside the actual body of Jandad.
In the painting of Jandad at Munuru the long red and yellow body of the lightning man is bifurcated at the bottom of the figure to produce two legs and feet. Alongside this long snake-like body, two more figures in red and yellow ochres are laying on the roof of the cave. These figures are of the bulbous striped body variety quite similar to full body wanjina figures. Very similar figures at Liringu, like others in this area, display a protruding bulge directly in alignment with the nose of the figure.

At Ngawerri in Wajingongo country, the Jandad figure appears in a separate rock recess above the main wanjina gallery. Painted in red and white, this figure has a particularly pronounced yilmbi, the dark pendulant mass said to be the sternum bone, which nearly always figures prominently on wanjina figures. The wanjina in the gallery below this figure also sport particularly long yilmbi. What is most striking about this figure is the jagged pair of parallel lines emanating from the lower part of the jagaran, “feathered head-dress”. This figure makes completely explicit the identification which is often made in the explication of wanjina figures between the “feathers” of the “head-dress” and lightning. These lines were clearly once painted in with white or yellow but are now weathered to leave just the red ochre outlines of the
lightning bolt. The bolt, mirroring in both width and direction a deep fissure in the rock shelf over the figure’s head, runs along the roof of the overhang then emerges in zigzag form on the adjacent vertical rock-face. This zigzag shaped lightning is called *malngirri*. The radiant lines emanating from *jandad*’s head disappear into the fissure, as though the figure is about to disappear into or has just emerged from, the crack in the stone. On the *wanjina* figures painted below this *jandad* figure several of the larger *wanjina* are represented with lightning bolts emanating from the head halo. These paired protuberant shapes are usually split along their length by a horizontal line, with the upper half being of a different colour (usually black) to the bottom half which is usually red. In this they bear a morphological similarity to the “nose” of the *wanjina* which is actually described as being a “line of power” rather than a nose in the naturalistic sense. While the “nose” line points downwards and is, in this sense, replicated in the dark hanging pendant of the *yilmbi* with which it is in alignment, the lightning bolts point upwards and away from the *wanjina* head. These elongated shapes are barely distinguishable from the *wunggurr* snakeheads which are also emerging from the various head-dresses. The equation between *wunggurr* and lightning is unmistakable except for one significant feature. The elongated lightning shapes are always paired or “split” vertically as well as being horizontally segmented into two different coloured parts. Representations of *wunggurr* on the other hand can be singular or multiple but usually lack this inherent twinned or split feature.

Lightning is regarded as something which possesses vitality inherent to human and all other life. Consider the following scenario:

**Me:** How’s P------ (who was ill in hospital)?

**L** (just returned from a visit): Oh, he got lightning!

**Me:** How do you mean?

**L** (laughing): I seen lightning in his eye. He gonna be home soon.

I point to a similar understanding (Sec. 7.7 below ) where lightning is seen to be the force which releases the inherent fertility of grass seed-pods by *dedj*—*uma*—“cracking” them open and thus allowing their seed to absorb the new rains of the Wet and thence to sprout. Lacan referred to this type of action as the “vital dehiscence that is constitutive of man” (1977:21). Following Lacan’s logic, Weiner explains and explores this notion of the “bursting open of a seedpod and the subsequent discharge of its contents” (1995:4) at great length in his discussion of Melanesian myths of self-constitution. The essential argument made there is that it is only through a process of
differentiation that the possibility of human subjectivity is created. The nascent fragmentary human ego gains a sense of corporeal integrity only through a series of vicarious identifications with others so that this new relational being, possessing introjected images of ideal selves, is forever prone to ego splits. As the ego begins to be able to perceive the different selves around it, rather than remaining enmeshed in the highly volatile flux of unorganised sensation and affect which is a correlate of its neotenous state (in which only needs and not objects are invested with affect), the ego itself becomes differentiated, mirroring and introjecting the relationship between objects of desire. Far from being merely pathological symptoms, these splits furnish subjectivity with the originary stuff of identity. This vegetal image of lightning causing a seed to crack open, then, is not simply a reworking of some infantile panic which leads to a self emerging from an undifferentiated mass. It is a dramatic condensation of the ongoing drama of becoming and remaining human. On a macrocosmic scale, the entire sky, the encompassing container and horizon of the perceiving human being, “opens up” with the forked lightning which also momentarily illuminates objects in their distinctiveness. The world becomes split open in order to come into being, something which is re-instituted at the beginning of each Wet season. Love noted that sometimes “a man will catch the spirit of a child in a lightning flash” (1936:114).

As I have suggested in Chapter 4, the splitting up of the visible body of wunggurr is what creates the different wanjina in their particular domains. The encompassment of the wanjina body within wunggurr remains as a persistent ideality but the process of fragmentation, embodied in the radiating lightning lines from the head of wanjina, is what fertilises the earth/body.
Plate 17. D. Oobagooma’s painting of *wanjina* splitting off from a single trunk

A form of “strong lightning” called *bandiwin*, is said to emanate from the “little finger” of a bird-like figure which is still regarded as *Jandad* but takes the form of *gwion gwion*, the striking elongated anthropomorphic red ochre figures which are often represented alongside *wanjina*. *Jandad* is said to “connect to *wanjina*” but is “different fella”. The *bandiwin* type of lightning is the most dangerous type, the “fork lightning”. When *Jandad* points this “little finger” the bolt hits the ground and “clouds come out where he bust that water”. *Jandad* “shoots” different locations until “he find main one, *winjin*, big dark spread all over, quiet rain” (i.e. steady cyclone rain). This is contrasted with *Galaru* which is associated with “different rain, noisy wind”. The “opening up of the heavens” (as Europeans say) which comes from *Jandad* puncturing the clouds, is expressed as the *wanjina* “being satisfied” – *yaji awan* – “then he goes mmmmmmmmm (through nose), he stop then” [V5, 9]. The violent crashing of the fork lightning has done its job and the *wanjina* is regarded as no longer being menacing\(^{161}\). When embodied with Galaru in “noisy wind”, the attacking aspect of *wanjina* is what causes people to run for cover and stop quiet in one place, avoiding the angry stare of the *wanjina* eyes.

My wife and I were always advised to make no noise or light any matches during the “noisy” part of a storm, lest we attract the attention of Galaru. When my

\(^{161}\) Hiatt noted that “thunder and lightning symbols are often found in association with the Wondjina figures, indicating a threatening aspect in addition to the fertilizing power of the serpent” (1971:82 fn.12).
wife was alone in the camp during a storm, M.M., the old woman who lived next
door, came over to protect her and waved her fighting stick into the air to warn off the
“gulingi”. She is a particularly tough widow having once been struck by lightning on
the arm doing this very same thing. She however, being my classificatory sister, felt
responsible for my wife while I was away and mustered up all her courage to leave
her own camp to protect her maga, “sister-in-law”, and “her brother’s” camp. She
concluded that the storm was the revenge of wanjina for the actions of some
adolescents who earlier in the afternoon had been shooting stones with their shanghais
at a flock of white cockatoos which were sitting in one of the bigger gums trees in the
vicinity of the camp. While this was a common activity for the groups of children
around the camp it was fairly unusual for one of them to actually hit the birds. On this
occasion we had all noticed the loud squawk made by the bird when hit. Later the first
storm of the season hit the camp. MM pointed out how the storm was coming up from
the southeast, the direction of the large wanjina complex at Wanalirri. She thus drew
upon the stories of Dumbi, the owl which had been tortured by two children causing
the wanjinases to band together and destroy the human population for attacking one of
its “own creatures”.

Certain men who have been through high degrees of law are regarded as
possessing the power to direct lightning with their hands or with the underside of the
penis held up to the lightning. The earliest ethnographies for the area also describe
this ability (Love 1936:202). Subincision of the penis is a precondition for a man
attaining this ability. The incision itself bears strong affinities to the vertical lines of
red sandwiched between yellow, portrayed on the Jandad. This affinity is also marked
by the long curving figure of Jandad. Often represented alongside Jandad, and
occasionally next to wanjina, is a curiously shaped object which looks much like a
bag opened at the top. This may be yellow or white or sometimes red. This shape is
said to be specifically “split” or “forked” lightning. The “forked” opening of this
shape suggests strong associations with the nyunggal, subincisions, which lightning
men possess. At Liringu one of the large yellow ochre Jandad figures has, inside its
body, a smaller red lightning figure which has a thick crescent shape emerging from
between its legs. Given that these crescent shapes often represent lightning it seems
clear that this is an overdetermined symbol for both lightning and penis as bearers of
abundant vitality. Another of the Jandad at Liringu has a kangaroo fetus coiled up
inside its belly and a ball of lightning emerging from its splayed open fingertips.
At the Ngegamorro *wanjina* gallery in Gunjangongo country, there is a large sandstone/quartzite boulder more than four meters high which is said to be a rain cloud. At about eye level is a narrow hole about one centimeter across drilled into the rock. This is said to be where lightning hit the rock, producing the *wunggurr* place of a recently deceased Wunambal man, Banymoro. The first syllable of his *wunggurr* name, anglicised to *bang*, refers onomatopoeically to the sound of the explosion of the lightning hitting the rock. Near this cloud/rock stand two *jalala* stones of different sizes and about two meters apart. The smaller is said to be the *jalala* for B.C. and the larger to be his *abi*, paternal grandfather's *jalala*. These stones need to be cared for by visiting family. They should be kept standing upright and brushed off in order to maintain their vitality. Ngegamorro is also one of the main places where the *wanjinas* came to gather prior to their attack upon the tormentors of Dumbi the Owl in the Wanalirri saga. After the battles in which most of the human population was destroyed, Ngegamorro, the *wanjina* husband of *Wulumara*, the Sweet-Water Turtle, came back to this cave and lay down. Lightning was one of the weapons used by the *wanjina* in this destruction.

These examples show clearly that lightning is strongly associated with both destructive and creative forces and in this it is a potent concentration of *wunggurr*.

### 7.8 Conclusion to Chapter 7

The discussion in this chapter of the relationship between *wanjina* and *wunggurr* is intended to establish, through a purview of the central elements of the cosmology attaching to these figures, how notions of both fluidity and the containment of fluidity infuse the inter-corporeality expressed in Ngarinyin relationships to country and kin. My first point was to show how *wanjina* and *wunggurr* are symbiotically bound to each other but at the same time capable of a life of their own, yielding different aspects of Ngarinyin personhood:

a) the participation in and emergence from the diffuse generative life-force which is embodied in *wunggurr* (cf. Berndt and Berndt 1970:117-118)

b) the holding of a specific identity arising from relationships to named and localised spirits of place, the *wanjina*

This neat scheme, as I have shown, is complicated by the fact that the watery body of *wunggurr* emerges as peaks or islands in the country, as self-contained fragments in
animals which yield up anguma, conception spirits and as concentrations of wunggurr power deriving from the realm of the dead. The wanjina themselves are manifestations of the intermittently visible body of wunggurr which have become attached to a place where they recycle themselves through the bodies of men and women, animals, plants and other kinds of bodies such as stones and stars (Maddock 1970). This continual reticulation of the self (Taylor 1990:336) is predominantly achieved through the rebirth of men through a son’s son and of women through a brother’s son’s daughter. People also participate in the life of specific wanjina through their anguma (“soul”) being found to have come from that wanjina.

Secondly, I have drawn out the nature and the morphology of wanjina and wunggurr, to show how they both operate as receptacles for rain, flood waters, animal fats, and other fluids as well as spiritual essences which give rise to yams, the young of all species and enhanced psychic powers in barnman (“healers/composers”). I then showed that wanjina is that which is contained within the body of wunggurr as babies, as deceased persons lodged in the rock shelters, as reflections contained within the sky and the permanent waterholes. Similarly wunggurr is contained within the bodies of all living beings but in barnman in a most concentrated form and in deep waterholes and the sea. This dual nature as container and contained speaks to the autopoetic nature of these beings who draw themselves out of their own bodies, project themselves into their own soft bodies in the matrix of soft stone, harden and petrify, and yield up new incarnations of themselves from the waters in which they dwell.

In the exploration of the importance of mud as the malleable substance par excellence from which the earth and first humans were created, I have positioned the argument which I will present in the final chapter, in regards to the essential plasticity upon which Ngarinyin subjectivity is founded. This will be examined in relation to shifting, quaking, splitting places in the landscape which reflect the nature of the human body. The partial and more complete representations of the body-ego which are figured in the wanjina image make it possible to grasp something of the core values through which the local subjectivity is constituted. For it is only in regard to the body that it is possible to understand the intersubjective creation of the person. It is in the body as a whole and in the shifting hierarchy of its focal parts, that Ngarinyin subjectivity, transposed onto country, is immanent and rewrought.
Chapter 8. Places That Move

Having laid out a generalised treatment of the central figures of the wanjina/wunggurr cosmology (Chapter 6 and 7) and a detailed description of the local social ideation and organisation (Chapters 3, 4 and 5), I will now proceed to an analysis of how these features of the cosmological and social systems come to bear upon, and are shaped by, a genre of performance, storytelling and social action which involves the movement of places in the landscape. By invoking these particular stories, performances and everyday social activities I aim to explore the ways in which the human body underpins the local understanding and uses of country in a very primary way.

The principal site which I will be discussing here is a spectacular monolith on the central Kimberley plateau known as Winjagin. It is in the patrilineal estate (dambun) of the Garnjingarri clan. My own visits there with the traditional owners and the stories I was told about this place are supplemented by two published versions of the stories, one by David Mowaljarlai (Utemorrah, Umbagai, Algarra, Wunyunget, Mowaljarlai and Mackenzie 1980) and one transcribed by Capell in the late 1930s (1972:49).

The main figure associated with the mountain Winjagin is Damalarr-ngarri, the Black-Headed Python (Aspidites melocephalus). The native cat (Spotted Quoll) Wijinngarri, the first of the composers or barnman, was the husband of the Black-Headed Python. He traveled down from the country called Wudmanggu where he had conducted the first circumcisions on the Flying Foxes, which forever afterwards have shown the marks of the operation on their penes (cf. Warner 1958:542; Roheim 1971:63fn.). Wijinngarri then traveled on to Burranjini where he circumcised all the other people/animals. After this he became sick (the white spots on the native cat's body are the sores from his illness, wijin = sore) and died in that place. Wijinngarri's widow came down to Winjagin after the funeral ceremony for her husband at Burranjini. The clan country around Winjagin belongs to people of the Jun.gun moiety and thus forms part of the grouped clan countries collectively known as mamaladba (see Chapter 4). The gi (totem) for the neighbouring country to the South-East around Mejerrin is Warrgali (wattle) another Jun.gun moiety estate. This particular country will feature significantly in a later development of the story of Damalarrngarri.
After moving south to Winjagain, the widow was surprised some days later to find that *Wijnngarri* had got out from his grave and followed her down there. She was extremely annoyed and turned around to him and told him that it was too late to return to her now since she had already gone through all the mourning ceremonies. She was already wearing the charcoal which is smeared over the head after burning off her hair. This is said to be the origin of the characteristic black head of this particular python. She told him to go back to his grave and lay down there forever, calling out "buuuuuu, buuuuu!
"Through *Damaltrngarri*’s injunction, death of the body became irreversible for the first time, though (see Chapter 3 and 4), a child will often bear the marks of a returning ancestral body on its own skin\(^\text{162}\). Nowadays people continue to assert that the mountain itself gets up and walks in the night and that when one dreams of it doing so this is a portent of an approaching death. The strong association with night is underscored by the activities of the two beings, *Wijnngarri* and

\(^{162}\) The highly marked contrast between the black colour band on the head of the Black-Headed Python, radically contrasting with the silver/coppery tones of the rest of the body, two distinct zones which are nevertheless united in the single surface of the snake’s body, may have made its form particularly valent to representing the distinct yet continuous nature of life and death for *Ngarrowin* people, in a similar way to that pointed to by Morton for the Pied Butcherbird among the Aranda (1985:182).
*Damalarrngarri*, both of whom belong to the group of creatures which move about in the night and are strongly identified as "law people".

At Winjagin the Black-Headed Python raises her head from her position entwined around the rock towards *brarr*, the rising sun, looking for daybreak to dispel her sorrow. Another aspect of her faces west "looking for *wurnan*" (i.e. for objects in the exchange system), for the pearl-shell (*jaguli*) which passes along the *wurnan* line from that direction. The bright scintillating qualities of pearl-shell were lighting up the world from this direction leading the Widow to believe that the sun was actually rising from the west, the direction of *Dulugun*, the island of the dead (see Chapter 6). Her mourning had pre-disposed her to expect the spark of life to come from that direction. This double-headed figure of the Python portrays the ambivalence and dismay of the widow. On the one hand she looks to the east, where the rising sun is said to be "the beginning of creation", the source of life\(^\text{163}\). This is the direction in which the interred skulls of deceased persons are faced when lodged in the *wanjina* caves. It is said that leaving them facing this way "cools" their spirits because they are left open to the dry winds from the south-east. At the same time the Widow looks towards the west where her husband has departed to Dulugun, far out in the western sea. First one way, and then the other, she hunts for a departed life, mistaking one for the other. The cast of her vision to the west follows the taut undeviating line of Gunmalamala, the Prince Regent River running out into the western sea.

