4

Dreaming Organisation

> Before *kartiya* [whitefellas], blackfellas bin just walking around organising the Country.
>
> Hobbles Danaiyarri

Creation

People's work to keep the Country 'organised' builds on a foundation of Dreaming tracks and connections. Dreaming geography is the creation of patterns that both differentiate and connect. Each Country contains a plurality of sites, and the sites are connected by tracks; the ceremonies and ecologies that are part of the tracks work across bounded Countries. Creation elaborates the tracks, and thus elaborates the intersecting and crosscutting patterns of connection between eco-places.

Each enclosed area is a notional Country.[1] Dots are Dreaming sites; arrows mark the direction of Dreaming travel. Some of the dots are connected by Dreaming tracks, which show a system of crosscutting connections (between Countries and sites). The significant features are: no Country is unconnected to others; and no Country is connected to all others. Each can trace a connection to another along a Dreaming track that is crosscut by another track. Thus: A is connected to B, C, D and J along one track, and

1 While Debbie references a diagram to show how these connections work, the editors have not been able to find this figure in Debbie's archive. They have looked over published papers and can't it find there either.

to H, E, F and G along another track. A has no direct connection with I. However, I is connected to a number of other Countries to which A is also connected: G, C, H, E, J, D, C and B.

The significance of this pattern of differentiation and connection is far reaching. It constitutes the organisation of geography and seasons and is discussed in the next two chapters where the focus is on precision (boundaries/differentiation) and on patchiness (crosscutting and recurrent bits). It constitutes a patterned ground of ethics (Chapter 6), and, I will suggest, constitutes a sustaining pattern for time and thus for serious life (Chapter 5).

In a real-life set of Countries and tracks, there would be complexity: contiguous Countries would be connected by the short tracks of local Dreamings, and on a regional basis there could be one Country into which many tracks converge. Experientially, walking in Country means walking in ecosystems.

There is also a greater density of connections among contiguous Countries. Dreamings travel, and their essences remain in Country. Thus, each Country is connected by Dreaming to other Countries in patterns of cross-penetration. With localised Dreamings, Country A Dreaming travels into Country B and returns, so that a part of Country A is in Country B. Similar relationships obtain between A and C, etc., etc. The same process obtains from the perspective of Country B. One or more of its Dreamings travel to Country A and return, so that a part of B is in A. Patterns repeat across Countries, so while there is no controlling instance of connection, the patterned repetitions become a system that both resists domination and resists disorder.

David Turner discusses a pattern that is pervasive in Groote Eylandt geography and personhood—a portion of each is located in the other without loss of integrity to either (1996, 14).[2]

The discussion of pattern is applicable to landforms and plant and animal communities as well. They are not there as random events, but rather emerge from and form organised patterns. I will look first to the boundaries between three main ecological zones, and then I will examine the crosscutting and overlapping distributions that bring both patchiness and

2 Debbie had a note here indicating that she wanted to add a paragraph on Turner's work and to link it to patchiness and precision—eds.

connectivity into a system of organised difference. Dreaming organisation of life forms and Dreaming demarcations of difference and connection underlie ecological zones.

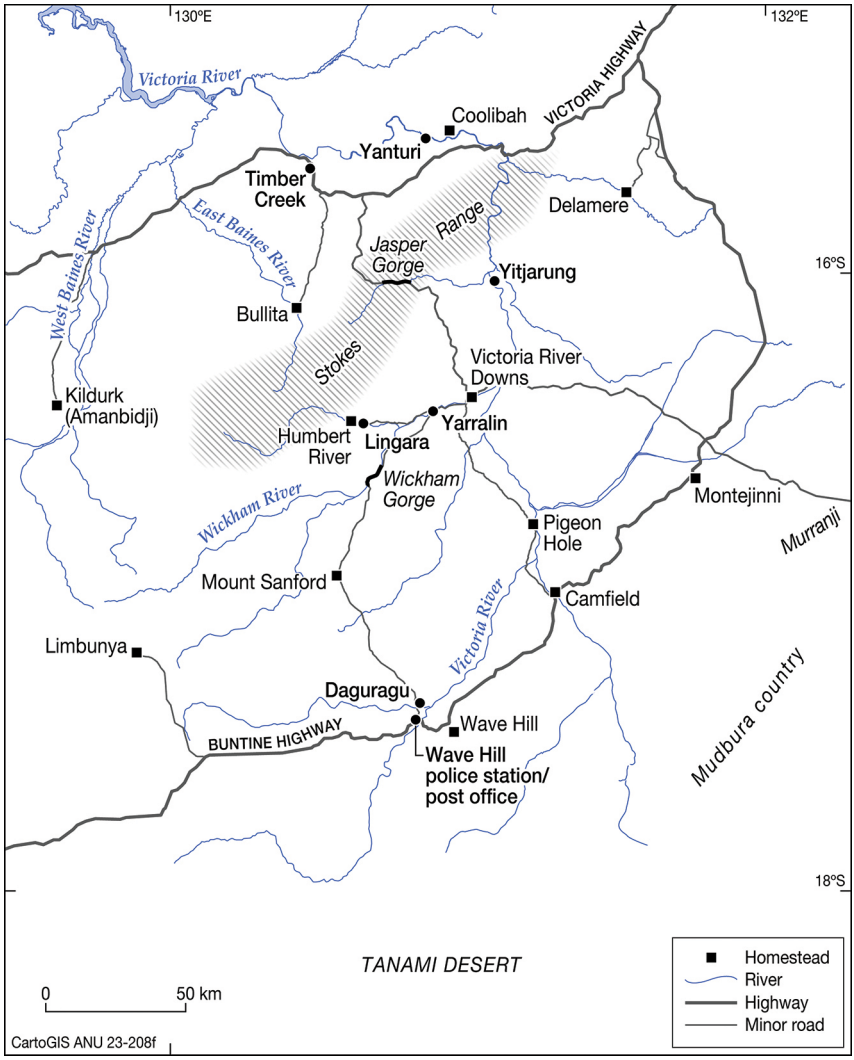
In the Victoria River Country of my teachers, there are three big ecological zones: the 'saltwater side' zone, marked by the tidal influence in the big rivers; the big freshwater Country of the inland (*laman*), where the rivers are fed by smaller creeks (*pinka*) and finally flow into the sea; and savanna desert (*kaja*) which is marked by an absence of permanent surface water. Following the river inland, each zone is adjacent to yet another zone: on the saltwater side there is an adjacent coastal zone comprising floodplains, mudflats and swamps. On the savanna desert side there is an adjacent zone of more arid desert marked by sandy plains and sand dunes (sandhills), and by rivers (if any) that flow inland, fanning into floodouts and disappearing into the ground.

Each of the zones in this study is uniquely defined by water: salt or fresh, present or absent, direction of flow. Furthermore, each has its unique plants and animals, and each can be defined by one or more indicator species. In this region, these broad zones extend west and east for much greater distances than they extend south and north. They thus correlate with rainfall patterns and with proximity to the humid and wetter coastal zone (to the north) or the arid inland (to the south).[3]

My perspective in this analysis is situated in the inland riverine Country where the greatest amount of my time has been spent. My teachers included people from all three zones, but all my great teachers were themselves situated in riverine Country during the time I spent with them, except when we travelled to other places. Thus, while those who came from elsewhere were well able, and often very interested in, teaching me about their home places, their perspectives also were situated in the riverine Country where we spent most of our time together. The effect of having this perspective is that I learned far more about how the saltwater side and savanna desert Country are marked as different from the freshwater riverine Country than I did about how neighbouring people define the freshwater Country.

3 From an outsider's perspective, they form bands that extend across river systems and state boundaries, and thus across both natural and political boundaries. From the perspective of Aboriginal people, their own zones extend within a major catchment area.

Saltwater and freshwater



Map 4.1. The Victoria River region showing the main ecological zones as defined by Aboriginal people—the 'saltwater side' north of the Stokes Range, the 'river Country' (*laman*—river and *pinka*—creek), below the Stokes Range, and the savanna desert (*kaja*), south of the river Country.

Source: Karina Pelling of CartoGIS ANU.