The raised head of the python coiled around Winjagin, embodies the strong consciousness of the Ngarinyin of themselves as "hill people". Older Ngarinyin people, in particular, express a great sense of satisfaction and joy in their country's mountainous terrain, poetically expressed as a sense of "expansion" (*warl*) or "falling" (*ngawan*) into the country from highspots within it (see Chapter 6).

The mountain Winjagin (Mt. Hann) juts with a startling suddenness from the surrounding Gardener plateau. A terraced, rounded sandstone monolith about 800 meters high, Winjagin is the highest point on the plateaus and is regarded as the image of the Python Widow herself. The terracing gives a strong visual impression of her coiled body snaking around its circumference.

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\(^{163}\) Morton reminds us that reptiles are well disposed to figuring the emergence of life since, being cold-blooded, they are "born with every dawn" (1985:249).
A visit to Winjagin in 1995 brought the poetic resonances of the stories home to me in a spectacular fashion. As our party of Garnjingarri sisters and their families approached the hill across the plateau, great ribbons of smoke could be seen wrapping themselves around Winjagin, following the contours of the sandstone terracing which winds around the mountain. It was the end of the dry season and the old grass was burning, much to the delight of the older people who take a great pleasure in burning off the old grasses whenever it is politic to do so (and sometimes when it is not), regarding this as part of their responsibilities to country (cf. Blundell and Layton 1978). People look with great satisfaction upon an expanse of burnt ground at the right time of the year (late in the Dry), confident that the forthcoming young green shoots will soon attract many kangaroos and other grazing animals. They also know that recently burnt ground will attract the much desired barnarr, “dargi” (i.e. “turkey”, Australian Bustard) which will converge there to pick over the ground looking for insects and seeds.

In this instance, the blackened, smoldering stubble left by the fires was pointed out as the burnt hair of the widow-python. This cutting and burning of the hair is both
a form of identification with the deceased and a denial which is practiced by all those, male and female, in a classificatory relationship of being *baran*, a classificatory wife or "in-law" to the deceased. People told me that "we gotta cry for that bloke", indicating a need to be seen to absolve themselves of any blame in the death. Only murderers are regarded as having long, thick hair. A Ngarinyin man told Pentony in 1938: "when anything is burnt it is finished". This was in the course of relating a dream in which he grabbed hold of another man's hair, it broke off and he then burnt it. It is possible to bring into the interpretation here a sense of *Damalarngarri* denying responsibility for her husband's death and embodying the permanency of death in her own burnt hair, "finishing with him forever". Such a permanent "finishing sorry business" is never achieved, however, because each classificatory *gurndi* who dies will re-invoke her widowed state. However, there is a provisional "end" to her mourning. This becomes possible for the widow once the husband's relatives notify her that enough time has passed whereupon her son (if she has one) will bring her a kangaroo to eat which is "body blang *gurndi* (husband)". Through this act of incorporation of her husband's flesh, restoring his body through metabolising him into herself, the widow becomes "free" from her social isolation.

Late on the evening of our visit to Winjagain, a band of cloud circling the full moon was pointed out as the Python wrapped around the mountain, reflected in the sky for us as a sign of acknowledgement of our presence. A further interpretation was offered later that night and this is discussed below in the analogy which is drawn in these stories between death and initiation.

From all these signs in the country, it was clear to everybody that Winjagain was "opening her *liyan* ('gut feeling') to us". After all, the two sisters pointed out, couldn't I see that as we got up closer to this long unvisited place, the mountain moved towards us, evidenced in the fact that it "grow big" as we got up close rather than "stay little" as it was when first sighted across the plain (cf. Merlan 1992:182)? This enlargement of country was a result of its recognition of the two sisters travelling in the party. Proof of their connection was seen to be in their proper narration of its story while still a long way off and their wise decision to camp overnight at this distance so that the country could "get use to us" before approaching any closer. This is an instance of stories being, as Povinelli aptly observed, "forms of work; they 'pull' the Dreaming into view" (1993:147). The mountain was perceived to be growing and shifting in front of our eyes, revealing an inherent instability derived from its
embodiment of the Widowed Python, who was being “moved” by our visit just as her desire had caused her to originally “peep out”, raise her head from the mountain looking for company upon the completion of the mourning ceremonies for her husband.

If there are many contexts in which Ngarinyin people talk about the transformation of soft organic substances into crystalline states, this mineralisation is never complete or static. Diamonds, for example, remain the soft kidney fat and emotional seat of ancestral and living subjects. Diamonds, such as those of the huge Argyle diamond mine in the east Kimberley, as I noted above (sec. 4.1.1.2), are said to have originated here in Ngarinyin country and to have been transmitted by an ancestral Barramundi who deposited its white fat along the Carr Boyd Ranges. Quartz stones, geji, are similarly said to be able to enter and exit the permeable human body, becoming soft, then hard, then soft again as they move through different media, leaving the bodies of barnman (healers) and entering the bodies of patients and acolytes. Jimbila, quartz stone, is said to have been taken by Julwun from his tail and given to humans as the initiator’s tool par excellence. These are some of the "greasy stones" which are said to characterize Ngarinyin country (Chapter 6). The instability of stone country, its cloud-like nature and its responsiveness to human interaction have already been discussed.

Just a little to the east of Winjagin is another hill containing the cave of the wanjina named Branggun "calling out for daylight", or Brad Wodenngarri, "Daylight lay down and painted himself". The central wanjina in this cave is painted with extremely vivid yellow and orange colours surrounded by a “family” of red and white ochre minor wanjina heads. Here Damalagnigarri is also represented, with her forked tongue flicking out like a projectile. Damala is a Ngarinyin word which is used to refer to lasciviousness and means "to throw out the tongue, lick the lips" (Coate and Elkin 1974: 118). In this image there is a suggestion of an inappropriate carnal appetite in a recent widow which compounds the already ambivalent nature of this figure. She reaches with her tongue beyond her now taboo body, seeking solace and company. She has properly abandoned her dead husband’s camp and returned to her father’s country, with all its implicit sense of limits and constraint.
Since she is said to be looking for *wurnan*, a word that is claimed to be related to *wunarr*, “the way of, the bone of” (cf. Coate and Elkin 1974:444), it might reasonably be inferred that the widow longs for both a re-entry into the exchanges of everyday life ("a share of the meat"), as well as attempting to internalize the lost object, the bones of her husband, that eternal part of him which will survive in her feelings for him.

Her attention is first directed to the occulted world of Dulugun in the West from whence all vitality is ultimately regenerated in the form of spirit children and *werul-di*, the *wunggurr* power that animates everyday life. Looking in the direction of the setting sun, *gularr gularr*, she is fooled by the shining pearl-shell which originates here before being transferred by trade routes to the East. The scintillation, *jalajal*, of the pearl-shell, leads her to think that the sun is rising here. Her dismay and confusion is that of someone waking in twilight unable to discern whether the day is beginning or ending. One of the Ngarinyin terms for evening is *nyalara*, (literally "on her [i.e. the sun’s] buttocks") which has been glossed as "at the arse end of the day" by older men who have found congruent the idiom from white co-workers on the wharves and cattle stations. Damalarrngarri’s state has made her unable to tell her “arse from her
head”. It is apparent here that both East and West carry cosmographic significance as loci of creative powers. The West, being the direction of Dulugun, is a site of regeneration of spirit children and source of the scintillating pearl-shell which embodies social animation in the wurnan. Both the colour white, associated with the pearl-shell, and red, the sky’s colour at sunset, belong to this realm. At the same time, the East, from whence marangi nyindi, the (feminine class) sun rises, is said to be the “source of all creation”, and it is facing in this direction that the skulls placed in funerary deposits are placed. Once again, both rowangarri “whiteness”, associated with the morning sun, and dubulangarri, “redness” associated with the ochre/blood of Wodoy, belong to this realm. These transitional zones of the day are liminal periodicities which strongly image the cyclical nature of cosmogonic time.

Having mourned her late husband, the Python-Widow may begin to open herself again to the vital potentialities which find their incarnation in the social exchanges, wurnan, which animate Kimberley societies. Powerful ritual objects, including dalnga or jimbirri, “really strong one red-ochre”, come from the East (Carleton Hill and Daly River) and the widow-python casts her regard in this direction. As I have pointed out (Chapter 4.), this source of red-ochre is the blood of the moiety hero, Wodoy, which was spilled in a fight with his adversary, Jun-gun, there. Her husband, Wijinngarri, also belonged to the Wodoy moiety. His bones and skull must be smeared with the red-ochre obtained from the East. But for this Damaarrngarri needs to have a wurnan partner or a husband who can trade on her behalf. This need for a second husband appears in a slightly more obscure addendum to the Winjagin story and I approach this subject below (sec.8.6).

8.1 Ngerdu’s Mejerrin Song

During the 1960s, a highly regarded Worrorra composer "dreamt" or “found” a new song based upon the story about Damaarrngarri. In this song the Python travels from Winjagin, which already had the powerful Ngarinyin story about her, to a twin-peaked formation thirty kilometers to the south called Mejerrin. This mountain takes its name from the twin-peaks and can be literally translated as "two-ness".
In this sung version of the Damalarrngarri story the widow becomes split into a pair of sisters, with one wrapped around each of the twin-peaks at Mejerrin. The focus on femininity with which the Winjagin story and the Mejerrin songs are imbued is also inherent to this genre of song, known as Galinda. This type of junba is said to “come from woman. When they dream that junba, big mob of woman spirits come out to take songman there [to Dulugun]” [V.3A, 98]. The composer of this song, Ngerdu, is said to have been “doctored” (made aware in a dream of his gifts as a composer) by a classificatory brother who died when Ngerdu was very young. This older barmman was Alan Balbunnu, the Wororra composer with whom Lommel worked in 1938. Balbunnu was dying from leprosy at the time Lommel met him. He was, says Lommel, attended by groups of “admiring women who fed him” (1952:58). Both these men totemised Ongon which is said to be a “sex totem” as well as Dangana (Livinstonia Palm) and also Bush Banana.

Ngerdu’s particular development of the Damalarrngarri story is not without presentiments in the Winjagin story. An ambiguous quality of dual-unity had already characterised the image of Damalarrngarri. One of her aspects, it will be recalled, had looked to the west for wurnan and the other looked to the east to see the rising sun. Ngerdu, the composer, seems to have taken his cue from this implicit twinning and made it quite explicit in the Mejerrin song.

This dioscuric quality of Damalarrngarri is embodied in the two contemporary owner-sisters, Jd. and Tn., who shared responsibility for the smoking of the country and dialogically narrated the story in situ during our visits there. The two sisters, who in most other respects live very much their own lives in different (though neighbouring) settlements on the Gibb River Rd, will not make any decisions about this country unless the other is present and informed. Their brother D.D. partakes in the discussion mainly through his older sister Jd., even though he is regarded as the most senior male for this country. The dioscuric profile of the sisters’ relationship is somewhat “softened” by this figure of the brother. His presence adds a third factor into the mythic equivalence pertaining between the sisters. In one important respect, the presence of the brother actually underscores the dual-unity of the sisters since in relation to him they are categorically a single being.

In the case of the actual shared relationships to Winjagin, the distinction between the two sisters and their brother serves as the new focus of any duality, thus emphasising the “unity” and de-emphasising the “dual” aspect of the relationship
between the sisters. Because avoidance is strictly required between brother and sister (a common feature of Aboriginal societies, see Chapter 3), D.D., just by virtue of being the brother, "absorbs" and dissipates the fissionary potential between the sisters. Later in this section, I will show how this fissionary brother/sister relationship between D.D. and his sisters is reproduced in the relationship between D.D.'s son and daughter who both have a consubstantial relationship with different parts of the mountain which are said to be "splitting off" from each other.

This formation of a dyad in the figures of the two sisters resonates with Mimica's (1992) discussion of the ontological significance of number for the Iqwaye, who share with the Ngarinyin the comparatively rare institution (globally) of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage and the reciprocal relationship between father and son which accompanies it. According to Mimica, "[a]t the level of kin classification, the term 'father' in its reciprocal usage designates exactly the ontological sense of maleness- self creation" (1992:89). He then goes on to demonstrate how this type of kin classification generates an ontological "meaning of male sex [which] is always oneness whereas the female is the dyad or twoness" (ibid:89)\(^{164}\). While it is simply fortuitous that the three Garnjingarri siblings I have come to know happen to be two sisters and one brother, the fact that the crucial mythopoeic materials pertaining to their clan country is above all concerned with this relationship between oneness and twoness, provides a marvelous opportunity to explore the ontology of Ngarinyin kin and gender relationships. The analysis, then, does not have to rely on an interpretation of mythic materials alone but can engage with the lived-in reality of the Ngarinyin social world through a focus upon this surviving sibling set.

The division between the sexes in Ngarinyin society is at its most pronounced in brother/sister avoidance relationships. This avoidance is still generally observed in Ngarinyin communities where opposite gender siblings are seldom seen in the same social setting. When they do need to attend the same meetings or travel in the same community vehicle, brother and sister will sit facing away from each other, one in front, one in back. Unless the sister is married to a particularly prominent and influential member of the community, one who is entitled to "hold the keys" to a

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\(^{164}\) Mimica is clearly aware that this oneness also makes a primordial ontogenetic reference back to the original unity in the symbiotic relationship with the mother. Fliess remarks in this regard on the appearance in dreams of "two categorically identical persons as symbolizing the mother as well as the fact that the preoedipal breast is at first single and has to be made a pair" (1961:268)
vehicle, she is almost certainly to be seen riding in the back of a truck or a Toyota, while the brother rides up front. In townships like Derby older people will express their disgust at seeing brother and sister “walking gardiya way” (i.e. alongside each other in a single mixed group). In earlier times, it is said, such miscreants would have been “beaten up and cousins too- same thing”. These elders declare contemptuously that there is “no shame today” among the youngsters. Even singular references to lalingi (“my sister”) are avoided and substitute generalised third person plural terms such as gawadngarri (“the mad ones”) are employed to declare how utterly distant a man is from these female siblings (cf. Silverstein 1976 for similar usages in regard to mother-in-law among the neighbouring Worrorra and Rumsey 1982b for similar usages among the Bunuba in mother-in-law language).

Because Jd. and D.D. live in the same settlement they have quite a lot to do with each other while still observing the required avoidance manners between brother and sister. Their camps are situated opposite each other, for instance, and they both pay a nurturing attention to M.M., a Bararrungarri widow whom they call “mother” because she is a classificatory sister of their own mother. She lives at the opposite end of the settlement. The fulfilling of this obligation means that their paths need to cross regularly and arrangements need to be made for the one or the other to provide for this widow. Most importantly, Jd. and D.D. are themselves, very unusually, married to another brother-sister pair who perforce also live opposite each other, separated by a hundred or more meters of open ground. Neither of the brothers nor the sisters visit their sibling’s camp. Rather, they meet on neutral (or common) ground such as the communal bough shelter or other relatives’ camps. The direct reciprocity (i.e. exchange of sisters) characterising these men’s late marriages (it would not be acceptable in first marriages) creates a dense web of relationships at this end of the camp. Criticism of the enclosed nature of such relationships is quite common, though in this case the long delay (about twenty years) in the reciprocal exchange mutes the criticism to a degree. Widows tend to make the most explicit comments upon such a situation, apparently feeling somewhat betrayed by the “desertion” of one of their own back into the ranks of the “murrit people”. This acute sensitivity to proper degrees of openness and closure in human relationships is figured in very explicit ways in the story of Damalarrngarri.

According to the Ngarinyin stories, in the Larlan the local clan, Garnjingarri, had devised a plan to move their mountain Winjagin down to Mejerrin, where the two
peaks are, in order to "box up the gap" between them, to create a oneness out of the visible twoness of the twin peaks at Mejerrin. The view of Mejerrin from Winjagin had made them aware of the “lack” in the visibly divided rock formation to their south and they set out to remedy this situation. It transpires that this desire for the creation of a monolith was in fact a desire for a recreation of a unitary mass because Mejerrin is said to have originally been just that; a primordial undifferentiated totality which became split in the course of Ancestral action on the country\textsuperscript{165}.

\begin{center}
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\end{center}

\textbf{Plate 21.} Mejerrin as seen from Winjagin.

As in some of the other examples of this genre of stories about moving places [see below], there is a strong sense that people in the “Places from the Beginning” (which is how Larlan is often glossed) wanted to share out geo-mythic resources, giving “presents” of landscape features that others were seen to lack. Sometimes these presents are in response to strong appeals from relatives who were pitied for not having "high places" or other such desirable features in their own country.

8.2 Bunggoni’s story of moving mountains

So far I have only outlined how the shape of two particular stories is reflected in the lives of the residents of these settlements. Before progressing onto a further analysis of these stories it is necessary to place the Winjagin/Mejerrin story in a regional and genre context. To this end, I will give here a reprise of the

\textsuperscript{165} I have as yet not been able to elicit the story of its original division.
Ngayanggananyi (Mt. Trafalgar) story collected by Howard Coate (1970:111) as narrated to him by the Wunambal man Mick Bunggoni.