Figure 4.1. Yanturi on the Victoria River, a Dreaming place for Barramundi, Plover, Pigeon and others, Coolibah Station, 1982.
Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.

From the riverine perspective, there is a well-defined boundary to the north, and the northern area is called 'saltwater Country' or 'saltwater side'. The Dreaming Pigeons followed the Victoria River north out of the desert fringe carrying large slabs of sandstone. The pieces of stone that they dropped formed the great sandstone cliffs and outliers along the Victoria River. These seed-eating birds used the sandstone as grindstones, and they were demarcating a zone of seed-grinding technology. The last place where they dropped sandstone is at a site in the river called Yanturi. Here there is a large drop in the riverbed; in the early dry season the waterfall is magnificent. This is the boundary for salt water: tidal influence extends inland within about 20 kilometres of Yanturi. This is also the approximate northern extent of grindstone technology. From here northward, mortar and pestle technology predominates. I was told this version of the story by Old Jimmy, and he took a decidedly inland view of the pigeons' activity and focused in particular on the saltwater crocodile, locally known as the alligator. In Jimmy's view, the pigeons put Yanturi there as a blockade 'to keep out alligator and keep out all those cheeky saltwater things'.

Yanturi marks the tidal influence, but it is not an absolute boundary. When the Victoria River is up, it covers Yanturi, and fish as well as other 'cheeky saltwater things' swim upstream. Further inland, the barramundi (giant perch, *Lates calcarifer*) marks another boundary. This species can live in freshwater for much of the year but migrates to the estuaries to spawn (Larson and Martin 1990, 42–43). The Barramundi Dreaming travelled upstream from Timber Creek, trying to pull the salt water through. It was unable to pull the water past Yanturi, but the Barramundi itself travelled upstream as far as the Wickham Gorge and other inland sites. Its travels mark the extent of barramundi migrations today and connect inland freshwater systems with the estuarine systems closer to the coast.

Up there at Yanturi, the Country belongs to Ngaliwurru and Nungali people. Their story is a bit different and is focused on several aspects of the place. One of the main features is the large rock hole at the base of the rock wall. This rock hole was made by the Dreaming Plover, and there is a Dreaming tree (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) that is the Barramundi who tried to jump over the cliff to meet up with the other Barramundi who had swum inland. The rock hole is also a rich fishing site: people spear or catch stingray, sawfish, shark, alligator (crocodile), barramundi and other mainly saltwater species, along with all the freshwater species that move around here. Yanturi was a site for ceremonial gatherings in the old days. The richness of the food supply here just after the rainy time enabled people from all the neighbouring groups to gather: Nungali, Ngaliwurru, Jaminjung, Wardaman, Karangpurru, Wulayi Ngarinman and Wickham River Ngarinman peoples.

Another boundary between the big river Country and the saltwater side is formed by the Stokes Range. The clarity of this boundary derives both from its physical presence and from the way it blocks some of the rain coming in on the monsoon. The range lies south of Yanturi between Timber Creek and Yarralin. Rainfall figures are compiled at Timber Creek (north of the range) and at Victoria River Downs (VRD) station (20 kilometres east of Yarralin, and south of the range). These figures show a difference of about 235 mm of annual mean rainfall: 632.6 mm for VRD, compared to 867.7 mm annual mean rainfall for Timber Creek.[4] To these aggregated figures must be added the fact that VRD gets slightly more rainfall in the dry season than does Timber Creek (6.1 mm during June, July and August, compared with

4 These figures are contemporaneous at time of writing, c. 2003—eds.

3.4 mm at Timber Creek). This means that at VRD slightly more rain falls at a time of year when it is less likely to promote the growth of plants and the sustenance of animals; the inland river Country is thus drier than the annual mean figures would suggest.

Along the Stokes Range two indicator species are especially significant: the boab (*jamulang*), and the long yam known as *kakawuli*. The boab (*Adansonia gregorii*) reaches its current southern limit on the south side of the range. *Kakawuli* (*Dioscorea transversa*) occurs north of the range and part way into it, but not on the south side. Dora discussed crossing this boundary when she entered a region where the staple food was unknown to her (Chapter 3). I have already mentioned the spears made of *Grewia breviflora* that Jirrikit went searching for in the Stokes Range. The Stokes Range seems also to have been the southernmost range for gliding possums (*Petaurus breviceps*), a species now apparently extinct locally.

As well as constituting a zone of ecological differentiation, the range marks a major linguistic boundary, dividing two different families of languages. It is also a cultural boundary, as it marks some differences in kinship, marriage and other cultural patterns (discussed in Rose 1992, 118–19, 1998). Social and cultural boundaries were no obstacle to social interaction, however. People from both sides of this social boundary gathered at Yanturi.

Another gathering place is located just south of the range at a site called Yitjarung. As at Yanturi, people from neighbouring groups gathered, moving across ecological, social and cultural discontinuities in order to interact. Yitjarung is in Jessie Wirrpa's Country. Her family travelled there from VRD following the track of their Dreaming ancestor Jirrikit. He was going north into the ranges to get spears that were flexible enough not to shatter on impact with a freshwater crocodile, and he had to get them from people on the other side of the range. When Jessie's people travelled to Yitjarung they met up with people from the ranges Country, Big Mick's family and others, who were the suppliers of the spears Jirrikit had sought. Jessie described these intertribal gatherings:

> Jessie: Jasper Gorge and VRD river. We met up there now. That Country belongs to us, my *kaku* [father's father] Country. That's for us, as far as that now. We used to be meeting everybody.
>
> Big Mick: Kuwang mob. Yeah, Kuwang [Ngaliwurru —ranges Country].

> Jessie: Ah, Karangpurru mob, *kaku* mob, we were camping out there. And after, everybody went back home. And we come back this way [to VRD]. And *Wardaman* [people] go back home. They had the holiday at the river. Yirtjarung, meet up there.[5]

The saltwater side is relatively well watered and given that Big Mick's home Country is in the Stokes Range, I asked him once to tell me all the kinds of water. His list included these types: spring water, flood water, running water, round billabong, *laman*/river, little creek, junction, soak water, rock hole, ice water, fog.[6] Many people spoke of this factor when they discussed the colour of the grass. On the north side of the range the grass is green during much of the year, but on the south side it is yellow. You drive through Jasper Gorge, cross the creek, and come out onto the flats on the other (eastern) side of the gorge, and the country opens out into yellows, golds and bronzes, along with the silvery greens of spinifex and the dusky greens of the eucalyptus leaves.

Freshwater riverine and savanna — *kaja*

The ecological and social boundaries between riverine and savanna desert are not as clearly defined as those between saltwater and freshwater. There are no major geomorphologic barriers such as the Stokes Range, and rainfall figures also tell a story of greater continuity. The difference between VRD and Timber Creek is significantly greater than the difference between VRD and the Wave Hill Post Office, a few kilometres from Daguragu. VRD's 632.6 mm annual mean is only 165 mm greater than the 467 mm annual mean rainfall for Wave Hill/Daguragu. Wave Hill gets slightly more rain than VRD in the dry season (8.7 mm in June, July and August, compared with 6.1 mm at VRD), and is correspondingly a bit drier overall.

Kaja is glossed as desert and is defined as an absence of water. Daguragu is in riverine Country because of the Victoria River, but to the south, east and west of Daguragu the Country is *kaja.* The *kaja* is still savanna, with some large treeless grass plains. It is differentiated from the more inland desert by its landforms, savanna vegetation and animal species, as well as by linguistic and other factors. My study includes savanna *kaja* but not

5 Jessie Wirrpa and Big Mick Kangkinang, tape 78, recorded at Yarralin, 13 July 1986.
6 Big Mick Kangkinang, notebook 12, 23.

sandhill *kaja* (Tanami Desert, for example). Within the savanna *kaja* zone the different languages are members of the same language family, and the people hold kinship, marriage and ceremonies in common (discussed in Rose 1992, 118). The distinction between savanna and sandhill desert peoples is marked by linguistic and other social and cultural differences, as well as by numerous floral and faunal differences. The main body of my research took me into Mudbura Country to look at differentiation, and so I will focus on that area.

Mudbura *kaja* — savanna (desert)

The Australian continent is bisected from north to south by a gently rising plateau. In the northern section, that concerns us here, this dry plateau country divides catchment areas. On the east side the rivers flow into the Arafura Sea and the Gulf of Carpentaria. On the west side they flow into the Timor Sea and the Bonaparte Gulf. Mudbura Country straddles the western flank of the plateau in Country where there are no rivers. The southern part of Mudbura Country is full desert. A band across the middle is home to the grassy treeless plains that ensure that Mudbura Country is rich with tucker. When the rains do fall, the water has nowhere to go. The waterholes fill up and overflow into the plains, creating huge wetlands. Waterbirds flock to Mudbura Country to nest, and the plenitude of birds, eggs, fruits and other tucker is awesome. The great lakes such as Lake Woods near Newcastle Waters, dry for much of the time, become home to pelicans, brolgas, jabirus and a myriad of other large waterbirds as well as flocks of ducks and other smaller birds. Many of the Dreamings in this desert Country are waterbirds.

The segment of Mudbura Country in which I have carried out ethnobotanical research is the northern segment. The botanist Jeremy Russell-Smith describes this region as an arid forest. It is well wooded with contiguous but separate stands of lancewood (*Acacia shirleyi*), bullwaddy, and in the limestone areas snappy gum with a beautiful understorey of yellow, prickly, aromatic spinifex (probably *Triodia pungens*). The famed Murranji droving track cuts through this arid forest. It was designed to move cattle in long hauls from one waterhole to another. They wrecked the largely ephemeral waterholes in due course, and the government installed bores. In 1990, Darrell Lewis and I did a quick survey across the old track; Darrell documenting historic sites, and I seeking to document some of the major aspects of Mudbura ethnobotany, particularly as they pertained to questions that had arisen in my VRD research.

My main teachers in this portion of the research were Nugget Collins Ngurrartarlu and Long Captain Marrjala. One of the questions at the forefront of my mind was how people managed to travel through the densely dangerous bullwaddy scrub, and how they managed to subsist without large permanent water sources. From a riverine perspective, as Old Jimmy kept emphasising, *kaja* Country has no water. From the perspective of the people who belong there, there is water all right, you just have to know where it is and how to access it.

Formerly, Nugget explained, before white settlers pushed their way through the Murranji Country, the arid forest was crisscrossed with walking paths. People followed tracks to their destinations, and the paths articulated with waterholes and soaks. The Murranji waterhole is the main one, and there are several others. Where there was not surface water, people had dug wells. Much of this part of the country is limestone. Water accumulates in this underground country, and people tapped into it with their wells.

Long Captain's Country was south of the arid forest, in even drier country, with no permanent waterholes, on his account. He had not footwalked his own Country, as his family had become caught up in cattle station life, but when he used to go across the Murranji droving, his relations would teach him about his Country to the south, telling him of soaks where people dug for water. They also described a tree called *karrinbirri.* These trees were hollow and collected water in their trunks during big rains. At night, they said, you could see something like lightning hovering around the top of the tree. You would mark that tree, and in the morning come back and make a small hole near the base of the tree to allow the water to run out into your container. When enough water had been collected or all the water was gone, the hole would be plugged with a stick so that the tree would hold water again during the next big rains (see Lewis 2007, 9–10).

From the riverine perspective, one indicator species for desert is the burrowing frog (also known as *kajangarna,* meaning 'desert dweller'). Many of the riverine people differentiate themselves by refusing to eat frogs, as Maliwa demonstrated when she scolded her sister for eating them (Chapter 3). Old Jimmy associated frogs with Cattle Creek country, and thus used them to distinguish the Mudbura *kaja* from his own Country, which is also *kaja* in some parts.

> All around Cattle Creek … they lived on the *kayaman. Kayaman,* it's a little *ngalpung* [frog]. *Kayaman.* They call it little *kayaman.* Little frog. That's the one

> they eat, early days, you know. I never ate it. I don't know that one. They all like that, though, they get hundreds in the one hole.

A second indicator species for savanna *kaja* is *miyaka* (*Brachychiton* sp.). The edible seeds of this tree are an important food source, not only because of their abundance, but also because of timing. They become ripe in a time when relatively few other vegetable tuckers are available. Although the *Brachychiton* species are widespread, *miyaka* only comes into abundance in the savanna desert, and in the Victoria River Country it is particularly associated with the desert Country on the eastern side, that is, Mudbura Country.

Charcoal Winpara's Country is in the Mudbura *kaja.* He described an area in which the plant grows, but then went on to identify it as his (desert) Country: '*Miyaka,* that's for desert country. In desert country. Ah, plenty down there, that's my Country, from Montejinnie, nother side. You see plenty *miyaka* there all round.'[7]

These boundary markers are experienced. As you move through Country you see, and eat, different plants and animals. Coming from savanna *kaja* into freshwater riverine Country, Hobbles encountered *wayita:* the little tubers that were left there by the Nanganarri Women. Hobbles associated it with soil type. According to Nicholas Smith and colleagues (1993, 47), they are always found growing in the black soil of the river Country.

Similarly, Nugget pointed out a highly visible marker when one travels from the Murranji savanna desert into the river Country. The plateau grades downward so gently that you don't notice it in a truck. Then you come to a major decline—the 'jump-up'—only travelling west you actually 'jump' down. Almost immediately you start to see the inland bloodwood (*Corymbia terminalis*). It is not the case that this species is confined to the Country west of the jump-up; it is widely distributed across much of inland Australia. However, it is rare or non-existent in Mudbura *kaja* Country. Experientially, it tells you that you are into the riverine Country.

In contrast to the distinctions between salt and fresh water and between river and savanna *kaja,* the sandhill desert is distinguished by a large number of different species. The Dreaming Wallaby, for example, travelled south into the desert. When he got into the sandhill Country, he changed over into

7 Charcoal Winpara, tape 84, recorded at Yarralin, 21 July 1986.

the Big Red Desert Kangaroo (*Wiwiri*). Other significant markers of drier desert Country include witchetty grubs (discussed below), solanum species and a number of lizard species.

Mosaics

The three big zones—saltwater side, inland riverine and savanna desert—are both bounded and crosscut. On the one hand there are the unambiguous differences. The sweet long yam, *kakawuli,* does not grow south of the Stokes Range and is thus an unambiguous mark of Country to the north, from an inland perspective. Similarly, *miyaka* (*Brachychiton*) is a savanna desert tucker and does not grow in the riverine Country; from a riverine perspective, it unambiguously signals desert.

Zonal differentiations are crosscut by other contrasts and the zones themselves are filled in with fine-grained detail. One type of crosscutting works with elevation at a local level. The contours of the land recapitulate locally some of the major contrasts associated with broad zones. Jessie Wirrpa listed the trees that grow 'outside' or 'top side' (hills or high ground away from the rivers, *kangkula*) in contrast to those which grow 'bottom side' or river flats or low ground close to the rivers (*kunjura*). Her analysis applied to her own freshwater riverine Country. She discussed three major communities: the riverside community includes river red gums, paperbarks, pandanus and other riverine trees, along with pockets of monsoon forest or 'jungle'. While there are of course no saltwater mangroves, freshwater mangroves (*mawunji, Barringtonia acutangula*) are plentiful. Out on the flats there are the characteristic tropical savanna communities of the inland riverine Country: scattered eucalypts and a few other trees including *bauhinia* and nutwood tree, along with grass and shrub understorey. On the dry and stony slopes of the mesas, and on top of the mesas and cliffs where there are no creeks or rivers, one finds plant communities that are characteristic of the savanna desert.

It is clear that the distinguishing features of zones enable a person to know, in their travels, that they have crossed a boundary. Within a given area, however, clusters of members of these different zonal communities are interpolated and thus form landscapes characterised by patches or mosaics. Some plants that are characteristically for savanna *kaja* will be located on top of the mesas, and some varieties of spinifex that are characteristically for

kaja Country will be located on stony slopes. In light of local interleaving of clusters associated with zones, the significance of unambiguous indicator species that are not located beyond their own zone becomes clear.