The members of the Wunbangguwa clan were unhappy with their flat country and having considered the options open to them decided to ask people in the north, where the highest mountains were, to help them. The Wunbangguwa people traveled north and said to them “We are looking for a mountain. We wish to make a memorial to ourselves. Could we split this one here and take half each?”. These Widjalgud people agreed to let them take it on the condition that they did the work themselves. The Wunbagguwa people split it then and lifted it on to their shoulders and started to move their piece, stopping now and then to rest as they made their way across Prince Frederick Harbour. It was very heavy and chaffed their shoulders. In several places they put it down but it continued to shake and wobble as it was on uneven or sandy ground. They enlisted the help of the crab, sting-ray and hammer-head shark to move it along from underneath and the flying foxes to lift from above. The crab got squashed by the Flying Foxes letting it down unexpectedly and that is how the crab became flat. Eventually they got to Wunbangguwa country. They put one smaller piece down at Ngubungarri and the other one they elevated though it still had a pronounced lean to it. They were elated then and called it their wunggurr place.

Here the transaction again takes place between same moiety clans; Wijalgud people and Wunbangguwa, belonging to amalarr, moiety. These two groups call each other rambarr (the mother-in-law/son-in-law dyad). The statements made by the “givers” to the “recipients” evoke similar sentiments to those which epitomise the mother-in-law/son-in-law relationship in regard to the bestowed wife: “We can’t help you with it nor can we follow you along. We have given it to you for good” (1970:111) just as the children of the union of a Wijalgud woman and a Wunbangguwa man will belong forever to the latter’s clan. The figure who has been “given” as a half, “split off from” the original stone matrix, then, is both the wife of the Wunbagguwa and her children. Though the movement of the mountain is touch and go, it is ultimately successful, unlike the aborted movement of Winjagin to Mejerrin which is also a same moiety rambarr transaction. I show below how the split-off fragment of the originary totality of the Widjalgud identity is not only this woman who moves from mother-in-law to son-in-law but is also a cosmogonic incarnation of the male penis as it undergoes
circumcision. In this sense, the bestowed wife serves as a transmitter of the patri-essence of her clan which will move no further, forever "stopping in one place", severed like the foreskins of her future male children.

If we juxtapose events/objects/personages from the Ngayanggananyi (Mt. Trafalgar) and Winjagin story it can be seen that in the former, the idiomatic expression gurung bundurani "they traveled in a string-line (single file)", becomes more literal in the Winjagin story. The attempted relocation here is through the use of wanalan, actual hair-string ropes. In both stories there is a strong emphasis upon this "string-line" linking together places and people. In the Winjagin story the Python moves inexorably southwards from Wudmanggu, to Buranjini, to Winjagin, following the course of the Roe/Moran River catchment. Later, in Ngerdu's song, she moves directly south again to Mejerrin. The line of her travels is marked out by the moving line of her body.

Under the pressure of the Ancestral People pulling on the hair-ropes which were attached to it, the mountain Winjagin had become unstable and started to shake and wobble, pieces flying off in all directions. This unstable, floating quality which is also pronounced in the Ngayanggananyi (Mt. Trafalgar) story above, is known as ngaraj and can be used to describe the quality of "being desirable or fascinating (if dangerous)" when referring to a person walking with a sensuous style. This attempt to move the mountain from Winjagin was made at night, the paradigmatic time for the activities of law people, closely associated as they are with nocturnal animals. But daybreak came before the move could be affected, the hair-belts snapped and the attempt had to be abandoned: Damalarrngarri, the Python-Widow wrapped herself forever around the mountain Winjagin in order to hold it together. These hair-belts, which are traditionally woven by widows from the hair of deceased persons, were also wrapped around the mountain in order to stabilize it. This sense of containment by wrapping is similar to the manner in which the wulun or paperbark "skin" (again strongly identified with feminine forces: wulun nyindi = woman) is wrapped around the fat and ochre anointed bones of the dead in order to hold them all together in an envelope of artificial "skin".

In both the Winjagin and Ngayanggananyi stories the movement is effected by utilising things which have an intimate association with the realm of the dead: in the first case this is hair-belts, in the second the lifting power of the Flying Foxes clawed hands. Bats of all types have a strong association with death in this cosmology, which
derives in part from their habitation in caves, like the spirits of the deceased. Dulugun, the land of the dead is also said to have the powerful, sweet but musty smell of flying fox. Furthermore, the sign language of the North Kimberley uses the image of the clawed-hand as a sign for “dead person” or “murderer”. Both the hair-belts and the Flying Foxes’ claws fail at a critical point to shift the obdurate mass of the mountain, even though the action is ultimately successful in the Worrorran scenario.

8.3 The Dream of G.L

The mythic treatment of a theme of entropy, dissolution and death and the narcissistic resistance to, and social patterning of, these forces in the exchange network, lies at the heart of the powerful images animating the Widow-Python stories. It is hardly surprising that G.L., someone who called Winjagin "mother", should be one to most strongly resist the idea that the embracing python moved on to Mejerrin. This man had no problem with the idea that Damalarngarri traveled across the length and breadth of the continent and proudly announced that they have stories about the same python right across into the "Northern Territory, Alice Springs and South Australia". When it comes to the more localized sphere though, he was extremely attached to the image of the sustaining presence of Damalarngarri wrapped around the crumbling edifice of his maternal place at Winjagin. This particular man narrated to me a recurring dream he had of climbing this mountain as he used to do in the years after the Second World War:

It’s easy to get up but when I look back behind it all worn away, fallen away. I can’t get down, can’t get back, one way trip." The mountain shakes and trembles, shedding stones and becoming hollowed out from within and then he would wake up.

G.L. identified himself in a fundamental way with Winjagin, insisting up until the last months of his life that this was where his body should be buried, given that the attempts to relocate his own wunggurr cave in remote and inaccessible country had been unsuccessful. In a sense, these instructions constituted his “interpretation” of the dream since he would usually narrate it and then say “well, what do you think that mean, eh?” and then go on to remind me that being buried there was his wish when “my time come”, thus showing how the arena of “present action is embedded in mythic plots” (Povinelli 1993:147). The dream narrative became the abbreviated
introduction to discussing his somewhat conflicted ideas about the after-life. He attempted (as a Christian) to make sense of the idea of a heaven which he was keen to locate as a place, asking me constantly “But where is that heaven? If hell is down there, then it must be up there (pointing to the sky) but I can’t get it in me mind. I can’t find that place”. Winjagan, on the other hand, and Dulugun in the western sea, he could locate in space, even visit as he did, and this afforded these places a corporeal reality which “heaven” continued to deny him. Indeed, it was this lack of corporeality of “heaven” which finally decided him, in his last few months of life when he was frail and anxious, to be buried near a remote community where he had close family. This family could easily “visit me then”, he said, affording him a sense of the intimacy of embodied relatives, their voices, their presence, which was quite different to the sometimes frightening images of a heaven which was “nowhere”.

He said, "when people dream of that stone moving then they get signal that I coming up (i.e. approaching)." G.L.-'s dream always began with the image of "climbing up, easy to get up". Referring again to pulsations in the body corresponding to particular relations, a fluttering in the buttocks (amala) is indicative of the approach of a persons mother because, as he said, "mummy carry me, lift'em up me" (ngaji marnu marnu nganmindarrn). The characteristic way for the mother or sister to carry the young child is on the hip or shoulder, and the point of contact between the two bodies is obviously buttocks to hip or shoulder. Elevation, safety and the joy of effortless transport are the result for the child. In regard to such “lifting up”, Merlan has pointed out that, in jarrada (love magic songs in Arnhem Land)

[o]ne of the ways in which themes of yearning for a desired partner may be combined with an expression of yearning for, and attachment to, country is that jarrada is also said to be able to compel country, “make it move”, “make it high” “lift it”, “make it come up close" (Merlan 1992:182)

G.L.-'s sudden terror of then being stuck is extremely eloquent despite its characteristically oneiric abbreviation. On one level, an elderly man casts a dreaming glance back over irrecoverable years but from an island of maternal safety which is itself falling away beneath his feet and from which he will eventually be catapulted into the inside space of his maternal place. His maternal introject, his "me", was itself
shedding and disheveling despite the crystalline qualities of being which he had consciously nurtured as desirable and useful human attributes. His laugh as much as his chest cicatrices marked out his status as both senior lawman and unbroken human survivor.

When we consider that in the Winjagin stories, the mountain was to be dragged with hair ropes down to Mejerrin to "box up" the gap between the twin peaks, it can be seen that this would also constitute a potentially murlal (incestuous) act in as much as this would have been placing the body of a relative back inside a same moiety clan country (cf. Morton 1985:146; Roheim 1972:80-86). In fact, the relationship between these two clans is sometimes said to be the reciprocal gaja (mother’s mother/woman’s (brother’s) daughter’s son/daughter) relationship. This is a relationship which can serve as an alternative construal of the rambarr (mother-in-law) relationship, the most restrictive of all relationships. Gaja is, as I have shown (sec. 3.3 above), the positive value (involving open affection) of the rambarr relationship (involving complete avoidance). I was informed that these hair-belts can serve as a gift, through intermediaries, from a mother-in-law to her son-in-law. This seems to support the interpretation made in Chapter 5 that the wunan exchanges are critically about the gifting of reproductive and sexual resources (cf. Merlan 1986:489).

These hair-belts were worn about the hips by men and women. I have shown above that the hip was the site in the body in which a woman’s husband was symbolically located in her body-ego. The wearing by a son-in-law of a hair-belt made by his rambarr, a rare if not unique example of the transcendence of the taboo of either relation touching things belonging to the other, immediately suggests that there is a symbolic obviation at work here. I suggest that the phallicised entire body of the son-in-law is here emerging from the vulva of his wife, which, like the hair-belt, was "made" by his mother-in-law. Being a highly overdetermined symbol the hair-belt also represents not just the mother-in-law herself, but the husband’s own

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166 I note here Morton's comment that "[M]ale and female contributions to the dreaming are thus caught up in an eternal dialectic between 'high' and 'low'. Men 'lay down' the country, while women 'lift it up'" (1989:280).

167 Petri noted that a man’s black human hair belt (as opposed to women’s and children’s grey ones of animal fur) was made from the hair of the widow of his mother’s brother (1954:79), that is to say his marriyangi, the most intense form of rambarr. Love also noted that "the hair of the (tribal) widow is spun into string and given to the son-in-law" (1936:61).
mother whose imago is transferred upon his *rambarr*. By being born again through his mother, the reciprocal identity with his father is incarnated.

Like mother-in-law and son-in-law, the features of the land and socialized individuals are expected to remain differentiated and distinct rather than merged into a single entity\(^\text{168}\). Referring back to the locating of the life source in the soft "gaps" between the collarbone, *anganda*, in the unclosed frontal suture of the infant’s skull, *delwa*, and in the hollows of the rock caves, it is clear that the closing up, and opening of social-physical gaps is a theme which is multivalently reworked in the Ngarinyin imagination. Schilder has shown that such gaps work at a very distinct level of embodiment. When the skin touches an object, for instance,

though we distinctly feel the object and distinctly feel our own body and its surface, yet they do not touch each other completely. In other words, object and body are psychologically separated by a space in between (1950:86).

Schilder went on the describe how the relinquishing of the touch upon an object, relinquishing the contact which itself gives to the skin’s surface the feeling of being “smooth, clear and distinct” rather than “cloudy” and indistinct, this relinquishing of touch causes a feeling of the skin “protruding over the surface and forming a slight cone, which almost reaches for the object” (ibid:86). This “desire” of the skin for the object, like the “amoebic”, finger-like protrusions of libidinal striving described by Freud, seems to express as much the need to experience the self in a distinct way, to overcome the “cloudiness” of the surface of the body, as it is to incorporate the object.

The Python Widow's demand that her husband return to his grave, "get in the same hole", is just one of these overdetermined images of desire for closure and distinctness\(^\text{169}\). The desire of Garnjingarri people to “box up the gap” between the twin peaks of Mejurrin is another. In the wurrman exchange channels a gift would move between clans, or groups (“commonwealths”) of clans, of opposite moieties, as we have seen (Chapter 5). This movement sparked the inter-moity “leap of current” described above (sec.5.1), and the gift then followed a path within the group of same moiety clans, and between the members of one clan. The appearance in the Winjagin

\(^{168}\) In Stanner’s terms, “[S]trife divided it into the present parts. The parts remained connected by the common source [(The Dreaming)] but were made distinct, separate and in some cases opposed” (1963:164; cf. Maddock 1972:27-28).

\(^{169}\) This closure within the earth is part of the modus vivendi of quolls which live in a network of burrows.
story of Brarr, Daylight, causing the hair-belts to break, brings a sudden end to the illicit (wrong order) action occurring under the cover of darkness, the transmission of the mountain into rambarr/gaja country. Brarr (daylight) is said to "sweep up, clean up" after the night [V.5, 11]. According to my older teachers, the hair belts woven by widows were also used in local inquests. As the widow rolled the hair from a deceased (actual or classificatory) husband, into a string upon her knee, she would think of, or silently call, the names of people she suspected of having killed the dead person. When the string broke, the name which she was contemplating at that moment would be taken to be the name of the murderer [V.8 Aug. 1997].

These hair belts or ropes- jundul -often appear in contexts which emphasize their symbolic value as umbilical cords -dijnjil- and have one incarnation in the biyu or death cords which have to be walked like a tightrope into the realm of the dead, a feat which can only be carried out successfully by banman (doctor-men) from whom the cord emanates either from the navel or the top of the head. In a metaphor which draws out the projective qualities of hair-belts, the invisible version of these "death-cords" are now glossed as "radar" by Ngarinyin people. Normal humans will become tangled up in the death-cord and fall to the ground. Ngarinyin people say that pre-natal infants stand upright inside the womb and are kept upright by the umbilical cord which prevents the child from falling out prematurely (also Lommel,1996:33).\(^{170}\) The hair-belts breaking in the Winjagin story is congruent with imagery of the umbilicus of new born child breaking after it falls through the rock-chasm into a realm of light symbolized in Brarr Wodenngarri, the day-light wanjina. The metaphorical value of hair-belts as umbilical cords is also given an indexical symbolic value in the practice, noted by Love amongst the residents of Kunmunya, whereby

when the umbilical cord comes away, the mother wraps it in a littler piece of paper-bark, and suspends it round her neck by a cord made of her own hair. When the baby can sit up, the packet is thrown into a pool of fresh water, ‘to make the baby grow’ (1936:113).

\(^{170}\) I was interested to learn that the umbilical cord, dinjul, in bush births at least, shouldn’t be cut off at the navel but rather have a piece of woven hair or sugar-glider fur tied tightly around it so that it gradually loses its blood supply and drops off after about a month. The intent seems to have been to prevent a radical severance of the child from its chrysalis/matrix which could lead to disturbance in later life, - "don’t make ‘im jump" as Ngarinyin people say. Such an attitude shows clear recognition that “the process of separation of self from the mother is itself a gradual and fluctuating development” (Mahler cited in Fliss 1961:24)
The fact that the *alanggu*, knee, where the hair-belts are rolled out, is the bodily site at which the *gaja* relationship is represented in muscle twitches fortifies the interpretation of hair-belts as a sexual/reproductive symbol fusing the psychical representations of mother-in-law, wife and mother.

The hair-belts, then, products of *rambarr* but re-worked upon the knee, emerging from the *gaja*, were unsuccessfully utilised to shift the mountain Winjagain to Mejerrin. Instead they were used to hold the quaking mass together, to constrain it, to prevent its fragmentation. The hair-belts, obviating substitutions for the taboo body of the Widow-Python herself, are emblematic of the intentional ego, unfolding from the centre of the self, stretching out towards objects in the world around it. This extension into the world of narcissistic libidinal energy is what creates that world for each human subject. Like the pseudopodia in the classic Freudian analogy, the hair belts stretch to breaking point - then snap, causing the world to become visible, the Daylight *wanjina* to appear, differentiated objects to populate the world. Fairbairn maintains that the ego is instituted through a process of splitting which starts off "as pseudopodia from the central ego" (1944:112). By splitting off from the main body, the fragments of hairbelt, the ego's pseudopodia, become the narcissistically invested world. The ego, now split, becomes itself able to perceive a differentiated world. Nevertheless, the hairbelts still wrap around the body of Winjagain, they sustain the nascent subject with secondary narcissism, the refracted object-love which flows back onto the subject to sustain and nourish it.

This sense of nourishment extends to the reproduction of the self and we can see that the "shaking, trembling" of the body of the mountain, both in L's dream and in the myths themselves, is not only a dissolution, a breaking down of the image of the body. It must also be understood as a creative action, a building-up expressed as the trembling of desire and the productive shedding of child essences into the surrounding country through a splintering of the maternalised body. The "hollowing out from the inside" of Winjagain is thus a realisation of the hollowing out of the maternal body which allows the fetus inside it to grow. A "ritual wriggling or quivering" is a significant part of rituals of reproduction in the central and western deserts and has been interpreted by Roheim as a "rhythmic mechanical shaking of the
body as sexual stimulation” (1971:155)\textsuperscript{171}. These shivering movements of the mountain mass can be similarly understood as a generative blurring of the outline of the body not unlike the child’s “endlessly rhythmic repetition and often violent head-rolling and banging, rocking, thread-winding, hair pulling, etc. [which] serves the purpose of libidinization of the surface of the body” (Margaret Mahler cited in Fliess 1961:23, my italics).