Another aspect of the interpenetration of zonal features is that of plants that are widespread, but only start to flourish in a particular zone or a particular Country, and thus become associated with that place. An example is the tuber known as *pikurta* (*Ipomea costata,* Wightman 1994, 34), which from a riverine perspective is characteristically desert tucker. It also can be found in the Wickham Gorge where it is not abundant but is sufficiently established to be known. Other plants are widespread but their appearance changes. For example, *mulurmi* (turpentine wattle, *Acacia lysiphloia*) grows in both the riverine Country and the desert. In the riverine Country it is a tall scrub, and in Mudbura Country it is a bush; in both places it is prized for its medicinal qualities.[8]

Another food that is distinguished by density and prominence is the witchetty grub. Grubs live in a variety of trees and shrubs. In the savanna desert (and throughout the arid zone) they are prominent subsistence foods and are characteristically found in the roots of several acacia shrubs. In the riverine Country they are found in trees. There they are not a major food item, they do not figure prominently in ceremony, nor are they associated with the seasons. In the desert Country, though, as Hobbles explained: 'That bush is in desert Country, and wet time, you can pull it out and find grubs underneath. That is truly *ngarin* [meat]. Wet time really belongs to grubs.' Old Jimmy added to the story:

> And witchetty grub, I'm not talking about this that lives on the river, not that witchetty grub that lives in the white gum tree [*punpu*]. I'm talking about the one that lives in the desert. It lives in the—oh, you might see a sort of a little tree. You move that one, you pull that one, you'll see ten or twenty witchetty grubs there [in the roots].[9]

Another way in which the broad zones are crosscut is by soil types and other geomorphologic features. Among the many soil types that my teachers identified are red soil, black soil, limestone, sandy soil, sandstone and stony ground. These types intersect each other across zones, and many have their characteristic plant communities or species.

8 Dora Jilpngarri, notebook 53, 149.

9 Jimmy Manngayarri, tape 114, recorded by Darrell Lewis at Daguragu, 19 August 2000.

Steep hills and gorge tops are the homes or habitats for numerous species which have a counterpart in another habitat. The fig tree of the stony hillsides (rock fig, *Ficus leucotricha* var. *leucotricha*) is a mate for the riverside fig (*Ficus racemosa*), as I will discuss in Chapter 6. For the moment my interest is in relationships across habitats. Old Jimmy explained the idea in reference to bloodwood trees, one for river Country and one for *kaja*. We had seen each of them recently, one on the flats, and one on the high dry Country along the top of a gorge:

> This sort of bloodwood, we call im this one bloodwood, bloodwood this one, river bloodwood [*C. terminalis*]. That one we call im *kajangarna* [desert dwelling], that one *puwaji* [*C. dichromophloia*].[10]

Yet another form of crosscutting is worked out through plants. Most of the mateship between plants identifies relationships based on the interplay of sameness and difference across habitats and zones. Difference is identified and then is crosscut by similarity; similarities are identified and crosscut by differences. Contiguity also seems to be a factor. The result is a mosaic of connectivities within and between genera and moving across habitats, landforms and ecological zones.

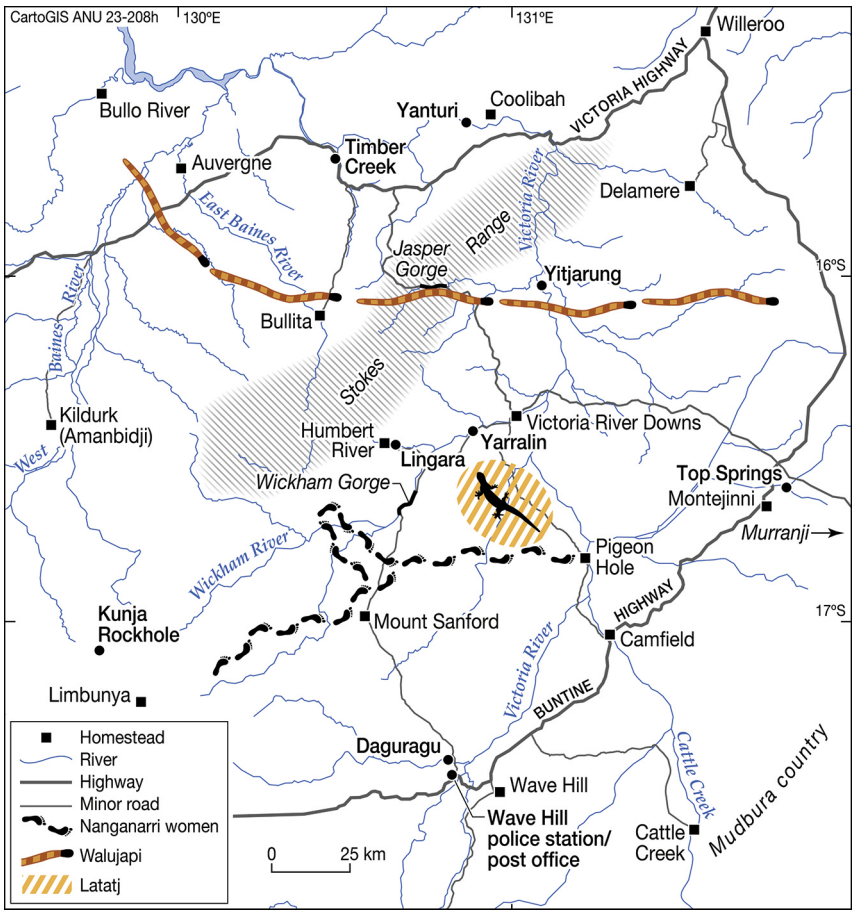
A plant like *kakawuli* that belongs to the saltwater side is referred to by the same term in Ngarinman (riverine) language because there are no Ngarinman (riverine) *kakawuli.* However, where species are located across zones and languages, there are some shifts in terminology which produce the mosaic effect of same and different. *Jartpuru* is a good example. In the riverine Ngarinman nomenclature of Yarralin and Lingara, *jartpuru* is a bloodwood tree, known in the English vernacular as the 'inland bloodwood'. This same term applies to this same species in Bilinara and Gurindji languages. In Mudbura Country, however, this tree is either extremely rare or non-existent. A similar bloodwood (*C. dichromophloia*), 'variable barked bloodwood' or 'mountain bloodwood' in English vernacular, is called *jartpuru.* In Ngarinman and Gurindji languages, *C. dichromophloia* is called *puwaji.*

Mateship also shifts across zones. In Ngarinman and Bilinara Country *wanymirra* is mother to *wayita,* but Glenn Wightman (1994, 53) reports that amongst his Gurindji teachers at Daguragu *wanymirra* is the grandmother for *wayita* (*wayij*).

10 Jimmy Manngayarri, tape 111, recorded at Yarralin, 14 August 1991.

Dreaming tracks produce another, highly significant, form of crosscutting. The Dreaming track for the uninitiated men, for example, is marked by snappy gum trees that are 'pegged out just like a line'. The trees march from the saltwater side down through the riverine Country and toward the desert, following the landforms and soils that make up their habitat.

Dreaming actions



Map 4.2. Dreamings that signify a zone (Latatj), connection between patches (Nanganarri) and demarcate a boundary (Walujapi).

Source: Karina Pelling of CartoGIS ANU.

I will discuss several Dreamings in order to explore the idea that bioregional communities are themselves the marks or evidence of connection, continuity and association. I will examine four processes: negotiation of discontinuity, the creation of a zone (Latatj Dreaming), the connection between patches (Nanganarri Dreaming), and the demarcation of a boundary (Walujapi Dreaming).

Discontinuities

The interpolation of soils, landforms and associated species produces a mosaic effect within and across the major zones. There are, in addition, discontinuities that are said to have been established by Dreaming. One such discontinuity was established by the Sugarbag Dreamings who fought over who could go where. One was a large one and belonged to riverine Country, the other was small and belonged to savanna *kaja.* As Ngarinman (river) people tell the story, their large sugarbag was trying to get into the desert Country, and the smaller desert one hunted it back. The boundary between the two is in the watershed range Country between the headwaters of the Humbert River and *kaja* Country to the south-west. Two of them were fighting, ground sugarbag and tree sugarbag, and where one killed the other and thus pushed it back to the north there is both a social boundary between Bilinara and Ngarinman languages and an ecological boundary between types of sugarbag.[11]

Even the reaches that exceed boundaries are still imagined in the mode of discontinuity. I discussed the Barramundi Dreaming that swam upstream from Yanturi. In Dreaming geography there are now several Barramundi Dreamings—one is at Yanturi where it tries and fails to jump up over the cliff. Others are in the inland waterways where they struggle to return to the salt water but are blocked by the fact that the rivers have shrunk back to disconnected waterholes. The Barramundi Dreaming in Daly's Country around the Wickham Gorge struggles, and fails, to reach its mate at Yanturi.