It is significant to note here that the prevention of the movement of Winjagin to Mejurrin not only retains the specific identities of Winjagin and Mejurrin, but also sustains the emergent differentiation of Mejurrin itself, since the gap between the twin peaks could not be “boxed up” by the mass of Winjagin. This sustaining of the identity of the One by the maintaining of the Two, is consistent with the interpretation offered in Chapter 6 of the emergence of the ontogenetically later image of the two maternal breasts, the imagery of oral devouring initiated by loss, from the originary single breast with its imagery of unified suckling (Fliess 1961:316-321). To have “boxed up the gap” between the twin peaks would have instituted a reversal of the process of differentiation, a return to a primordial state of symbiosis\textsuperscript{172}.

8.4 The mountain of initiation

Birth imagery, as Van Gennep (1960:67) has made well known, overdetermines the symbolic structures of circumcision ceremonies, in the Ngarinyin case \textit{Walungarri}, which equate the foreskin with the umbilicus and repeats the severance of the “new man” from the maternal body (cf. Munn 1970:154; Morton 1985:245; Hiatt 1971:80). Supporting this interpretation in the Ngarinyin case is the fact that \textit{damalarr}, the charcoal from which the Python takes her name, is also the substance which is applied to the healing penile wounds of initiates after circumcision. There is a strong sense, then, in which the widow is herself made equivalent to the initiates’ transformed genitals, a process which her husband, \textit{Wijinngarri}, the Native Cat, introduced at the same time that he precipitated his own

\textsuperscript{171} “[t]he hole, the cave, the concentric circle mean the female genital organ [and] we could explain the rites performed in connection with these symbols as representing birth or coitus” (Roheim 1971:152).

\textsuperscript{172} “The great mystery revealed to the human totemites in the final acts of their ceremonial cycle was the eternal union, in an unbreakable embrace, of the separate male and female ‘principles’ which had always co-existed at each sacred site” (Strehlow 1964:738).
death. The reverse is also true; the Python-woman becomes like a mature male through widowhood; independent, "hunting for herself" and "look round for wurrung".

In that part of the Winjagin story where the first rays of the morning sun make the hair-belts snap, there lies an analogue of the crucial "last movement" of the ceremony for "making man". This occurs at the moment of the sun breaking the horizon, after the three nights of continuous dancing, when the taut, stretched out foreskin is cut by the "butcher" (a colloquial term for the circumciser). His maternal links eclipsed, rising from the ceremonial ashes, the "new man" is re-born from his brother-in-law's thighs, after being hidden in the "ground" of his maternal relations (cf. Hiatt 1975:150; Roheim 1945:198). Like Wijinngarri, he gets up from the ceremonial "grave" after three nights. His transformed social self is marked by the new importance of his brother-in-law in his life. His actual father has "nothing to say" in this now that he has been re-born from the brother of a future actual or potential wife. This action has, in some important psychical respects, made his future wife into his own new mother, since the initiate is now just like his father. The brother-in-law (called in this context the "nurse") as "mother", and his sister (the initiand's future wife), become, at this juncture, a single psychical entity, just as in the local classificatory kin model they are regarded as one body, possessing the same clan patri-essence. The de-hooded, charcoal daubed penis is simultaneously an embodiment of the "widowed" maternal body, now an internalized object, bound to the transformed subject. The doubling of the subject is a response to the intense fear of loss, both in death and initiation. Hiatt has made the cogent argument that this male imitation of a female generative model is enacted not through envy but "to break the bond between sons and mothers" (1971:88) so that men obtain "rebirth from a male being" (Roheim 1971:198-199; cf. Morton 1985:131).

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173 Hiatt (1994:173) also noted the passive role of the father in initiation ceremonies in Arnhem Land and quotes Stanner (1989) to the same effect.

174 Hiatt justifiably claimed that in initiation "the underlying purpose of the ritual is to resolve the primal flaw in the relationship between father and son by exposing its nature and dramatising its cause as the common fate of all men" (1994:182). This is perhaps particularly marked in the Ngarrinyin case where a man and his father provide each other with mothers by securing wives, that is say they marry each other's "mothers", thus bringing Oedipal desire dramatically into focus as well as allowing a "cathartic dissipation of residues of Oedipal resentment" (Hiatt 1994:182).

175 Elkin also reported the prominence of the brother-in-law in initiation ceremonies in Warburton (cited in Roheim 1971:72). Roheim (ibid.) also reports that his own fieldwork in the central desert showed the father-in-law to play the critical role in initiation ceremonies. Given the condensation of brother-in-law with father-in-law in the generation merging Ngarrinyin system (see Chapter 3), we seem to be looking at the same complex of ideas (cf. Stanner 1989:87-8).
The analogy of the shifting of country with initiation is quite explicit in the Worrorra story of Ngayanggananyi (Mt. Trafalgar) and the Wunbangguwa people told by Elkin Umbagai (1980:76) as “the Mountain of Initiation”. In this version, the Ancestral Beings first dig a trench around the mountain so that it is cut off from its surrounding stone matrix. They then move it so that it is sticking up “in the middle of the blue ocean”. To celebrate their achievement, they instituted “the first initiation ceremony for young men”. Here the Walungarri circle dance emulates the digging around the base of the mountain. The Flying Fox and several other of the animals, including the Ring-Tail Possum, the Crab and the Shovel-Nose Shark “change their shapes”, i.e. attain their present shape (the way things are supposed to be), through the process of digging out the trench around the mountain. As in the Winjagin story, the Flying Foxes, the first initiates, play a prominent role in this story. While I have already pointed to their strong associations with death and the marks (“their present shape”) which are said to show circumcision on their penes, there is a further element in their behaviour which is discerned as salient by Ngarinyin people. It has been pointed out to me on many occasions how the whirling flight of flocks of Flying Fox when roused from sleep is a re-enactment of the Walungarri circle dance. Rising into the air with a great screeching the multitudes wheel around their nests in a single direction before resettling. The Walungarri, says Umbagai, “goes on all night. When the first streak of daylight shows, the lads are taken away from the families- from the women and children”. The women then “wail and sometimes beat their heads with stones” in the manner of widows following the death of their husbands.

Umbagai’s image of the “circumcision” of the mountain leaving it “in the middle of the sea….so everyone passing this way can stop and admire it” (1980:76) is replicated in the stories I was told of the cloud-ringed moon being an index of a Walungarri ceremony being performed “somewhere”. During our visit to Winjagin, for example, a circle of cloud appeared around the moon while we camped nearby. The older men said that this was a sign that “somewhere, Walungarri happening”.

The confluence lies in an object being operated on so that it stands out like an island from its surroundings. The moon is cut off from the night-sky by cloud. The steep-sided red cliffs of Mt. Trafalgar are cut off from both the surrounding landmass by sea-water and from the sea-water itself by the marked difference in their physical qualities. Both cloud and water, as I have shown above, are strongly linked to wunggurr and are in many contexts identified with each other also. Stone formations
rising out of the sea or out of the surrounding land mass are figured as "islands" and draw upon the notions of differentiation of the named and distinct \textit{wanjina} from the more diffuse body of \textit{wunggurr} which I addressed at some length in Chapter 7.

This story of "the mountain of initiation" now comes closest to revealing the bodily basis of the mountain and how it is that such features can move, quake, tremble and split. The actual act of circumcision takes place on a "mountain" of human bodies, specifically a "mountain" made of the brothers-in-law of the initiate (cf. Stanner 1989). This human table is made up of three bodies stacked on top of each other, the first two lying face down on the ground, with the next lying prone so that the initiate can emerge from between his thighs. This is the quaking mountain of humanity which replicates the birth of an infant and from which the "strings" of umbilicus and foreskin stretch out as a man is "made" by the ceremonial interaction of his own patrilineal and affinal male relatives. The man on the bottom is "flattened out" like the crab attempting to move the mountain. The initiate, like the mountain, is in fact being "given" to his in-laws as a future husband for their daughter or sister and children from that marriage will be a "memorial to themselves". The initiate’s children will be a "feature" in the new social "landscape" just like those "high places" which had been envied by the supplicant group. They have been "given half" of their affines’ identity. In \textit{walungarri}, the bestowal is construed as being the prestation of a son upon his wife’s family rather than a daughter to her husband’s family. The interdependency between clan groups which allows a wide sharing of resources through the marriage system of bestowals (noted by Blundell and Layton, 1978) begins at this crucial point in the relationship between the initiate and his future in-laws.

\textbf{8.5 Severance}

In one of the versions of the Winjagin story, the widow-python creates a cave, cleans it out and the Daylight, \textit{Brarr}, comes and lays down inside this cave made from the widow’s own body. Damalarrngarri, though, goes down into the ground at a spring, Mujuru, next to Winjagin and "stays there". It is seen to be the "proper" thing that Branggun, the \textit{wanjina}-child remains in a separate hill, just as the python widow remains distinct from Mejerrin and from Burranjini, the place where her husband died. Likewise, Miriji, for example, could never contemplate visiting her husband’s country at Winjagin once he had died. She could barely mention the place without
quickly retreating into agururu, widow avoidance dialect, and finally closing down conversation completely.

One fragment of the mountain Winjagin is called Jag Nyoningngarri, (literally "he split it off her") which is also the name of one of the sons of the male traditional owner. His daughter takes her wunggurr name, Winjagin, from the rock itself. This splitting-off of brother and sister is actualized in the name Jag which refers to a wanjina, Wurnbijngu, "chopping out" a spear-thrower from the body of a corkwood- tree and thereby nearly severing part of the mountain. The action of the wanjina reflects the radical avoidance relationship between brother and sister, so integral to the story of Winjagin. There are even dual explanations for this splitting off of the rock matrix. This part of the monolith is indeed plainly in the slow process of breaking off. It is attributed to both the chopping actions of Wurnbijngu and to the actions of Black Ants who were breaking it away. These ants are said to still live in this part of the country. Older people instructed me to immediately "break a stick" over any place on my skin where I might be bitten lest the "sore hurt forever". On reflection, it is now possible to see how this act of breaking something, peculiar to this place, is an act of sympathetic magic over-determined by the overall theme of breaking connections between brother and sister, the breaking of the hair ropes, and the breaking off of the fragment of mountain. The "sore" that could "hurt forever" is the narcissistic wound of severance inherent to initiation and parturition. This separation is almost inevitably accomplished through an aggressive act:

this may be an angry separation. It is as though the child said to its mother; "I don’t want to be you anymore, I want to be myself.” Such an affirmation amounts to the birth of space (separation, instead of the previous indivisible unity) and hence of time....the birth of the individual would mark the birth of space-time (Matte Blanco 1975:105).
Plate 22. Jag Nyoningarri and the Garnjingarri sisters.

The forked structure of the spearthrower, yanggal, is shaped in the image of the "forked" relationships between avoidance relations, stemming back to an original unitary block. The social structuring of this originary pool of undifferentiated libido provides the transcending thrust (of kinship system as "social technology") which projects the human subject, spear-like, towards an acceptable object of desire and into a wider world of social and object relations. Morton (1997:157; cf. Roheim 1969:219) has brought to light the fact that Wijinngarri, the native cat (the Spotted Quoll) really has a "double penis, an actual one and a long secondary appendage, which like the
penis itself, becomes erect during mating. The spearthrower, iconically associated as it is with men (cf Merlan 1986:485) and comprising minor and major vectors, the hardwood prong and the shaft itself, could, in some respects, be said to also be a "double penis", as well as an originary matrix or cradle/receptacle from which the spear emerges. Spear-throwers are made from the same timber as coolamons which are modeled, as I have shown in Chapter 5, on the primordial androgynous body of the wanjina.

Elkin (1933: 455) found that the Corkwood tree from which both are cut belonged to the Wayangarri (skin) clan (confirmed by contemporary Ngarinyin people) and the stories about it relate the "skin" of the corkwood tree with the skin of the kangaroo. Wayangarri people call Garnjingarri people "mother" and they own adjacent dambun.

In these stories "the men of the time tried to make yarn, gal out of the waya, skin, that is the bark, of this tree, but finding it was not strong enough, they used the wood instead, and found it successful" (Elkin 1933:55). This little story which seems in the "just so" vein, is also replete with body imagery, with metaphors of human skin and trunk, with the "splitting" effect of the stone axe as it is swung into the core of the wood to break suitable pieces off the main body. The skin's (bark's) "uselessness" is also how the mamala, or foreskin, is referred to. This is offered as a rationale for circumcision: "get rid of that useless thing". Walungarri, the term for initiation ceremony, is said to derive from the verb walag, "to strip off, to tear, as in to strip bark from a tree". One of the words used for the hairbelt or "bushstring" is mamalanja which may be cognate with mamala. This confluence of meanings adds further weight to the interpretation which I have offered above concerning the identification between the hairbelts used to try and shift the mountain and the stretched foreskin of the initiate.

The tensions inherent in the unresolved desire for closure are the creative forces themselves, socialized in the indirect exchange system, the wurnan. The stories become over-layered and complicated exactly because of this desire and resistance.

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176 Morton's analysis of the metaphorical value of the native cat in the Aranda world is centred around the double penis created through subincision. My information doesn't extend to the relevance or not of subincision to the mythic corpus under discussion here.

177 Mimica (1992:118-119) cites a psychoanalytic case study by Bird to demonstrate the unconscious symbolism of the foreskin as feminine container (cf. Roheim 1971:72,161).
working through and against each other. The process of the splitting of the major protagonists in the story is a working through of desire and social differentiation, the implementation of the wurnan sharing system to prevent closure at the same time as fully acknowledging the power of incest passions.

Ngerdu’s Wanalirri song-cycle seems to have been regarded locally as being unprecedented in its wide-ranging scope, linking together places and songs across a vast breadth of country. Like the attempts to shift mountains in the two stories above, the composer’s project was regarded as an extremely ambitious one with an uneasy potential for overlaying different stories upon each other. Some of the senior Ngarinyin people I have spoken with say " they are both right, those different stories but we don’t know.....". The Ngerdu song constellates places and person with new emphases which may sit a little uneasily with some of the older people's versions. One old man who belongs to Winjagin through his mother believes that the composer could have "got it wrong. . . . might be".

This is a case of the creativity of mythic thought in process. The poetics of Ngarinyin/Worrorra song are employed to overlay the imagery of the mountain being unsuccess fully moved, imagery of the continually restless nature of the mountain, and the Ngerdu version in which Winjagin, as Python/Widow, moves on to Mejerrin, as though flung there by the centrifugal force of the Python/hair-belts as they snapped. It seems to me a good example of the process in which relationships to land and the interpretation of those relationships are articulated and extrapolated. In this instance the song-transformative process carries strong resonances with Ngarinyin expectations about country which require the same moiety adjacent clan to assume responsibility for a deceased clan’s estate. The Mejerrin song follows a cultural shape or trajectory which, in the land-holding context, also involves the interdependency of dambun clan groups.

8.6 The Moon and the Python: Avoidance and Breaking Taboo

There is a recurrence of the theme of splitting and shielding as Damalarrngarri makes her way through Ngarinyin country. After many tellings of the stories of Winjagin, a more obscure addendum appeared.

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178 As in many other Northern Australian languages, in Ngarinyin the word for mother-in-law, rambarr, is a polysemous one which also has “windbreak” as an idiomatic connotation. Various imprecations are sung out in camp when a whirlwind is approaching and looking set to cause havoc with blankets, (fn. Continues o.p.)
In this version Damalarngarri did eventually obtain a second husband. But he was a “side-ways” husband, *rambarr* (son-in-law) to her. This is the most prohibited relationship of all, equivalent in its degree of proscription to the brother/sister relationship. Her son-in-law can be seen today as the mountain *Unalauni*, just to the northeast of Winjagin. Damalarngarri struggled against being taken by this man for a wife and called out, just as she did to her first husband Wijnngarri when he returned from the grave, “*Buunuuu, rambarr guunuuuuu!*” (“Go away son-in-law!”). After she failed to drive away this most persistent suitor, he grabbed her and married her anyway. In a twist that speaks to the dangerous *wunggurr* power that is seen to attach to such wrong-way liaisons, the son-in-law became incarnate as a sacred object. This is what is today visible as the hill Unalauni. After that, it is said, Garnjingarri people became pre-disposed to *murlal* relationships.