The maps for such landscapes are complex, indeed. Old Jimmy always held that the maps for these relationships are in the ground itself:

> I mean like, you know, on this Earth. On this ground, isn't it. You know, what the Dreaming has done. This ground, it's sort of a map. Map. Map for the people.

11 Jimmy Manngayarri, notebook 55, 117.

> That way, this ground here … On this ground—*Janja.* Ground. Well that's that map for the *ngumpin,* right on this ground here. *Janja*—that's the ground where we sit down.[12]

Latatj

Latatj is a small goanna (Storr's monitor, *Varanus storri*), known locally as a rock goanna. According to one of the main scientific sources, the Australian population is divided into two widely separated groups: the eastern group is located primarily in Queensland with slight overlap into the eastern Northern Territory, while the western group straddles the Country along the mid and upper Victoria and Ord Rivers and extends into the inland Kimberley (Swan 1995, 102). The western range of the *latatj* very neatly coincides with a portion of the big river and *kaja* Country, stopping short of the saltwater influence in the north and the sandhill Country to the south. The range thus includes the region in which the majority of my research has taken place.

According to Old Jimmy, Latatj was responsible for organising the plant and other communities that go to make up this region. I asked him once about a plant I was hoping to be able to identify called *tipil.* I knew that it was supposed to grow further north, and I wondered if it might also have grown in some remote corner of his Country. He rejected the idea that I would find *tipil* in his Country:

> No, nothing. That Latatj didn't want that kind of tucker. All kinds of tucker, he pushed them back, right back that way, on the sea side. He must have a good fish, good crocodile, good sugarbag [native honey], everything, good way …
>
> He's boss for every tucker there. Whatever he don't want, he push it away: 'You take it back,' he said. 'I don't want that one.' He don't want it. Latatj don't want it: 'Keep it out on that side, on the sea side.'[13]

12 Jimmy Manngayarri, tape 110, recorded at Yarralin, 13–14 August 1991.
13 Jimmy Manngayarri, tape 109, recorded at Yarralin, 13 August 1991.

Figure 4.2. Debbie, Ivy Kulngarri and Nancy Jalayingali at Winingili, a Latatj Dreaming site on the road between Yarralin and Pigeon Hole, 1982.
Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.

Figure 4.3. Rock painting of Latatj, the rock goanna (natural ochres), 1984.
Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.

On another occasion I asked Jimmy whether there was in his Country the kind of sugarbag (native honey) that the bees put into termite mounds (antbed). Again, his reply was vigorous: 'Ant bed. No, Latatj never like it on this Country. He put it right back this way, saltwater side. Latatj never liked it.'

The rainbird (channel-billed cuckoo, *Scythrops novaehollandiae*) assisted Latatj in pushing things away; it took back into the coastal Country those species that Latatj did not want:

> Another end [salt water side], is using different tucker from us. They got different-different tucker. That's what that rainbird pushed out. It took it back. Rainbird took it back. Latatj don't want it. Latatj don't want it, Rainbird took it back right back. That's the way. Make it good, you know.

Jimmy would always emphasise the regularities and practicalities of this organisation:

> We've got to eat the right feed that we were raised up on. That grew us up. Well, we got to go on with that same tucker … That's why we got to go with the right feed, that we get ourselves. We might go down to Auvergne [station, saltwater zone] somewhere, I might see some tucker there, I don't know what it is. Well, I'm frightened to eat there. Very bad, you might eat some sort of tucker, poison tucker. You see, that's why that tucker that you were raised up on, that tucker, you gotta stick with that tucker. See?[14]

Nanganarri Women

The Nanganarri Women came travelling out of the west carrying tucker, future generations of people and Law. They are identified with several plant species, in particular; they deposited many foods along the way, but they also established particular associations between plants and Countries. One of their main foods is *wayita*. As discussed, *wayita* is a small edible tuber; there is an area along the Nanganarri track in Bilinara Country in which *wayita* once flourished, and the singular abundance of the tucker announced the action of the Dreaming Women.

14 Jimmy Manngayarri, tape 110, recorded at Yarralin, 13–14 August 1991.

Figure 4.4. *Wayita* tubers from Ngurundarni, Pigeon Hole area, 1984.
Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.

Ivy Kulngarri set up the photo in Figure 4.5 and captioned it: 'Two little children for Wayita Country'. The Country where the Nanganarri Women travelled and deposited the tuber *wayita* is now known as Wayita Country. The Nanganarri Women also deposited mussels in some of the billabongs, and themselves turned into nutwood trees (*partiki, Terminalia arostrata*) in the vicinity of Pigeon Hole settlement. These Dreaming Women brought 'babies' who constitute the future Bilinara generations, and they deposited them, too. There is, thus, a convergence of nurturance: both the people to take care of the Country, and the foods to take care of the people were deposited by Dreaming.

Figure 4.5. Two little children from Wayita Country, Ngurundarni, Pigeon Hole area, 1984.

Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.

The Nanganarri Women came out of Old Jimmy's Country to the west. There they were associated with another tuber, a yam called *pikurta* (*Ipomoea costata*). *Pikurta* does not grow in Bilinara Country; it ceases just about at the boundary between Bilinara, Ngarinman and Malngin Country. Across the black soil plains of Bilinara Country the Nanganarri Women put *wayita.* When they reached their last site in Bilinara Country, they stopped, stood up and turned into trees, before going underground to continue their travels. At this site stands a small group of bullwaddy trees (*kamanji*) (see Figure 2.1). These Dreaming trees are protected: people are not allowed to cut them down, burn them or harm them in any other way. This is the most western stand of bullwaddy. The Nanganarri Women did not come up to the surface of the Earth until they were at the edge of the region where bullwaddy is common. Their travels thus link an isolated patch of bullwaddy in the inland riverine Country with the place south-east of here in the Mudbura *kaja* Country, or arid forest, where it becomes plentiful. The Dreaming track with its songs and stories thus exists as a relationship between stands of bullwaddy, and bears knowledge of that plant at a remarkably detailed level: to know the Bilinara portion of the track is to know the location of the most westward outlier of the geographically circumscribed bullwaddy.

Black-Headed Python (Walujapi)

The Black-Headed Python cut through the Stokes Range as she came travelling out of the west. She was carrying a coolamon as she travelled, and in her coolamon she carried seeds which she put here and there. She thus established certain distribution patterns. The boundary for boab trees follows her track, and she was putting those seeds here and there, but no further to the south than where she travelled. (Boabs appear to be spreading, however, and their travels may have been sped up by white settlers, many of whom planted boabs at their homesteads.) Along the southern edge of the range, nearly every boab tree is a Dreaming tree and thus is a sacred site along the python track. It seems that these are the last of the boabs she planted along her travels. As Dreaming trees, these boabs are protected: they ought not to be cut down or damaged by human action.

Figure 4.6. Jasper Gorge was created when Walujapi, the Black-Headed Python Woman, travelled across the land, 1984.
Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.

The list of plants that people asserted to have been carried and deposited by the python include some which are local identifiers because of their localised distribution, and some which are local identifiers because they grow prolifically in the area. *Walmat,* for example, is a palm tree with restricted distribution, and thus far is documented at only a few locations, including Jasper Gorge (Brock 1988, 239) where the python travelled and deposited them.

This great Dreaming also carried human beings with her, and she distributed them, too. The linguistic boundary between Ngaliwurru and Karangpurru languages is marked by a site where she changed over from one language to another, and where she deposited a supply of people for the Country. She thus carried people and some of the foods that would nurture them and other living things in the region.

Travelling with totems

All of the geographies and taxonomies I have discussed are organised around overlapping and crosscutting connections. Nothing is connected to everything, and nothing is without connection. Relationships between

humans and other species, technically known as totemic relations, show the same principles of crosscutting connectivities. Some totems are linked directly to land and thus precipitate groups along the geography of tracks and sites. Others are formed by different criteria and crosscut the Country-based totems. Like the Dreaming geography of Nina's painting (see Figure 3.9), totems are not confined to abstract structures, but rather connect living things across species boundaries and implicate them in relationships of care. Then, too, totems connect with seasons, growth and the contingent becoming of life in Country.

It is instructive first to look briefly at the history of the concept of totemism. Sir James Frazer's *Totemism and Exogamy* (four volumes, 1910) and Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1919) testify to the fact that 'totemism' was one of the cornerstones of emergent social science and related disciplines around the turn of the twentieth century. Debated regularly from decade to decade, totemism has become a palimpsest of western social theories. Definitions vary enormously, but at the core the phenomenon labelled totemism posits a non-random relationship between particular humans and particular non-humans. It is this human/non-human link that exercised the thinking of early theorists such as Frazer (1910) and Freud (1919) (discussed in Lévi-Strauss 1963, 2–3; Wolfe 1999).

This project was aimed toward distinguishing civilisation from savagery, and culture from nature. It was given special urgency by the intellectual revolution taking place in conjunction with secularisation and Darwinian theory. If humans are descended from animals, where is the boundary between them? If humans are all one family, biologically speaking, what is the difference between savagery and civilisation? These questions mattered to people who believed themselves to be fundamentally different from both animals and savages. Their project had the happy benefit of refitting under a new paradigm a set of distinctions that were both foundational and self-serving. Civilisation was marked by a separation of culture from nature, so it was said, and it followed from this that a world view that posited intimate physical relationships between people and animals must be understood as an absence of civilisation and must therefore constitute an evolutionary stage at which humans were not fully separated from nature. Totemism could thus confirm the superiority of western civilisation and the inferiority of the savage, defining and ordering their difference, while simultaneously linking them together as evolutionary moments in a global history of progress.

In 1912 Émile Durkheim wrote that 'the totem is before all a symbol, a material expression of something else. But of what?' He would go on to assert that the totem is a symbol of God and of society, brought together, in his view, in the clan (quoted in Lessa and Voigt 1979, 34). The question, 'a symbol of what?' can be read as a secular analogue to the theological longing for the absent body; it haunts social theory as a quest for the hidden referent. It proved to have an amazingly long shelf life and provided an opportunity for people to inscribe their particular theories of society and culture on the *tabula rasa* of totemism. Bronisław Malinowski, for example, in good economic fashion, found a consumption value: 'The road from the wilderness to the savage's belly and consequently his mind is very short,' he wrote in 1948, 'and for him the world is an indiscriminate background against which there stand out the useful, primarily the edible, species of plant and animal' (1948, 44). Alfred Radcliffe-Brown (1929) had developed this view in more elegant manner, suggesting that it was a common characteristic of hunting peoples to elaborate a major food item. While Radcliffe-Brown would initiate analysis into the logical properties of totems, both he and Malinowski are expressive of the theory, stated so succinctly by Claude Lévi-Strauss, that totems are 'good to eat' (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 62).

Lévi-Strauss himself found another meaning in totemism. In his view, totemism answered a universal question of the mind: 'How to make opposition, instead of being an obstacle to integration, serve rather to produce it.' Natural species, he claims, 'are chosen not because they are good to eat but because they are good to think' (1963, 80). Following the basic quest for the meaning of a totem that must be about something other than itself, Lévi-Strauss argued that totemism was about resolving problems of logic.

Lévi-Strauss's work depended on the familiar dichotomies: mind vs body, culture vs nature, difference as an obstacle to be overcome. All these points have been subjected to a range of excellent contemporary critiques (for example, Plumwood 1993). I am not proposing to go over that ground; my purpose is simply to remind readers of the culturally constructed quality of these suppositions so that it may become evident that they block access to some of the other interesting questions that could be asked.

When we bring the analytic focus into the Australian context, we see that evidence from Aboriginal Australia (especially Spencer and Gillen 1899) was drawn on by all the early theorists of totemism and 'primitive' religion. Subsequently, much of the debate about totemism was supported with

evidence from Australia. Thus, virtually every major proposition concerning totemism was supported in part by reference to Australian data, and virtually every critique of theories of totemism was also supported with reference to Australian data.

Much of the anthropology of twentieth-century Australia did not seek unified global theories, but rather sought to analyse specific instances of totemic structure, action and thought. Lloyd Warner's pioneering ethnography of 1958 (1937), *A Black Civilization,* based on research he conducted in Arnhem Land in the 1920s, signals in its title the author's distance from the oppressive savagery–civilisation dichotomy. Warner stated that the totemic system of north-east Arnhem Land was 'highly elaborated and permeates all the activities of the group and all of its concepts of life in the world about it' (Warner 1958 [1937], 378). Totemism in north-east Arnhem Land, Warner contended,

> is intelligible only in terms of the social organisation, the relation of the technological system to society generally, and the ideas which surround the society's adjustment to the natural environment. (Warner 1958 [1937], 234)

In light of Warner's emphasis on both the environmental aspects of totemism and its pervasive, indeed foundational, relation to religion and social organisation, it is unfortunate that decades were to pass before these ideas were put to work systemically in other parts of the continent. Radcliffe-Brown, as stated, emphasised function, while A.P. Elkin (1933), after offering an excellent definition of totemism, sought to classify and catalogue types of totemism. In his view, totemism is formed out of relationships of mutual benefit between people and non-human species. I will return to the issue of mutual benefit in Chapter 7. W.E.H. (Bill) Stanner's 1962 phenomenological approach to totemism and religion emphasised the mystical quality of totemism (1979 [1962]). He also linked totems with clans and with Country, asserting that the group has a corporate title that covers not only the Country or site, and a mystical relation to the totemic creators, but also non-material property associated with the Country (Stanner 1965, 13). Stanner's study was closely followed by Ted Strehlow's (1970) study of Aboriginal religion in Central Australia. He documents a totemic landscape in its social, spiritual and geographical complexity. Briefly, but tantalisingly, he discussed some of the ritual which ensured the continuance of each totemic species or other existent, as had Walter Spencer and Francis Gillen (1899) before him. In this same period,

Peter Worsley's (1967) study of totemism, derived from his Groote Eylandt research, followed the tradition of Malinowski in seeking to distinguish totemism from logic and science. Nicolas Peterson (1972) followed on from Durkheim, Stanner and Strehlow in examining totemism as a link between person, group and Country. He found totemism to be a mechanism for ordering sentiment toward home place, and thus to be a key mechanism in territorial spacing (see also Strehlow 1970).

Strehlow's 1970 article 'Geography and the Totemic Landscape in Central Australia' marks a major turning point. His foundational assumption was that while totems can be and are thought to represent many things, they are also, perhaps centrally, themselves. Strehlow thus brings the living world into the analysis in a way that previous scholars, with the exception of Warner, had not done. Like many others, Strehlow agreed that the totem and the clan are connected to each other and to an area of land, and he went on to look to the organisation of ritual life oriented toward sustaining the life of the totemic species and the life of regional ecologies.[15]

The key study that initiated the analysis of totemism as ecological practice is Alan Newsome's (1980) study of the Dreaming track of the red kangaroo in Central Australia. This track traverses some of the toughest desert country in the world, and the Dreaming sites coincide with the most favoured areas for kangaroos. These sites are protected; no hunting or burning takes place in these refugia. These are places to which living things retreat during periods of stress, and from which they expand outward again during periods of plenty. Thus, kangaroos too are protected at these sites. The people responsible for that protection are the kangaroo people in whose Country the site is located.

In sum, decades of study of totemism have ensured that the clan/Country nexus has been well analysed, but issues of human interactions and connectedness with, and responsibilities toward, the non-human world remained undervalued. Totemism posits connectedness, mutual interdependence and the non-negotiable significance of the lives of non-human species. Totemic responsibilities are organised along tracks that intersect, and thus build regional systems of relationship and responsibility (see also Rose 1997).