Further to the east in Liyarr country, the Black-Headed Python again appears in a *murlal* relationship. This time the suitor is *Garn.gi*, the moon, which is a male personage in Ngarinyin cosmology. Here the moon is offered many choices for his bride. He rejects them all, one species after another, staring at the ground shaking his head as the names of suitable brides are called. Finally he can contain himself no longer and calls out: “I only want one, only one can satisfy me, my *rambarr* I want, the Python, Damalarngarri”. Great hoots of embarrassed laughter inevitably followed this narration. An important part of this narration is the anticipation which is built up as each possible wife is offered to *garn.gi* and he rejects them in succession until the final revealing of his desire. A very similar story is told by the same and neighbouring clan groups about the *wanjina* at Wanalirri, the galleries for which are less then thirty kilometers apart. Here the *wanjina* cannot be induced to engage in the battle to destroy the tormentors of Dumbi the Owl until he is brought out of his “sulky” lethargic state by being offered his *rambarr* as a wife. Suddenly recharged with energy, he then leads the *wanjina* to battle. The serial question with serial refusals, “do you want x?, asymptotically builds the erotic tension until critical mass is reached. In psychic terms, these questions have to be interpreted as symbolic obviations which will finally not just *reveal* their latent content but actively create it just as an obsessive act finally embodies the return of a repressed idea through utensils and kick up clouds of dust. One of these runs: *guuuuu rambarr adada guramunya* – “go away, you mothers-in-law - sit down over there”.

repetition and a consequent annihilation of the subject. The rejection of other possibilities is a progressive defining of the nature of the subject. The act of asking questions in dreams symbolises an aggressive devouring of the maternal breast so that the form, as Freud so perspicaciously discovered\(^\text{179}\), mirrors the content.

It seems that the Widow-Python couldn’t help but be pursued by amorous sons-in-law wherever she went. *Murlal*, as I pointed out in Chapter 7., is embodied in the rainbow and carries with it deeply ambivalent powers. The rainbow as *wunngurr* becomes embodied in living people as intestinal worms (“blind worm”) which are believed to mate with each other and confer magical powers.

This source of power continues to make wrong-way marriages a desirable match for some younger and middle-aged men seeking access not only to the knowledge, prestige and independent incomes (“widow money” i.e. pension) which such women might hold, but also the nurturing affection which an older woman may choose to lavish on a younger husband.

It is apparent that one of the reasons older people are so distraught about the increasing incidence of wrong-way marriages in their communities is that young people are seen to be activating a power which older people no longer have the capacity to control or to punish. Proper etiquette in differentiating marriage classes is integral to the Ngarinyin social system and the very personal project of differentiating oneself from the original matrix of family relationships is what makes a Ngarinyin man or woman a properly socialised person. Both the “hardness” of chest feeling which G.L. discusses and the chest cicatrices which mark out full adulthood in men and women are indicative of this necessity to detach oneself from the symbiotic bond with the mother and to move into the social space of “right-way” relationships. Avoidance between brother and sister and the more general theme of social differentiation is the subject of versions of the same story told by Daisy Uttemorah (1980) (“Moon Glue”) and Elkin Umbagai (“Two Disobedient Children”). In these stories two children, specified as brother and sister in Uttemorah’s story but not in Umbagai’s version, disobey their mother by staring at the moon when laying down to sleep. Just as their mother warned them, the moon fell down on them and stuck them together. They remained this way for several days and were only freed after departing.

\(^{179}\) “The form of a dream or the form in which it is dreamt is used with quite surprising frequency for the representation of its concealed content” (Freud cited in Fliess, 1961: 232).
their camp and plunging into a water-hole which washed away the “moon-glue”. Brother and sister, or brother and brother, it will be recalled, are symbolized in Ngarinyin body language by the calves of the legs. The legs, parallel limbs identical to each other, combine qualities of symmetry and identity. They become differentiated as they move towards the feet but joined together at the trunk of the body, specifically at the genitals. Brothers and sisters are “one body” as far as the patrilial clan is concerned but brother and sister, paradoxically, must separate in order to maintain this “one body”. Without exogamy (and the avoidance which precedes and always conditions it), there can be no wives and thence no mothers for a clan. Staring together at the moon which contains the paternal imago, Andarri, the Possum, directs the brother’s and sister’s gaze back at their common origins, the fact that they are “joined” at the father’s genitals, and only by parturition, being re-born, “washed clean”, in the waters of the wunggurr pool can they be separated again. Their “placenta is tangled up together” (D.M.) and this dangerous situation must be remedied.

In this light, it is possible to look back upon the example of the moon ringed by cloud as an index of initiation, the point of entry into mature marriageable adulthood with all the obligations this then carries in regard to proper avoidance relationships. Being a male personage, garn gi, the moon, is standing out clearly from its matrix of sky by virtue of the cloud ring around it. The newly socialised man stands out from his maternal family just as his circumcised penis is no longer surrounded by the mamala, foreskin. It is said that this mamala is a “water-bag” that traps moisture around the glans. This is regarded as something to be avoided just as the neo-natal infant must gi ama, “push itself out”, from the wulungarri, “taboo, holy water”, free itself from the amniotic fluid and become “proper dry one” through smoking ceremonies. This process of shedding an organ which has “passed its use-by-date”, such as the husk of a seed or the placenta, is what Weiner, following Juillerat, calls caducity (Weiner 1995:4). Weiner’s important insight is that this shedding, far from diminishing the body which it falls away from, in fact transforms and even augments that body. This is the case with the mamala which is quickly buried in the sand, the encompassing feminine organ itself encompassed by ngurra nyindi, the feminine ground. A jalala, upright stone or stick, an obviating substitution of the mature phallus, is then planted on top it. Thus the mamala, “a residue of the perception of a whole figure…..must retain the shape of that whole
figure...paradoxically, these objects mirror back a condition of completeness to the multiply composed...person” (Weiner 1995:21). The differential relationships between the masculine and feminine cannot be equated with simple gender difference here though. This should be clear from the terms which are being compared above: emergence of child from amniotic fluid, emergence of penis from the “water-bag” of the foreskin, emergence of initiate from maternal kin network. None of these terms can be considered as a more fundamental “meaning” that the other symbols are reducible to. This is integral to the interpretive method of symbolic obviation forged by Wagner (1978) and utilised to good effect by Weiner (1988;1995) and Mimica (1991); each of the terms represents “the variable potential for expansion of various tropic constructions” (Weiner 1995:25), a “holography of meaning” (Wagner, 1986). The jalala, for instance, might initially present themselves as being inherently masculine symbols. They find another kind of incarnation though in the wide variety of ant-hill types, jangi, which occur in different soil types of the northern Kimberley. These anthills, towering up to three meters tall, are held to be sacred to women because of their association with gestation, the production of heat and transforming substances within their bodies. They are alive with the movement of white, translucent, light-shunning, moist, fetus-like termites. Termite eggs are forbidden to children because of the threat of premature closure which they represent for those not long enough “out of the water”. These termite mounds were also used as alternative burial sites. The deposit of bones and skulls within them mirrors the burial of the mamala after circumcision. The point here is that gestatory, transformative, erectile symbols are not the preserve of one gender alone.

Returning to the implication of the moon in initiation ceremony, it is said that the moon ascends to the sky each night by climbing, like the Andarri the Ring-Tail Possum, up a cypress pine, climbing through its regularly spaced branches like the “steps of a ladder”. In initiation ceremony the initiate is required to do the same, climbing up through the branches in imitation of the Ancestral action of Andarri. This cypress pine, guru, also figures the human body’s skeletal structure. I draw this

180 The transformation of the initiate’s penis into its mature social form, standing out from its maternal matrix, may draw upon the same obviation sequence and return of the repressed (Freud 1984:154) which led Forge to discern that “the phallus among the Abalum is not a simple unitary aggressive symbol” in light of the fact of “the Abalum identification of the penis of the male flying fox as a single female breast” (1966:28 cited in M. Strathern, 1988:361). See my discussion of the image of the single female breast in Chapter 4.
conclusion from the fact that *jilngi*, the moon in its first quarter, is said to be the rib, *omba*, of a kangaroo (or sometimes the rib of a bull), which has been plucked from a rotting corpse by either an agula or *wanjina* during the *larlan*. The rib has then been thrown into the sky, making a soft whirring noise which is said to be still audible at night. The climbing action of Andarri through the cypress, through which the moon itself became a man, is replicated by the casting of the single rib away from its original matrix in a body of rotting flesh. The moon/rib thus becomes isolated in the sky just as the initiate is in the bush camp and thence grows into the fullness of its social being, just as *jilngi* becomes *garn.gi* ("swelling forth"), the full moon. The curvature of *jilngi* hanging in the sky is reproduced in the curved body of the initiate as he is carried (as though on a litter facing skywards, head on one set of shoulders, calves supported on another) on the shoulders of his brothers-in-law through the *walungarri* ceremony.

The process of “splitting” up of the major protagonists in these stories works in an obviating way: a defense against the recognition of incestuous desire at the same time as contemplating consummation of these same desires.

In this analysis of the different versions of the Winjagin/Mejerrin stories:

a) the native cat is married to two Python-sisters who each come to Winjagin,
b) both are wrapped around a single stone but looking in different directions
c) one or both of whom are then grabbed by the *umbaru* (a local avoidance word), (sacred object/son-in-law) who becomes her second or "side-ways" husband
d) one sister then disappears into a spring at the base of the mountain,
e) another (or the same one) creates a cave out of her body which the Daylight *wanjina/child-image lays down inside*
f) she simply stays wrapped around the rock.
g) The sisters are also seen wrapped around the twin peaks to the south which were once a single block.

This dizzying flux of identities exists in concert with the powerful counterpoint of an insistence that the protagonists "lay down and remain" in one place, just as the Lazarus-like *Wijinngarri* was also told to "go back and lay in the same hole." Merlan has pointed out that in Aboriginal ontologies of sexual relationships, particularly as expressed in love magic songs, not only widows, but female companions in general, are often regarded as desirous of making men “settle down” through a process of “*domestication*, of making men dependent, desirous of
one's company, and constant" (1992:182). The political and moral tensions between moving and stopping, containment and action, are overdetermined in the lives of Ngarinyin people and the stories associated with Winjagin are but one point of cohesion between mythopoeic and historical experience and interpretation (Rumsey 1996).

8.7 Moving country, moving communities

The data above can also be usefully situated in the midst of very contemporary concerns about shifting settlement patterns and how these have been perceived and articulated over the last three generations.

The scene from the song about Mejerrin is one of the three places depicted in a spectacular mural in the hall of the settlement of Mowanjum to where many Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Wunambal people were relocated in 1956. It was painted by some young men of mixed Ngarinyin-Worrorra affiliation who are locally esteemed contemporary composers in a country/blues genre and the nephews of the original composer. The other scenes are of the twin mountains, Jimbini (Mt. Trafalgar) and Nyarrngganangi, (Mt. Waterloo). These two mountains are next to each other in Worrorra country north of the Prince Regent River. They too were split and relocated in the Larlan. The third place depicted in the Mowanjum mural is Ngaywarrngarri, a Wunambal country to the north from where Nyarrngganangi was shifted. Ngaywarrngarri is also the place where wijinngarri, the native cat who features so prominently in the Damalarngarri story, originated from.

The representation of these places at Mowanjum, a place where many Ngarinyin, Wunambal and Worrorra people have been ilgiwa, “locked in a pocket”, “boxed up together”, as they say, is emblematic of the ambivalence which attends this state of affairs. On the one hand the triptych mural is a recognition of the shared cultural and social life between the “three tribes” of wanjina peoples which long preceded the existence of either Mowanjum or Kumnunya. On the other hand, the high places depicted therein nostalgically evoke a radical contrast with the flat, dry pindan scrub amidst which the residents of Mowanjum now make their lives. The act of painting this mural has “drawn” (in the literal as well the figurative sense) this country into the heart of Mowanjum, no less than the original Ancestral removal of the mountain into the flat country south of Prince Frederick Harbour did. By doing so, the original line of movement has been infinitely extended. From Gandiwal in the
north, south across the dry land of what became Prince Frederick Harbour and finally much further south to the dry, flat country of Mowanjum. The various settlements which have served as staging posts along the “road to Mowanjum” are also situated on this trajectory. Kunmunya, Munja and Wotjalum can all be plotted on the unilinear descent of this line (see Map. 4, Chapter 9).

This magical act of moving place has, in the context of the community hall, recreated the geo-mythic features with which the _wanjina_ people are most strongly identified. In the contemporary settlement it serves to fulfill a deeply experienced “lack”, as though the contemporary residents of Mowanjum were themselves the ones to have traveled to the north and sought a “high place” as a “memorial to themselves”. Like the three language groups, the three places are now “boxed up together” as the painted backdrop to the refugees’ life on the plains. The contemporary composers and painters, the O. brothers, have acted as _barnman_ of the younger generation in this process by bringing to light visions of faraway countries in their paintings and songs. The charisma which Lommel attributed to Balbungi, the high status of the middle generation composer Ngerdu, and the charisma and “hero-poet” status which has characterised the lives of these young men, are all the result of their power in the world of sung visions of country. Their appointment as composers was bestowed by their mother’s brother, the Ngarinyin composer, B.S., who instructed them to call their band Gulingi Nungga, “The Rain Mob, _wanjina_ Mob”. In order to retrieve these visions of country in paint and song, the brothers have had to “travel” to their mother’s country in Jibilingarri where Ngayanggananyi (Mt. Trafalgar) was pushed across Prince Frederick Harbour, their classificatory fathers’ country in Ngaywarrngarri on the Mitchell Plateau, the Kunmunya area where their countrymen lived for two generations and the black-soil plains of Pantijan station where Ngerdu was at home as both traditional owner and head-stockman. What they brought “home” made them local heroes but also exacted a high price on their health and their relationships.

Amidst all this forced resettlement, the desire for autonomy in one’s “own country” is never far from the surface. Shared relationships in marriage, a shared cosmology and shared contemporary living conditions do not prevent a fraying of the shared social fabric under the pressure of the underlying move towards differentiation between not just these three language groups but in smaller, clan and family based
contexts as well. This emergent differentiation is the very life-blood of the out-station movement (see Chapter 4).

In the following chapter, I systematically compare the various kinds of transmissions between groups and individuals which create their distinct identities within an overarching system of relatedness, with a particular emphasis upon the imagery of gifts of country as kinsman or "countryman". I then go on to describe in some detail how these images of moving country culminate in performances which draw people in to an intense focus upon these themes.
Chapter 9. Transmitting songs, transmitting country.

"Land, food, or whatever one gives away are, moreover, personified beings that talk and take part in the contract. They state their desire to be given away" (Mauss 1954:55).

There is a powerful analog in contemporary life to ancestral beings making a gift of features of country in the Larlan. The transmission of songs into the possession of a group related in the exchange network seems to involve a similar dynamic given that most songs are, above all else, evocations of places. Indeed, it is quite common for an older person offering what they understand to be an exegesis of a song cycle to an outsider to simply list off a series of place names through which the singer "travels" in the course of the performance. At times, when I have sought further information about the "meaning" of a song, the singer will look puzzled and perplexed, pointing out that he has "just tol" me what the song meant by listing off those place names! While not assuming any sense of ownership of the countries which appear in these transmitted songs, there is no doubt that the new "holders" of songs to whom they have been transmitted feel a deep affection and pride in the places which are sung about. The same term, duna, is used for "holding songs" and for "holding country". As I have noted for wurnan exchanges generally, this transmission effects one of those "transformations without obliteration" which Hiatt (1975:155) described as inherent to myths and rites of swallowing and regurgitation and which I am now proposing is also inherent to the investments of identity in the isomorphic wurnan and marriage exchanges.

The Mejerrin songs, for example, were themselves passed or "sold" on to exchange partners living on a remote cattle station near Gibb River after the death of the original composer in the 1970s. In this transmission, the songs were in an important sense returning "home" because the corpus in which the Mejerrin song appears is the Wanalirri junba, deriving from the central mythic site of Wanalirri which is close by to Gibb River, in Marndangarri clan country, a brramalarr moiety

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181 Myers notes that for Western Desert Aborigines exchanging sacred boards "it is important to recognize, too, that in ‘giving’ the board, the original owner had not actually lost anything" (1988:70). This seems consistent with views held by Ngarinyin people about “selling” songs; while others gained the right to perform them, they still essentially “belonged” to the composer.
estate. This transmission took place between the Worrorran composer’s Ongongo (Ilagarri) clan, onarr moiety and the Ngarinya recipients’ Ngorunguru and Brrewanggudu clans, amalarr moiety. The first recipient was the composer’s wife’s brother, his waya, and from there it went to his brother who became new principal singer for this song. Here we have the suggestion of a return payment between clansmen linked through marriage. The latest holder of the song, B.J., died in late 1997 but by this time the song had already been “sold on” again to people of Wurla identity living at Doon Doon station. In subsequent years initiates from Doon Doon would be brought to Nyalanggunda for “making man” ceremonies. Interestingly, B.J., the “holder” of the Mejerrin song throughout the 1980s became the step-father of the Garnjingarri children (who are identified with Winjagin) when their mother married him in her second marriage. His attachment to the area in the song, neighbouring on his own father’s country, thus became overlaid by the affectionate bonds binding him to these step-children whom he raised from a young age alongside his own children from this marriage. This singer, above all others, directed the singing and the visual representation of Mejerrin on the song-boards. He would point proudly to his step-children and openly declare his role in making sure that they received proper recognition as up and coming custodians of the places in the songs. He would also remark that his own children’s wunggurr places also featured in the Wanalirri song-cycle. The different verses of the song formed a thread which wrapped up the social positions of his actual (Brrewanggudu) and step-children (Garnjingarri). Though stricken with kidney disease which kept him confined to the community most of the time, his efforts were strongly directed at teaching the children of his community to enact the junba Ngerdu composed about Mejerrin.