15 Following this paragraph Debbie intended to add something from the work of Morton (1990)—eds.

Back to the Victoria River

In the Victoria River District, there is a multiplicity of types of totems (discussed in greater detail in Rose 1992). Country-based totems, inherited from one's father's father, mother's father, and in many cases from mother's mother (and her brothers), link people with land, Dreaming tracks and sites, and the species of those Dreamings. The Dreaming Owlet Nightjar Jirrikit, for example, travelled and demarcated a Country and became ancestral to owlet nightjars and to the people for that Country. Jessie Wirrpa and her siblings are owlet nightjar because their father and father's father were owlet nightjars. They have responsibilities toward the sites of the owlet nightjar, and toward owlet nightjars generally, as well as owning the stories, songs, designs and sites. They are responsible for the flourishing of owlet nightjars and others of their totemic species, and this means that they are responsible for their own flourishing as well. Nor are they alone in this responsibility. Owlet nightjars (the birds) also have responsibilities toward them (the people) but it is fair to say that as a human being one knows the most about human responsibilities. Primarily, these responsibilities are to Country: to the sites, the knowledge, the practices of care and the protection of places, people and knowledge.

A Country-based totem is a singularity: you either are or are not owlet nightjar. There are other owlet nightjar clans in the world, but there is only one for this Country. This singularity is crosscut in several directions. One direction is that of other Country-based totems. Countries are exogamous, meaning that people must find their spouses in other Countries. People have non-negotiable responsibilities in their mother's father's Country as well as their father's Country, so people have totemic relationships with their mother's father's Country too. Jessie, Nina and their siblings have rights and responsibilities from their mother's father who was possum. These siblings are Countrymen with owlet nightjar, and Countrymen with possums. Countrymen take care of each other; to say that Countrymen have responsibilities toward each other's interests is to include non-humans within the realm of Law. The rule that Countries are exogamous crosscuts the singularity of Country and Country-based totems, generating kin relationships across Countries, species and people.

A system of matrilineal totems that are not connected with Country cuts across the Country-based totems. Matrilineal totems have received relatively less analysis by anthropologists, perhaps because much of the emphasis in

the past few decades has been on the land tenure systems that are articulated through the system of totemic clans, but perhaps also because the real-world orientation of matrilineal totems has not been a strong focus in anthropology. Matrilineal totems in the Victoria River Country identify consubstantial relationships between persons and other species. The group of people is bounded by matrilineal descent; its members are the same flesh or 'meat' (*ngurlu*), and they share that flesh with the animal or plant with which they are associated.

As I discuss in *Dingo Makes Us Human,* these *ngurlu* groups are organised within a broader implicit organisation of matri-moieties. Within one circle of women are all the *ngurlu* that are part of dry land and the dry time of year: emu, finches, sugarleaf and *miyaka* (or *yimiyaka, Brachychiton* species). Within the other circle of women are all the *ngurlu* that are part of water, rain and the wet time of year: catfish, brolga and flying fox. Matrilineal totems thus directly concern the 'what-is' of Country and the processes that sustain it. They profoundly undercut species boundaries, and they organise groups according to ecological, not territorial, principles. They articulate patterns of connectivity such that the processes of the ephemeral world and the contingent lives of humans, animals and plants are connected in their own flesh.

Within the group of people and animals or plants who share the same flesh, what happens to one has a bearing on what happens to the other. When an emu person dies nobody eats emus until the emu people tell them they can, and similarly when a flying fox person dies nobody eats flying foxes until the right people give permission. There are more variations than there is dogma, but there is a clear recognition that the lives of same flesh beings are enmeshed in perduring relationships. Many people do not eat their own flesh. Here again, there is no dogma, with the possible exception of the emu people who neither kill nor eat emu. Many others will not kill their Dreamings but will eat them (if edible) if they are killed by others.

Genres

Luce Irigaray expands the term 'genre' to include concepts of sort, race, species and gender as well as the more familiar literary connotations of genre. Her expanded sense of the term focuses on the concept of 'kind' as in mankind, and she argues that the specificities of gender are such that women constitute their own kind or genre (Whitford 1991, 17). In my

view, Irigaray's linking of 'kind' with embodied specificity gives us a way of thinking about totemism without having to invoke the whole history that emerged from Durkheim's pivotal question of what totems are really all about. They are not about absent bodies or hidden referents; they are about themselves.

The terminology for matrilineal groups in Ngaliwurru language suggests that genre is indeed an appropriate gloss. Catfish is 'fish-kind' (*yawunyung*), sugarleaf is 'plant-kind' (*mangarinyung*), emu is 'meat-kind' (*ngarinyung*) and sugarbag is honey or 'sweet-kind' (*ngalunyung*). These genres are further grouped into what one might term wet and dry genres. Flying fox and Rainbow are also grouped as light rain. Brolga and catfish together are grouped as dark rain. Emu, in contrast, is also termed *yarnanganja*—'ground' or 'Earth' (Rose 1992, 82–83). There is no question at all of these totems representing 'something else'. Children are born from, and are the same flesh as, their mother. There is no absent body to haunt the scholarly imagination, and perhaps this is another reason why they have been undervalued by scholars.

The genre is the flesh that exists in the world. Old Tim Yilngayarri often referred to them as tribes, and he explained the origins:

> Beginning word: Dreaming been changing in that dog, changing in that crocodile … I [Tim] came out [of] goanna Daddy, [and] catfish and brolga mother … Born longa Namitja—brolga. We boys belong Namitja, we brolga same way, same [as] mother. That's beginning Dreaming. We different tribe, we … And big catfish, he floats [in the water], and that brolga come along and put foot right here [on neck]. All that catfish and brolga, that's the mother and the uncle. That's all the same we tribe. Dreaming been change over … That's we tribe.[16]

Different tribes are connected to each other; they are defined as 'mates'. They are not brothers, Old Tim said, but rather 'each one is for himself', as it follows along from mother and uncle (mother's brother).