D.D., the father of the Garnjingarri children (who are identified with Winjagin) had long enjoyed a high status as a dancer. This renown had contributed significantly to the transmission of the songs to his moiety partners in Ngorungoru clan country where he resided. Indeed D.D.’s dancing feat was explained to me as “e win bes’ dancer” at initiation ceremonies held many years previously. This competitive idiom was used in a manner which linked ritual performance with the transmission of not just songs but sacred objects in the wurnan exchange. Because Mowanjum, the part-time home of Ngerdu, the original composer, was the next place in line to the community where the initiations had been held, the objects would have had to go through the “gate” at Mowanjum first. From Mowanjum the transmitted
objects had “collected” the Wanalirri songs and then reached the Gibb River Road communities. In return for D.D.’s impressive performance at these ceremonies, initiates were sent the following year to go through law at Bijili, situated between Dodnan and Ngallangunda communities. Thus the rewards of his “winning” performance includes the Wanalirri junba, the objects and the prestige accruing to Dodnan community (actually Wah, an earlier settlement site in the same vicinity) being asked to stage the next initiation ceremony.

Four elements of congruity and one element of disjunction are identifiable in the exchange nexus outlined above (see Map 4 below):

1. The transmission of the locus of the Damalarnggarri story from Winjagain to Mejerrin is figured in the same moiety, adjacent clan relationship linking Garnjingarri (dambun in which Winjagain is located) and Warrgalingongo (dambun in which Mejerrin is located) to the south-east. This entails a transformation/transmission without loss of primary identity of both places.

2. The transmission of children from father to step-father is figured in the same moiety, adjacent clan relationship linking Garnjingarri and Brrewanggudu to its north-west. Once again there is a transmission without loss of primary identity of children’s clan membership.

3. The transmission of sacred objects and initiates first to Mowanjum and thence to Bijili in return for D.D.’s “winning” performance.

The transmission of the Mejerrin song between two opposite moiety clans, Ongongo and Ngorungoru/Brrewanggudu clan countries to the east. This transmission was fomented by prior marriage promise linking the two clans and facilitated by the ritual renown of the Garnjingarri father of the children subsequently raised by the Brrewanggudu custodian of the song-cycle. Again a transmission without loss of primary identity (of original composer). In the process, the relationship between Garnjingarri and Ngorungoru/Brrewanggudu had been further cemented. The fact that the transmission is made to people resident in Marndangarri, another bramalarr moiety estate, home to Wanalirri, the major mythic site in this song cycle, is also significant.
Essentially the song cycle keeps moving in a (south)easterly direction. From Ongongo man living at Mowanjum and Pantijan stations, to his brother-in-law and thence, via Garnjingarri man living at Dodnan, to Brrewanggudu man living at Gibb River to Wurla man living at Doon Doon, the direction of the exchange is constant. The place of residence of each new custodian and the relative position of their *dambun* in regard to each other is on a single trajectory. This is consistent with the rules of *wurnan* exchange.

In the analysis offered above, it can be seen that in the transmission of songs there is a parallel to the mythic theme of transmitting country features from one *dambun* group to another. In the case of the Mejerrin songs in the Wanalirri cycle, it can be observed how human relationships, such as the care of the Winjagin children, became implicated in this process as well.

A characteristic facet of the gifts which form *wurnod*, the “bone” of the *wurnan* system (as opposed to the *amalarr-da*, the “dust” or consumable aspects of it), is that they are not really gifts as Europeans understand them. They do not carry the sense of things that can be kept, incorporated or used up by a single person or group for all time. The idea of enduringness is missing not from the object but from the act of possession (cf. Myers 1988:70). A *wurnan* gift is more like a loan which then has to be loaned to someone else. What can and does endure are the relational structures and the structures of relationships which constitute the *wurnan*. Without movement, and the anticipation of movement, the object and the potential relationships it embodies are dead (see Chapter 5). The tension between holding and passing immanent in the *wurnan* “gift” expresses another facet of the fractal nature of the person. Just as the split-off fragments of mountains which are given by one group to another always maintain a shadow of their former identity, the transmitted song always maintains something of the identity of the composer and a child who is adopted to another clan group always maintains the patri-identity of its first father as well as gaining an additional one. As a “total social fact” (Mauss), the gift contains

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182 This fractal endurance of original possession despite acts of transmission is also coming to be recognised as part of European subjectivity in intellectual copyright laws which guarantee an artist a share of ongoing sales of their work. It might even be suggested that Euro-Australian law in the High court Mabo decision (1992) has made a similar recognition of a person’s or group’s ability to retain original possession of something which has been removed and then transmitted to a third party. This entails a “splitting” of the subject and of the unitary nature of Aboriginal ways of holding country so that it simultaneously is and is not any longer their own.
within itself the totality of schismatic social relationships. The “I” and the “not-I”,
phases of what Marriot called the ‘dividual, are continually emergent structures of
being which always hover on the brink of collapsing into each other\textsuperscript{183}.

\textbf{Map 4. Vectors of transmission of songs and other items.}

\textsuperscript{183} Fliess (1961:58) presents some compelling examples of the gift vs. loan confusion between
European family members who have not been able to psychically pare themselves off from each other
successfully.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point of Origin</th>
<th>Transmitted Object/Subject</th>
<th>Recipient or Intended recipient</th>
<th>Direction of gift</th>
<th>Moiety and kin relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garnjingarri Clan country</td>
<td>Winjagin (round mountain)</td>
<td>Wargalingongo clan country of Mejerrin</td>
<td>N=&gt;S</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wijaalgud clan country</td>
<td>Mt. Trafalgar (round mountain)</td>
<td>Wunbangguwa clan country</td>
<td>N=&gt;S</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongongo (composer’s clan country)</td>
<td>Wanalirri songs (custodian/singer’s clan country)</td>
<td>Ngorungoru</td>
<td>W=&gt;E</td>
<td>Opposite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garnjingarri (father’s clan country)</td>
<td>Children (sister and brother eponymous with mythic sites)</td>
<td>Marndangarri (step-father’s clan country of residence)</td>
<td>W=&gt;E</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garnjingarri (father’s clan country)</td>
<td>Children (sister and brother eponymous with mythic sites)</td>
<td>Brewanggudu (step-father’s clan country)</td>
<td>S=&gt;N</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brewanggudu (song custodian/singer’s clan country)</td>
<td>Wanalirri songs</td>
<td>Doon Doon</td>
<td>NW=&gt;SE</td>
<td>Opposite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marndangarri (custodian/singer’s clan country of residence)</td>
<td>Wanalirri songs</td>
<td>Doon Doon</td>
<td>NW=&gt;SE</td>
<td>Opposite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doon Doon and Warman</td>
<td>Initiates (clan country of ceremony)</td>
<td>Marndangarri</td>
<td>SE=&gt;NW</td>
<td>Opposite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mowanjum</td>
<td>Sacred objects (new custodians clan country)</td>
<td>Ngorungoru</td>
<td>SW=&gt;NE</td>
<td>Opposite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Waya/gurndi*
In the table above, I have summarised the contents of a number of significant transactions which are either in process or are currently focal among Ngarinyin participants. In keeping with my purpose in this thesis of dealing with social processes, individual dreams and mythic materials as an interrelated whole, rather than as separate domains of activity/ideation, I bring together these data to demonstrate that the mobility of people within country is something which is desired and attained as a means of creating and reproducing the vitality of country and of relatedness between kin. The pre-established directional nature of these transactions is important to this schema because it is based upon established patternings of expectation which allow participants to regulate the flow of resources across country and to demand that they be included in negotiations about the extent and nature of such flows. Despite the male dominated secrecy which attaches to various moments of the transactional process, the patterning of expectations allows a transparency in these transactions which is likely to elicit positive responses from those who occupy the various “channels” of transmission. Indeed, these transactions, from the purposeful display of travelling novices, to the removal of geographic features to areas of flat and “empty” country, are exactly about making social relationships visible. In order to achieve such visibility, country and person must first be divided, and extracted from the originary matrix.
The aligning of these data of transmission against each is not in itself, however, adequate to addressing the question of what exactly is being made visible in the process. It would be quite restrictive to say only that the social relationships which are animated by the exchanges are being made visible. Although I have already (in Chapter 5.) asserted that the contents of such exchanges are the sexuality and reproductive capacities of women, the question remains of how these are seen as present in the uses to which songs are put. The analysis of the formal structures of exchange needs to be complemented, then, by an explication of how composition and performances of songs are able to "move" kin and country, to induce them to join and separate at the right moments. This is the subject of the following section.

9.1 The Composition and Performance of Songs

The performance of the Mejerrin song which I witnessed at Bijili, close to one of the outstations, Dodnan, in 1997 illuminated the kinetic embodiment of displaced places in a powerful way. The song-boards depicting the Python-wrapped twin-peaks were transported from the neighbouring community, along with the young performers, on the back of a Toyota driven by the Catholic nun who ran the school. As an older woman with cropped hair, living alone in her private camp, "Sister" was herself, in some important respects, treated as a widow would be. That she was understood to be married "to Jesus", a dead man, no doubt added something to her honorary "widowed" status. A much admired person in the region, her energies were devoted to the children in her care and in this she had her counterpart, another "sister", the other side of the Catholic dyad, who was sometimes present and sometimes not due to health and family reasons.

The boards, transported thus, were mounted on the shoulders of the dancers behind the green-bough screen. In a dramatic enactment of the power of becoming visible, the dancer moved from behind the screen with his back turned to the audience, and the painted surface of the board turned on his shoulders similarly turned away. At the opening of the first repeat of the verse, this dancer turned to reveal himself and the board and stamped across the ground. Moving above his head, the twin peaks of Mejerrin depicted on the dance board shook and shuddered in response to his movements, tilting first in one direction and then another. The body of the dancer became the medium through which the image of place became animated and
infused into the barurru, "stamping ground". The clouds of dust arising from the
dancers' feet obscured the actual point of contact between the dancers' body and the
ground, lending the impression that the dancer was moving through a red haze or
walking on clouds. Clusters of green leaves at the knee and elbow joints added to the
flickering, kinetic image of the body. Mejerrin became present in a dance ground
several hundred kilometers away from its actual physical incarnation.

The hoisting of the song-boards and string crosses onto the shoulders of the
dancers, and their subsequent progression around the dance ground in this fashion,
emulates the wanjinjas' transportation of mountains and caves upon their shoulders.
Remembering the fact that in Ngarinyin sign language the shoulders are an index of
the father and, because of the reciprocal nature of this kin relationship, also an index
of a man's son, it is now possible to see how the wanjina becomes the foundational
body of a clan country, as well as the underlying animating force of that country
which allows it to move. It is now also possible to further analyse the overall gestalt
of the wanjina figure which I began in Chapter 4. I have shown above how the geo-
mythic landscape features transported by the wanjina is isomorphic with the
transmission of women between clans. What then of the combinatory image of
wanjina with cave on his shoulders, wrapped around his head in the same way that the
soft bodies of newly killed game are carried by the hunter?

The cave carried by wanjina in such instances is a natural extension of the
enwrapping head-dress, the red-ochre band of the body of wunggurr, which encircles
the wanjina head. Similarly, the dancer's head fits snugly into a head-sized slot at the
base of the song boards, extending the parameters of the human body, welding it
indivisibly, for the duration of the dance sequence, to the images of country being
transported. The dancer is wanjina, transporting and animating country. What is so
arresting about these images in which the human head gi ama, ("peeps out") from the
slot in the dance-board, is that they direct us to the fact that the wanjina painted inside
a cave recess is also not just a flat image painted upon a two dimensional surface. It is
a Being projecting itself into the dark rock recess itself. The cave itself, as I have
pointed out in Chapter 4, is part of the total Gestalt. If the image of the wanjina is not
clearly enough androgynous in itself, then the combination of the projecting wanjina
head/body and the enveloping cave structure carried on its shoulders surely is. The
two are welded together into a unitary image.
The mythic/performative complex of the \textit{wanjina} becoming embodied in the dancing figure speaks to an interaction of persons and country highly evocative of the qualities of human and other animal bodies and the imaginary structures which arise from and make awareness of the body possible. Ehrenzweig (1967) coined the term "pemagogic process" to describe the imaginative oscillations between scattering and containment, the rise and fall of inarticulate perceptions, unconscious fantasies and enteroceptions which create the labile sense of self at any given moment and impart definition and depth to the world. This sense of the shifting coherences which the human imagination creates out of experience can be usefully combined with psychoanalytic insights to show how objects can be internalized as more or less integrated parts of the self as well as how parts of the self may split off from the core ego to become alienated and projected onto other people or other objects at the same time as being bound to the subject (Fairbairn 1944; Klein 1973, 1975).

A phenomenological method informed by psychoanalysis thoroughly problematises the distinction between the "outside world which is 'proximal' as opposed to the inside world which is 'distal' - that is beyond the subject’s field of sensory presentation" (Morton 1989:289). Of course, the inside of the body, and by projection the inside of country, does present itself to consciousness as enteroceptive images, creative/destructive fantasies and sensations seeking articulation.

In the case of the \textit{barman}, the fragmentation which he undergoes in order to visit the realm of the dead to learn new songs is explicitly figured as a physical fragmentation of the body. This scattering of the body emulates the creative disembodiments of the Ancestral Beings which left various body-parts spread across the country, fertile bones and organs which distribute child essences and promote reproduction of species. These internal disembodiments, centrifugal explosions of the inside onto the outside, can be seen, then, to be the fountains of health which cause the country to become \textit{yayiyurr}u, "everything standing up together". This state of being is associated with the application of moral laws, the sense of properly abiding within an ordering of bodies, since “moral laws can only find an application to human beings with a body, and moral phenomena are therefore closely interwoven with our own image and the image of others” (Schilder 1950:281). The \textit{barman} becomes a vehicle of the moral order, his fragmentation leaving him totally open to dependency on others who guard his body during the shamanic journey. The active participation of his relatives is required to massage his skin in order to bring him back to a state of
coherence, restoring his bodily integrity (cf. Lommel and Mowaljarlai 1994:282-283). Lommel described how the Worrorra barnman Balbungu, who in 1938 was dying from leprosy, would sometimes be unable to engage in his dialogue with the spirit world. At this point he would be

laid on the ground. All the men sit in a circle around him. They begin to sing and as they sing they slowly rub the shaman’s body. The men sing for hours on end and on a regularly rising and falling note: mnnmmn nnn nnn mnnmmm mnnn184 (ibid.:283)

In junba performances which I have witnessed, the composer sits in a place encompassed by a semi-circle of relatives/chorus singers enclosing him on all sides except in the direction opening out upon the barruru (dance ground) from which the spirits of the dead will move towards him. In many instances I saw that the wife of the composer sat directly behind him with her head resting on his shoulder blades as he sang, raising her head at the completion of each verse, often showing a smile of intense pleasure. This bodily condensation, complemented by the intertwining and layering of the voices of the chorus with that of the composer, is a clear example of the interdependency of the body images of a community.

A similar bodily encompassing of the composer occurs in the performances of contemporary music in communities in the region. As Gulingi Nungga (“Rain Mob”) played their compositions in local pubs and halls, close relatives would crowd around the composer, one hand on his shoulder as he played and sang, lighting cigarettes for him in the middle of a song, following every move on his guitar with rapt attention while he played away averting his eyes, concentrated upon the performance despite the mass of relative’s bodies spilling over the equipment onto the (ground level) stage. In most cases, people would only dance for the composer from their community, retiring from the floor if another band played. As I discussed in Chapter 8, a strong outpouring of local sentiment was produced by these performances and the death of two of these composers occasioned the largest and most grief-wracked funerals I witnessed in my six years in the Kimberley.

Indeed, the preservation of the health of a barnman seems to work, in a way that could be interpreted in a Durkheimian way, as the preservation of a shared body-

184 See Chapter 6 above for an interpretation of these bilabial consonant chants as modeled upon the nursing infant’s first sounds.
image constitutive of an intensified sociality. Schilder tells us that in these intersubjective dependencies of body-image "the constructive forces are always present, even if the destruction is in the foreground of the scene" (1950:281). As noted earlier, such "destruction" is inherently creative because the body-image is continually being broken down by pain, disease, mutilation and simply by movement, and thus continually needing to be restored. The splintering of the barmman's body-ego is similarly created by and necessitated by his movement, through the air and/or underground, in order to retrieve the ancestral body-image which he will shape into song. His flights over country and his descents into it, give him new images of country and thence the body, and/or shed a new light upon existing images of the same.185

The explosive, blinding, destructive nature of the epiphanies through which songs are found by a composer is well captured in this description by G.L. of the finding of the Jelarri Miri ("Shielding the Eyes from the Light") songs:

The war (WWII) was going on at the time. He (the composer) was sitting down in the early morning. He went to look at clouds of smoke but could make out nothing. The smoke was rising. That bloke there (Harold Reid, boss at Munja) said to him "You go and look". "Allright, I'll go right to the top of Gunbow," said Wirrijangu. But the heat pushed him back. Fumes and heat hit him and he was hurt by it. He couldn't eat or drink for three days. He was overpowered by the sickness and didn't know what had happened to him. He was burnt badly and became sick. He then got well and got up and walked. "Allright all of you come here" said Wirrijangu. He was preparing a singing place for a Junba. "Gagagagow!" he called out (for an assembly of the people), saying that he had dreamt a new Junba belonging to himself. He was not in the least confused. He sang and we danced. Nothing was too difficult for him. He still hadn't taken any food or water.

When he had been walking along he had come to the camp belonging to his mother. Ralga was her name. She asked him if he had seen the Junba. He went

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185 "You see him breathing but he gone. He travelling. And that's how uh they compose corrorborree there. Junba. When they get all the story belong to every Wunggud, snake story, any animal. We dance now. They teach us now. That how it go. Its all round the nature power. Power all belong nature. We get all the power from the land. That's why its important" (Mowaljarlai talking to Alan Rumsey in Lommel and Mowaljarlai 1994:286).
into a trap-door where the spirit people played out a dance for him. Next day the spirits told him to stay there with them. They got hold of him and as he watched they did strange actions for him. A large crew of spirits did a dance for him. One old man was the boss of the big mob of spirits (G.L. Ts. 1996, dialogue translated from the Ngarinyin).

In this respect, the return of the *barnman* with new songs induces his countrymen and women (especially it seems) to work towards "the preservation, construction and building-up of the body-image of this other [which] thus becomes a sign, a signal, and a symbol for the value of his integrated personality" (Schilder 1950:282). These acts of restoration or restitution of the body of the *barnman* allow the composer himself to become a healer as a result of his/her own intimate knowledge of the destructive construction of the image of the body. His own experiences avail him of the knowledge of the relativity of the body's structures, the fact that they are decomposable and able to be reconstituted in new ways, just as the verses of the songs he learns are able to be re-worked. His/her experiences of undergoing metamorphosis avail the composer/poet of a special skill in being able to follow the *binyu* (death/umbilical cord) back into the realm of the living. This process, then, involves a communication and identification with the ancestral realm, an elicitation of the spirits of the dead to become re-embodied, to emerge from behind the bough screen, in order to show the *barnman* new dances and songs which in turn are regarded as being able to "make a place lively", and to "open up the country". The composer with whom I worked most closely described his experiences in this way:

[*]his song is from my old grandfather, *mamingi* (mother's father). He came to me in a dream and said 'You wouldn't mind keeping this song and keeping it going forever and ever. This is a sea-side song. I travelled (in dream) to sea-side and picked it up there. Mamingi said 'Wake up my grandchild, I'm going to give you this for everybody. This song will go forever and ever. Sing about all sorts of songs for the birds, mountains, river, sea. You must see countrymen in dreams — granny, father's uncles, grandfathers. You must think about this'. I didn't know I was a composer before that dream. ... Whatever song you compose comes out of the life of the *wanjina*. He belong half to *wanjina* life and half to culture side (i.e. "to the creative side of men") [Ts. June 1995].
The dancers themselves are thoroughly imbued with a strikingly vegetal imagery. I have already mentioned the flickering bunches of green leaves attached to the articulating sites of the body, the elbow and the knee. It is worth recalling here the conclusions reached earlier (Chapter 3.) about the significance of the knee as an image of maternal reproduction (gaja, MM) in the body-ego. Here, I note that M.S.’s creative dream came to him from his maningi, his mother’s father (with whom, as we have seen, his mother is identified at the clan level so the dream comes from a maternal source).

Wirrijangu also found his junba through the agency of his dead mother who led him into the spirit world. This transcendence of separation by the composer is explicitly figured in the song itself, where the composer is himself symbolised by a female Brolga, his own moiety totem:


Large numbers of Jun gun moiety people came stamping along the ground performing the Yuruba (moiety group dance) as Jellari-miri sang.

“That dance belongs to those people” the spirit-boss sang. It was the Dust moiety spirit-people performing for the composer as he watched all this in his dream. Then the Brnarr spirit-people came out in a vision of light as Jellari Miri continued to sing. He changed the positions of the dance again. A great light fell upon the ground. The dancers were descending upon the composer
with their light. All the Brronarr moiety people, Wodoy (Spotted Night-Jar) like himself, were lit up as he sang. The composer was now singing only about this Wodoi man, someone connected with the devil-string which goes under the name of the "death-cord".

That what-cha-ma-call-it (avoidance idiom) -death-cord - is laid out. Then that Brolga comes marching on in the afternoon time as the sun is sinking and light falling across the bush. Then a big mob (of Brolga) came dancing, pushing their beaks along the ground as they grazed. Two of them were play-fighting as Brolgas do. Then one of them, she came to the death-cord. It is laid across to divide Wodoy on one side from Jun-gun on the other. They were pulling on the cord from either end, pulling and pulling. A screen of green boughs was erected [so that the two different mobs were hanging on to the cord from either side and one end of the cord was attached to the singer].

After that the people kept that dance ground and singing place. That's how this junba came into being. (N.P. Ts. 1996 dialogue translated from the Ngarinyin).

The scattering of the green shoots from this site on the body (the knee and its upper body equivalent, the elbow) generates a powerful evocation of replenishment of country which is being simultaneously stamped upon in rhythmic, libidinalised thrusts of the body. The term for this genre of dance, jadmi, actually refers onomatopoeically to the powerful stamping motion of the dancers - jad jad - which raise the dust, breaking the surface of the dance ground, creating a fertile red cloud, fragmenting the existing pattern of the world. Here, raising the knee as high as possible with the ensuing motion of pounding the foot back into the ground is regarded as the hallmark of a powerful dancer.\textsuperscript{186} This generative vegetal imagery is strengthened by the ngadarri, conical paper-bark caps which are tightly bound with string around the head of each dancer. These caps, made of wulun, the material which, as we have seen above, is emblematic of women, evoke at once the restorative wrappings around the

\textsuperscript{186} Roheim's descriptions of the aiknantama ceremonies of the Aranda, in which "ancestors perform totemic ceremonies, shake themselves, and spirit children emanate from their bodies" (1971:155) contain some very similar features, including intense focus upon the kneeling posture of the dancers. One of his informants dreamt of this ceremony in which "an old man was kneeling in the middle near a flat stone called pulja (navel) and a tea-tree arose to mark the spot....I was making ljapa (he repeats this several times, rubbing his leg - that is how they make string). Some women are making round head decorations (kamaj)" (ibid:156). The tea-tree is the same species form which wulun comes.
bones of the dead and the maternal receptacles (womb and angga) from which the child emerges. Thus the emergence of the dancers is occurring on at least two levels; their appearance as a group of the spirits of the dead from behind the bough screen, and their individual protuberance from the conical tube of wulun on each dancer's head. This "appearance", like the appearance of anguma (child spirits), is restorative of the ancestral world embodied in country.

Another explicit figuring of this restorative action occurs in the construction of wunggurr figures from the dry river grasses in the midst of the dry season. These grasses are cut away in the trickling dry-season creek beds and bound together into over-sized bundles in the shape of the rainbow serpent. They are then carried on the shoulders, in the same way that wanjina carry country and hunters carry game, during junba performances. These vegetal images represent a turning inside out of wunggurr in the sense that the river grasses are generated by rain, the dry season allows them to become straw and the performances enhance the fertility of country and men in order to invoke increase of the species, fat bodies in living creatures and, finally, the next Wet season.

In the jadmi junba the restoration of the body by the barnman is itself part of the dance scenario. The scene opens with a dancer lying "dead" on the dance ground. As the singing begins, a barnman emerges dancing from behind the bough-screen and circles the man lying on the ground. He then bends over the "dead" man and rubs his stomach with both hands. The "doctor-man" removes some invisible object from his own stomach and presses it into the abdomen of the prostrate man. Presently the "dead" man wakes up and is assisted to his feet by the barnman after which both men dance out of the barurrru and disappear behind the bough-screen.

The act of restitution of the body of the composer, and of the bodies of others by the barnman, is mirrored in the rituals of revitalisation of country; the restoration of the body of the wanjina through repaintings, and of stone images through brushing, touching, and nursing. For instance, when jalala (limb-proportioned "signal stones" averaging about two feet in height) are discovered knocked over, they are carefully

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187 "The force which is passed on by Ungud has its seat in the abdomen of the man" (Lommel 1996:41).

188 In this respect there are distinct similarities with the tender care afforded to the desert tjurunga of which Roheim says "although it represents the body of an individual, also stands for the environment in which he moves" (1971:243).
stood upright again, brushed off and talked to. Other stones are retrieved from the bottom of small pools and rubbed and patted before being replaced. This is the case with the turtle stone at Ngegamorro. Recalling that the *wanjina* is regarded as having “laid down and become a painting” in the cave sites and that these places are the depositories of the eternal living essences of the dead, we can see that in the act of “touch ‘em meself”, the bodies of painter and *wanjina* are acting as communicating vessels mediated by the body of country itself.\(^{189}\)

I have already noted (sec. 4.1.1.2) how the body of a *barnman* would be painted with white ochre to “cool him off” during his dream visits to Dulugun. This white ochre, symbolic of water, fat and life-giving force, also forms the basal layer, and the final mouth-sprayed coating, of the *wanjina* paintings. Strangely enough, it is this very white ochre which peels first from the cave surface because of its superior moisture absorbing qualities and thus is the primary cause of the condition of decay which necessitates repeated acts of renewal. These acts of restoration of the person through rubbing, touching and petting are directed at reconstituting the “skin” with an overall glow of well being, “make ‘em bright... good looking... happy” (see also Roheim 1971:153). This bringing to the surface, literally in the case of ritual stones brought from the bottom of a pool, of the inherent vitality of these living personages who have been “sleeping” or “resting” is also what ritual massage upon the *barnman* achieves, and of course, is also the way in which babies are brought to a state of well being and sense of self. As I discussed in Chapter 6, the effect of such tender attentions is to bring about a progressive displacement of energy quantities from the inside of the body (particularly from the abdominal organs) towards the periphery of the body...so that the perceptual rind of the ego, containing the sense organs, may receive cathexis...The baby’s libido position thus proceeds from the stage of fetal narcissism...to primary body narcissism, a stage in which representation of the mother’s body plays a large part (Margaret Mahler cited in Fliess 1961:23).

That such a process of bringing unconscious ideational material into consciousness is active in the composer’s work is clear from exegeses which are given by

\(^{189}\) This is an instance of what Povinelli calls usage of “the human body as a depository of cultural value” (1993:143).
composers\textsuperscript{190}. Even though the dances and songs are said to be received in a complete form, "stained" upon the mind of the composer, the actual organisation of the material, the teaching of the choreography and new verses to the performers, the creation of the sequences of verses and the strategic use of song words to enhance the flow of the song and to sustain polysemy, are all things which the composer works on over time. The first act is usually to teach these songs to the spouse, then to the inner circle of collaborators (cf. Lommel 1996:53), thus setting up a dialogic interaction where she can give shape to the ideas in an empathetic environment, shifting, changing and moulding the dream material to create just the right effect for the performance. Finally, the dance paraphernalia such as painted boards and masks have to be imagined and constructed.

The realm of the dead (the inside of the \textit{wanjina} cave, the bottom of the \textit{wunggurr} pool, the place behind the bough screen, the dead relatives) and the realm of the living (the country visible from the cave mouth, the upper layers of the \textit{wunggurr} pool, the \textit{barurru} on the open side of the bough screen, the babies in a camp) are not just in a continuous communication, but form the shape of a single body which folds, like the human knee, into itself to form interiorities and exteriorities out of each other.

The creative/destructive tension between the visible and invisible worlds, so elegantly figured in the gestalt of the knee, is founded upon this hierarchically organized asymmetry of bodily experience, conflating behind and in front, inside and outside the body, above and below the surface of the country. As we have seen, such a contrast is utilised in the moiety division, noted in Chapter 4, in which \textit{Jun.gun}, the Owlet Nightjar, is said to live inside tree trunks and other secretive hollow places and is heard but not seen, whereas his counterpart, \textit{Wodoy}, the Spotted Nightjar, lives in the "open places", making himself visible on bright nights. These corporeal asymmetries (Chapter 5; cf. Morton 1985: 127,136-7) have significantly shaped the asymmetrical exchange system, \textit{wurnan}. They organize Ngarinyin sociality around the same themes of alternating disequilibrium, fragmentation, transmutation and interdependency. These images of movement also envelop feelings of a perpetuation of the self just as \textit{ngamun}, the fleshy breast tissues, envelop \textit{ylmbi}, the sternum bone

\textsuperscript{190} "An old man told the experiences of the calling in the following manner. The power of Ungud enters the body of the medicine man through the navel. He dives into the water where on the bottom an (\textit{fn. Continues o.p.})"
within this fleshly matrix. The two images held together, as they are in the \textit{wanjina}, can be seen to characterise lived relationships to kin and country.

\textit{Ungud-snake gives him two eggs to take and which will grow inside him}" (Lommel 1996:41).
10. Concluding Remarks

In the introduction to this work I laid out the bare bones of the theoretical positions which I would both adopt and contest throughout my discussion of the ethnographic materials gathered by myself and other prior researchers in the northern Kimberley and beyond. Inevitably, such *theoria* also played a determining role not just in my presentation of the ethnography but also of the things to which I was most attuned to whilst in the field creating ethnography. In short they have provided the macro-lens, albeit a plastic, jelly-like lens, through which my experience of the contemporary Ngarinyin world has been filtered.

By applying theoretical insights derived from a wide body of psychoanalytic literature, and combining this with phenomenological explorations of bodily experience, the ethnographic material has been able to be presented and analysed at a level beyond narrow regional considerations. Utilising psychoanalytic concepts in this way has enabled, amongst other things, an interpretation of seeming contradictions such as the claim that currently living Ngarinyin people have not actively created the world in which they live without either relegating this claim to mere ideology or accepting it uncritically. Psychoanalysis being the social science of apparent contradictions *par excellence*, the humanity of the people making such claims, and the expansive notions of the person to which it points us, become richly available to us. Psychoanalytically informed anthropology has had its Australianist practitioners before in Roheim, Hiatt and Morton, with the latter’s writings being closest to my own approach. I have attempted to expand this approach in the direction of explorations of intersubjectivity as the fount of personhood rather than trying to divine the shadow of some pre-existent individual instinctual conflict within the shapes of social formations. I have taken the notion of intersubjectivity as being primary rather than a secondary product emerging from the elaboration of instinctual roots into sociality. This is the sense in which Laing wrote of the family fantasy, not to be confused with an unreality, as “a matrix for dramas, patterns of space-time sequences to be enacted” (1971:17).

To this end I have also utilised some of the anthropological approaches to understanding the constitution of the person developed in Melanesian ethnography. The approaches developed by writers such as Wagner, Strathern, Munn and Weiner
have tended to have a detailed and richly elaborated theoretical base from which to proceed towards understanding the nature of personhood, in comparison to the more positivist approaches generally characteristic of Australianist ethnographies. The nature of sociality and personhood has undergone a sophisticated and sustained analysis in Melanesian studies which I have applied to a fuller understanding of Ngarinyin ideas and experiences of place and, in particular, how place is infused with a sense of the intercorporeal transactions occurring at multiple levels of this lifeworld. Wagner’s notions of the “fractal person”, Marriott’s concept of the “dividual” and Strathern’s subsequent elaborations upon it, have thus been invaluable in leaving behind the ultimately unsatisfying dualisms which encroach upon most discussions about the person in society. This approach has breathed a new life into Marx’s notion of the person as an “ensemble of social relations” (1978:145). The social alchemy through which kinship transactions transform the base metals of lived relationships with other humans and with the country itself into psychical “gold”, generating all social and cosmological values, becomes apprehendable as soon as we accept the ethnographic evidence of the co-inherence of self in other.

In the first chapter I spelled out the nature of these theoretical considerations, the methodological basis of the fieldwork and the analytic process, and began the process of building an overview of the social world in which I had moved, framed in the conventional anthropological terminology of moieties, clans, language groups, the kinship universe etc. In Chapter 1, I also gave a brief introduction to the ecological niche in which this social world is situated. This required the first introduction to the cosmological concepts of *wanjina* and *wunnggurr* which are so intimately bound up with the conceptualisation of the natural world.