16 Old Tim Yilngayarri, notebook 2, 83.

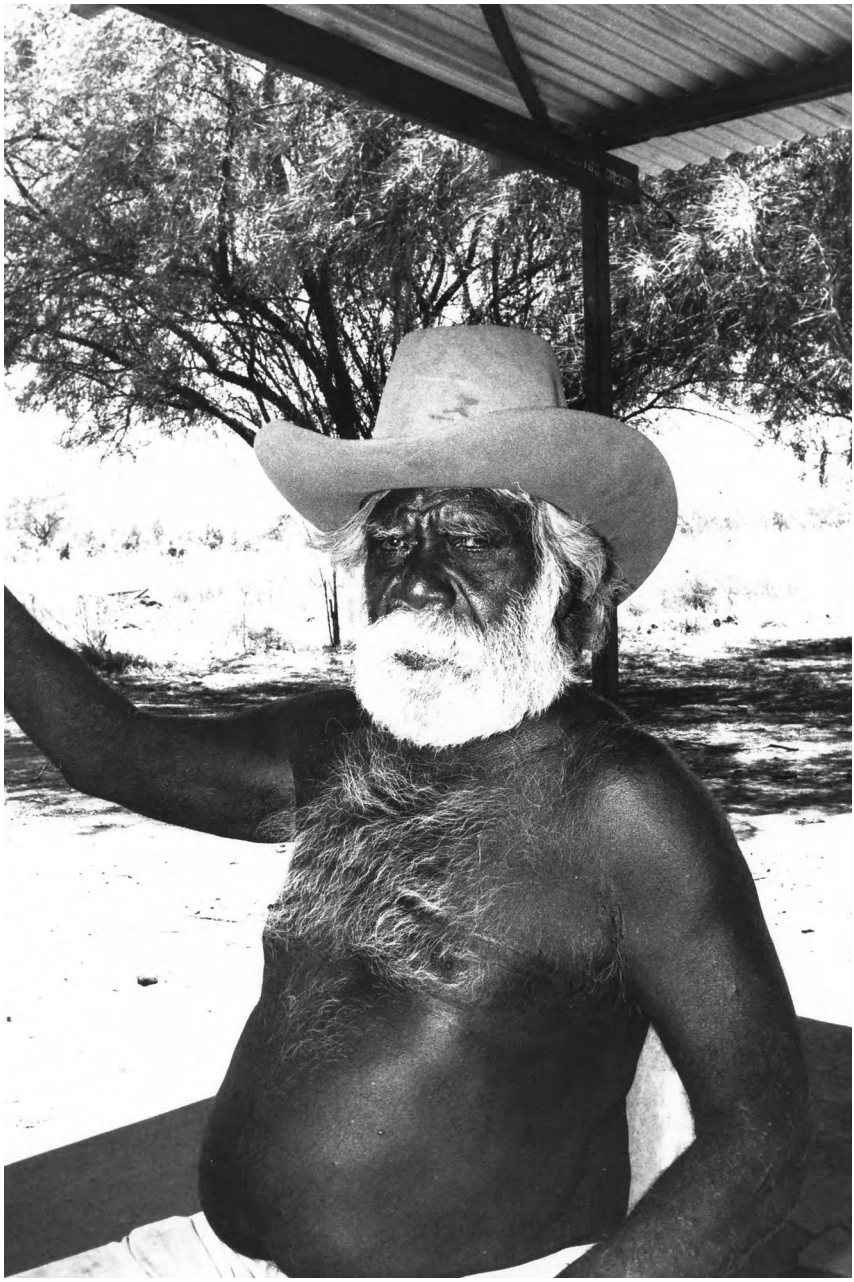


Figure 4.7. Old Tim Yilngayarri, Yarralin, c. 1981.
Source: Photograph by Darrell Lewis.

The underlying pattern has been discussed in relation to sacred geography: mutual interpenetration. Owlet nightjars, people and birds, share an essence such that humans and birds are mutually and interactively part of each other. Emus are the same, and the same relationships held between person and Country: the Country is in the person, the person is in the Country. These connectivities ramify in patterns of relationships.

Genres crosscut and overlap each other. Some of the owlet nightjar people are emu people because their mother was emu; but others are not because they had a different mother. It follows, therefore, that the members of a set of owlet nightjar people are both the same and different: the same by reason of being owlet nightjar, different by reason of their other, differing totemic relationships. As different genres crosscut each other, the people and other species who are related in one context are unrelated, or differentiated, in another context. Every boundary formed around a group of same genre folk is crosscut because people and others belong in multiple genres distinguished by context. The overlapping and crosscutting of relationships generate a mosaic of living things who are organised across species boundaries into relationships of care and interest.

Genres interrupt traditional anthropological accounts of structure and function in Aboriginal societies. From a genre perspective, the Country-based totemic clan is one among many genres rather than, as is often contended, the privileged social structure. The clan forms itself around totemic relations that are linked to Country, and the nexus of Country/Countrymen is a genre too. Footwalk epistemology is always emplaced, so the Country genre is powerfully pervasive, but it is not a singularity. Footwalk epistemology is also always on the move, and matrilineal genres may be encountered anywhere.

In addition, genres cut across western atomistic thought that would identify self or person as a singularity. The boundaries of the person are not coterminous with the body, and nor is it the case that because other people share a person's body, the person is thereby violated. On the contrary, the person achieves their maturity and integrity through relationships with people, animals, Country and Dreamings. Their being and becoming in the world exist in relation to other subjects, only some of whom are human beings. Subjectivity is not confined by the boundaries of the skin, but rather is sited both inside, on the surface of, and beyond the body. Subjects, then, are constructed both within and without; subjectivity is located within the site of the body, within the bodies of other people and

other species, and within the world in trees, rock holes, on rock walls and so on. Multiple sites of subjectivity crosscut the singularities of person, species, Country and genre, and while they do not and cannot extend indefinitely, they overlap with other sites of subjectivity which are crosscut by others, which overlap with others.

Footwalk epistemology invites us to think of process rather than structure. The consubstantialities of genre form the ripples or patterns that are the created world. Action in the world is morally directed toward sustaining these relational patterns—those of difference as well as those of sameness—through the care that is attentive to embodied subjectivity.

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Genres cut across contemporary social theory of self and other in a delightfully provocative way. Emmanuel Levinas is the great twentieth-century philosopher of ethical alterity. He seeks to undo western monistic philosophy 'by way of a passionate ethical protest' (quoted in Oppenheim 1997, 54). Levinas contends that the belief in the self's autonomy is a major obstacle to a life with others (Oppenheim 1997, 54), and his life's work moves away from the insular totalising self, and toward relationships. 'Self is not a substance but a relation', Levinas writes (1996, 20). He teaches an ethic of human connectivity:

> Consciousness and even subjectivity follow from, are legitimated by, the ethical summons which proceeds from the intersubjective encounter. Subjectivity arrives, so to speak, in the form of a responsibility toward an other. (Newton 1995, 12)

One of Levinas's key tropes in examining the ethical ground between self and other is the 'face'. In the concept of the face Levinas finds an unmediated ethical relation (Newton 1995, 12), a relation that calls forth subjectivity and responsibility.

The main critique that I want to bring into this dialogue originates with Luce Irigaray's 'Questions to Emmanuel Levinas' (Irigaray 1991, 109–18). Both Levinas and Irigaray agree that ethics must provide the foundation for philosophy (Oppenheim 1997, 54). Where they differ is over the specificity of the other. Levinas wants to efface difference, Irigaray maintains that erasure is violence; a system of intersubjective ethics cannot rest on erasure. To keep specificity, however, is to stay with embodiment, as in her use of

the term genre to differentiate genders. Subjectivity cannot be theorised through an either–or dichotomy of substance or relationships, but rather is *both* substance and relationship.

Another of Irigaray's questions concerns 'the face of the natural universe' (Critchley 1991, 182). For Irigaray, the embodiment of human specificity is inextricable from the embodiment of the world, and elsewhere she has queried the notion of mind disengaged from nature. This approach leads her to challenge Plato's view that true selfhood is achieved through disengagement with the body and the world. She asks:

> What could induce anyone to choose as the more visible, the more true, and ultimately the more valuable something that is merely named and that is intended to replace something else that has charmed your whole life? (quoted in Plumwood 1993, 97)

Irigaray's question concerning the face of the world interrogates the gap between nature and culture but does not continue to posit a stronger theory of non-humans as intersubjective others.

Martin Buber took a similarly ambiguous stand. His 'I–Thou' is a relationship of presentness and responsibility, and although his emphasis is on the inter-human, he also considers non-humans, including nature, God and works of art (cited in Martin 1970, 244–48). I do not want to underestimate the potential for dialogue with Buber, for his is a theology of encounter and presence. It does not seek to recover, or bury, an absent body, nor does it posit that God is hidden. I do, however, want to examine the limits of Buber's theology as an ecology, because it is at that boundary that footwalk epistemology can intervene dialogically. Buber's eloquent description of encountering a tree in the 'I–Thou' mode of intersubjectivity claims for nature a reciprocal subjectivity that is not animistic: 'What I encounter is neither the soul of a tree nor a dryad, but the tree itself' (Buber 1970 [1937], 59).

Aboriginal genres intervene around substance. It is not only that self is both substance and relationships, but even more strongly that substance/self is shared across bodies and across species. And then there is place. Footwalk epistemology brings emplacement into the analysis, and thus works toward patterns of proximity and connection. Buber's hypothetical encounter between person and tree would have to become far less imaginary; it would happen in place, in time, with the histories and relationships of the parties also present to the encounter. One would want to know what kind

of tree—Dreaming or ordinary, matrilineal flesh or not? And one would want to know what species, because different species have different ways of 'behaving' and thus offer their own specific beneficence in the world. All of this knowledge is part of the relationship, and thus demands the further question: who is the 'I' who encounters the tree? What is their genre, their place, their purpose?

Let us revisit the Dreaming Women and their billabong with its pandanus trees. Recall that Ivy's ethic includes non-human subjects within her world of care, communication and reciprocity. Her world is sentient, and its parts communicate. If life is always in relationship, and if communication is the evidence and much of the substance of relationships, then it follows that one of the deepest desires of all life is to be attended to, and one of the deepest practices of participation in living systems is to pay attention. If we put deep attention together with connection, we find an intersubjectivity articulated through encounter. This is a footwalk intersubjectivity. Encounter happens in the coming forth of life in the world across multiple subjectivities. It is actualised through motion, that brings living things into each other's presence.

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