In the second chapter I painted a portrait of the contemporary settlements in which Ngarinyin people, and their closest neighbours, the westerly Worrorra and northerly Wunambal, live. This rather long chapter began the process of introducing the experiential tenor of lived-in relationships as highlighted through phenomena such as sharing and withholding practices, physical movements through country, the politics of funeral negotiations, and the response to contemporary articulations of feeling for country in both local popular music and local political organisations. This followed onto an investigation of the local political economy, the physical infrastructure in the settlements and the environmental health conditions which
prevail within them. At this point it became necessary to show how the encompassment of these communities by the Australian state operates at a very intimate level through the refiguring of local kinship modalities to deal with an array of new relationships with outsiders with vastly differing values from those of interdependency and a variously ambivalent adherence to kin and country prevalent among Ngarinyin people themselves. Here I introduce explicitly the notions of embodiment which will figure so prominently throughout the following chapters. In particular, Laing’s notion of the “inducement to embody” the body-ego of others as a way of drawing and being drawn into webs of relationships and their attendant power structures is raised here for the first time.

The raising of this issue in the final section of Chapter 2 allowed for a segueing into an extended description of the Ngarinyin kinship system at the beginning of Chapter 3. Here, Marriott’s notion of the ‘dividual is introduced and elaborated through using some of the insights of Marilyn Strathern and, later, Roy Wagner, into Melanesian ideas of embodiment and subjectivity. The strategic introduction of these materials at this point allowed me to re-examine the anthropological practice of ascribing what have been taken to be self-evident semantic values to kinship terms founded upon either a Cartesian doctrine of the bounded individual or an equally skewed Durkheimian focus upon processes of social integration which allegedly transcend the realm of the individual. The insights of Marriott, Strathern and Wagner provide a potential exit from this impasse by addressing the co-inherence of subjects within other subjects conceived at other levels of constitution. From Marriott and Strathern’s usage of the notion of the multiply composed person as a microcosm of a broader sociality, Wagner’s concept of the “fractal person” is a further development which I flag here in order to make the concept available to a later analysis (in Chapter 6) of the *wanjina* figure itself as a fractal body. The important issues raised by each of these three theorists all focus upon the centrality of the human body as not just indexical of the sociality in which it is submerged but as vitally constitutive of that same sociality. As Strathern put it, “the body’s features are a register, a site of that interaction”. It is at this point that Laing’s notion of sociality as a “drama of interactions”, in which introjections and projections of the desire of and for others are played out, comes into its most useful form for anthropologists trying to understand the nature of social reproduction.
In the succeeding sections of Chapter 3, I offered a description of Ngarinyin kinship dyads and then went on to show how within such dyads a performative usage is available within the constraints of the ascribed relationships. Using Alan Rumsey’s description of the context dependent usages of the MB kin term, garndingi, as my model, I reveal how a similar context dependent usage is made of the MM/WM, gayingi/rambarr terms, something which had remained unnoted by previous ethnographers. The exploration of this issue led into a complex argument concerning the nature and extent of generation merging in Ngarinyin kin terminology. More pertinent to the rest of the thesis, though, was the discussion of the transformation of affectivity between these polar contrasts of open affection vis a vis complete avoidance and the possible reasons why such contrasts should be encapsulated within a single set of terms. In this discussion, the Ngarinyin body-image is drawn upon to show how the body acts as a communicating vessel in which relatedness is transmitted and transformed through articulation and movement of the limbs.

The final section of Chapter 3 addresses from another angle the issue of generation merging and the “screening” effects of the adjacent generation divide. Here, I map out the social relationships which are constituted in the performative field of the barurru (dancing/fighting ground). My analysis focussed upon the green-bough screen behind which lurk and emerge the ancestral spirits in a world continuous with, but also separated off from, the world of living human actors who can nevertheless elicit responses from the spirit world. I argued that this screen in fact has the potential to organise the affectivity of all those involved in the performance, just as the screen of the avoidance relationship, organises affectivity around the “negative” values of avoidance. The fact that dancers continuously appeared from and return to the spirit realm and newborn children were also seen to continuously appear from the ancestral realm indicated that Ngarinyin people indeed perceived a possibility for social engagement with the world of ancestors, something which is denied or marginalised in contemporary western epistemology. This has allowed Ngarinyin people to conceive of the social reproduction both of the ancestral realm itself and of the revitalising ancestral power which infuses the everyday world of contemporaries. Generational merging of deceased people with their wanjina allows for a profligate social embodiment.

Chapter 4 is an exploration of socio-centric images of the Ngarinyin person. The first such category discussed is the moiety division. This fundamental social
enactment of notions the deep interdependency between self and other is locally figured through a thoroughly somatic imagery which manifests in concepts of "skin". I drew out this imagery in order to show how the originary relationship of child and mother is socially elaborated as a necessity for differentiation and thus how subsequent social gradations are dependent upon mobilisation of the fissionary energy generated at this first great Split. The foundational myths of the moiety heroes as the first "divided self" are explored here in order to show how conflicts over incestuous desire are articulated and held up for public scrutiny in the moiety division. I contested Blundell and Layton's modeling of the moiety division as being essentially one of reciprocity and symmetrical equality by showing how all desire is constituted through lack and inequality and is thus inevitably based on alternating disequilibrium. The discussion of moieties is extended through a consideration of colour symbolism, contrasting red as emblematic of vengeful desire with the life-giving nature of white as embodied in fat and water imagery.

The next section of Chapter 4 dealt with the Ngarinyin patrilineal clan and its consequences in terms of territorality and the conceptualisation of the body as experienced as an incarnation of FF, a particular *wanjina*, and a particular tract of country. I presented these data in terms of the "distributed person", scattered across the landscape yet relationally bonded into contextually dependent groupings, at larger and smaller levels, whether these be the "commonwealths of clans" related through same moiety *abi* relationships or particular patriline within a single clan. I found it necessary, in order to deal with the complex forms of embodiment emergent from clan groupings to address the otherwise separate notion of spiritual conception, a largely contingent and particularising form of identity as opposed to the regularised events of clan membership. This section of Chapter 4 thus explored how it is that a man and his child encounter each other in the conception event and thus create the possibility of the grounds of reproducing each other through mutual wounding. In turn each human subject is also subject to the hunting of the patrilirial *wanjina* who rains down his fat replete weapons of eel, turtle and crocodile upon the earth in order to feed the *wanjina*’s own desire for re-embodiment in living human agents. The interaction between the ancestral and contemporary world was again highlighted throughout this particular discussion.

The subsequent section of Chapter 4 dealt with scarification practices. Here I showed how combining the data presented in Chapter 3 about body sites in which
particular relatives are introjected by the subject, with the sequence in which different parts of the body are cicatrised, can yield an interpretive cycle for socialisation of the Ngarinyin body-image. This organisation of affectivity through pain and the making visible of the actions of ancestral beings on the body creates and reproduces relationality at a fundamental level.

I then went on to look at the now besieged system of promised inter-clan marriages and how the relationships which were once fairly strictly determined by this system of promises continue to mark the Ngarinyin kinship world despite the decline of actual fulfillment of bestowals. I concluded Chapter 4 with an attempt to schematically represent the fractality of local notions of the person by mapping out some of the major constitutive elements of two patrilially related persons.

Having thus described certain structurally inter-dependent ways of making the Ngarinyin person, I attempted, in Chapter 5, to show how these structures are in fact continually in the process of being made and remade by the multi-level system of exchanges which find a paradigmatic embodiment in the wurnan. I argued that his system of intra-family, intra-clan, inter-clan and inter-group indirect reciprocity is the animating principle which brings social/physical relationships into being by allowing the extension of the partible person across a range of culturally authorised possibilities. I interpreted this complex of exchanges as being isomorphic with the marriage system and as drawing upon the same principle of creating relatedness through internal differentiation that propels the first act of self-constitution, the breaking of the symbiotic maternal bond. In short, I was inclined to see in the wurnan a highly productive obviation sequence in which the exchange of symbols of female sexuality and reproduction elaborates upon the process of generation of the human subject. Here the critical issue of mobility, the transmission of elements of the self which remain, somewhat paradoxically, integrally bound to the giver, came to the fore. The power of the wurnan, I argued, derives largely form this mobility of affectivity, the continual breaking down and building up of images of the body through agentive movement through the landscape.

Having raised the critical nature of the mobile structures of social being in this life-world, I then entered (in Chapters 6 and 7) into a detailed examination of the locally pivotal cosmological notions of wanjina and wunggurr. Rejecting the a priori assumption that these cosmological first principles are predetermined by local social forms, I explored the tensions between the unitary mass of wunggurr and the
relatively more differentiated nature of *wanjina* in terms of local body imagery. I thus raised the issue of the projection of internal bodily structures onto the surface of the body and beyond, interpreting these projections through psychoanalytic notions of how the human infant comes to a knowledge of its own body through identification with and an internalisation of the maternal body, and subsequently the socially stratified bodies of a range of significant others. I arrived again at the crucial notion of the effects of mobility upon the destruction and building up of the local body-ego. Once again Wagner's notions of the "fractal person" is employed to emphasise the integral relationality both within the person and the ever-widening circles of intersubjectivity within which the person is embedded. These two chapters (6 and 7) explored the intra- and inter-psychic mechanisms through which the subject/object nexus is fashioned at multiple levels, including the important issue of the identification of country through the bodily image. Both of these chapters made extensive use of Schilder's phenomenological/psychoanalytic explorations of the creation of the human body-image, focussing upon the generative nature of water and mud and how these are related to enterocceptive imagery. His emphasis upon the intersubjective milieus in which this is achieved was most helpful to the elaboration of the Ngarinyin ethnographic materials in terms of the visual/tactile/kinesthetic modalities through which images of the body are continually constructed and destroyed.

The emphasis upon the essential plasticity of the Ngarinyin body-image which I pointed to in these two chapters was then subsequently employed in the interpretation of certain mythic/performative clusters. In Chapter 8, I compared different variants of an "ideal type" of story involving places in the landscape which move, shake, tremble and split. Here I combined my analysis of socio-centric and ego-centric social forms with the notions of body-image construction which I found to underpin the cosmological entities of *wanjina* and *wunggurr*. I argued, in this chapter, that the related foundational principles of the *wurnan*, mother-in-law avoidance and initiatory practices could be discovered within these stories. I further asserted that these social practices could be seen to have their psychical roots within the differentiating movement which gives rise to the locally conceived subject.

In the penultimate chapter I discerned this theme of motility as being primary not just within the mythic/ceremonial texts themselves but also in the uses to which they are put. I outlined the trajectories through which stories and ceremonies are
exchanged, creating indebtedness and relationality in the process. I detailed how the exchange of one type of thing, such as songs, implicated the exchange of all manner of other things, such as initiates, thus overdetermining the entire spectrum of relationships involved in exchanges.

Returning to a theme first raised at the end of chapter 3, I focussed closely upon the body of the composer of songs as a symbol of restorative power which becomes accessible through the disintegrative journeys made to the reciprocating ancestral realm. I then drew out the isomorphism between such creative/destructive journeys “behind the screen” of everyday life, and the restoration of the body of the country through human interaction with wanjina. Placing what I considered to be a due emphasis upon this human/ancestral interaction and reciprocity, I pointed to the unceasing creative interaction with the cosmos which lies behind Ngarinyin people’s assertion of the “already formed” nature of their world. I interpreted this apparent contradiction as an articulation of the ways in which notions of the perpetuation of the self are enveloped within the highly mobile structures of the body-image. The process of differentiating structuration of the self is the same for ancestral subject and living human subject. The fact that Aboriginal cosmogenies hypostasise the ancestral creation is a result of the tendency to “split off” primary process thinking with all its manifestations of timelessness from secondary process seriation and organisation of the world. However, this “splitting off” means that the original creative process remains forever present for each human subject, and this fact becomes clear in the identifications which are made between living people, ancestors and ancestral beings. That the creative embodiments of ancestors objectified in the landscape remain mobile, rather than a “fixed topological structure”, was a major theme of my materials and their interpretation throughout the thesis.

I have maintained a constant attunement throughout the thesis to the interpenetration of subject and object in the Ngarinyin lifeworld. This has been made possible by the explicit ways in which country is figured through bodily imagery encompassing both hard, bony structures and soft, fleshy masses, full of water and fatty tissues. These two realms of the body and of the country are seen to constantly co-inhere in each other, each giving rise to its other through the porosity of surfaces which join rather than divide the realms of softness and hardness. Like the mobile swarms of native bees which continually move from the outside to the inside of the
hive to make the honey essential to reproduction, human affectivity is continually creating the substantial mass of the body through practices of intercorporeality.

These practices of intersubjective projection and introjection make a most marked appearance in the _wurnan_ (Chapter 5). Munn has pointed out how in the Melanesian world such sharing practices “constitute a mode of spacetime formed through the dynamics of action (notably giving and taking) connecting persons and places” (1986b:9). In other words, the very act of mobile interaction between corporeal beings is a perpetual act of constituting the world and the self at the same instant. This perpetual act of autopoiesis, powerfully pushing into life in the generative relationships between _wanjina, wunggurr_, living human beings and the country itself, creates an intercorporeal being which abundantly spills over the bounds of what modern Europeans would consider to be the egoic self. This is the sense in which the importance of continuing acts of reciprocity between the present and the ancestral worlds comes to the fore. As I noted in the introduction, non-Aboriginal people commonly assume a quite rigid boundedness to exist between these spheres, something which was formulated by Schutz and Luckmann as the impossibility that “[S]ocial relations that are essentially reciprocal” (1974:87) could exist with ancestors. The effect of such an assumption is to contain non-Western notions of the person within a narrow niche which denies them exactly the possibility of intercorporeal constitution, and creativity itself, through transactions with the ancestral world. The interpenetrative spheres of existence which I have explored throughout the thesis are made concrete in a number of interdependent ways.

Firstly, the multiply constituted/distributed person carries within their own body imprints and other empathic introjections of the bodies of their living kin (Chapters 3 and 4). Such imprinting of the other onto the self is possible only through active engagement in intersubjective encounters such as scarification, initiation and _wurnan_ which open up the person to the possibility of production/reproduction of self and other (Chapter 5). The overlapping and merging of ego-centric and socio-centric spheres in the living subject, as manifest in the nature of _anguma_ as both a contingent and socially structured force of succession to country, forces us to cast aside false dualisms between society and individual.

Secondly, there is a mutual dependency between ancestors and living persons which creates living beings through incarnation through the _abi_ relationship, intergenerational merging and _junba_ composition and performance. The mythic
modality through which historical actions are reconstituted serves to allow people to “enter into” both history and the landscape in the shape of *wanjina*. In turn, living human beings are “entered into” by ancestral presences, so that the shape of their dreams, the dimensions of and marks upon their bodies, and their individual life trajectories are significantly shaped by mythic determinants with particular application to particular individuals.

Thirdly, the body of the country gains its animation from the co-presence of other living bodies in an interdependent dialogue, giving and taking parts of these bodies into itself which in turn avails country of an ability to move. This is exemplified in the *giyug* spray-painting of the *wanjina* by living individuals which enlivens country and in the moving around of stony structures in the night in response to grief or longing for consubstantial relatives.

Fourthly, the sky, earth and subterranean regions are co-present, each in the other. This is exemplified by the notion, for example, that rocks are clouds, that the rain lizard, *ondalan*, is the sky itself, that the *wanjina* and its own cave shelter are the intermittently visible body of a pervasive subterranean entity, *wunggurr*, and that mirror worlds exist in which airy realms abundant with game and social interaction lie beneath the reflective surface of the permanent waterholes. This immanence of all within the one allows for the “oceanic interdependence” which Morton (1985:157) discerned in the sky-world in desert cosmologies to be extended to the moving bodies of humans, of stone and of water.

Clearly, the primacy of bodily co-presencing, or what Laing called “co-inherence” (1971:17), Levy-Bruhl “bi-location” (1978:5), Basso “interanimation” (1996:55), and Munn “the bi-directional movement” (1970:144) between subject and object is the major theoretical point which I derive from the Ngarinyin ethnography. Leaving aside static images rigidly laid out for semantic analysis, I take up the centrality of action and mobility to the creation of meaning in the world so that the “power of place” as Casey has it “is found in its encouragement of motion in its midst” (1996:23). More than this, though, my materials suggest that place only gains its power through the ability to move, through becoming thoroughly imbued with an intentionality characteristic of both living human and ancestral beings. This ability of country to move and to be moved means both actual motility, and an ability to “move” its kin into action, whether of grieving, composing new songs or finding child-substances within its embrace. What Isaacs called “the desire to be powerful in
giving” is what is mutually provoked between kin and country in that ideal state of alternating disequilibrium - *yaiyawurr*, “every body standing up together in a bunch.”

It was apparent to me that in the Ngarinyin world the ability and desire for mobility formed the foundational common ground between animal, plant, human, mineral and heavenly bodies. Indeed, this is the primary quality all bodies share. It is also primary to the mytho-poecia and everyday practices of Ngarinyin people. This is a product of patterns of relatedness, the social embodiment found amongst groups of relatives, being extended to country. If Aborigines are the original Durkheimians (rather than just the basis for his theories) positing an immortal, super-organic and transcendental realm not just over and above but dominating those who constitute it, then the Ngarinyin ethnography suggests that, rather than a “frozen over”, determinate topography being the source of an eternal moral order, it is the dynamic idea of a continuous entropy and restoration both of the body of relatives and the country itself which is conceived of as eternal.
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