POSTCOLONIAL IMPERATIVES IN REPRESENTING THE INDIGENOUS SACRED: A YANYUWA CASE-STUDY

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I need to acknowledge the extraordinary generosity of Yanyuwa people whose website it is I write about and without whose continuing collaboration this paper could not have been written.

Website addresses:
Main Diwurruwurru (Messagestick) site:
http://arts.deakin.edu.au/diwurruwurru (follow the links to Yanyuwa)

Satellite sites:
http://arts.deakin.edu.au/metacogs;
http://arts.deakin.edu.au/bcec (Borroloola Community Education Centre)

Introduction

Despite decades of poststructuralist postcolonialism, the binaries are difficult to evade and avoid, and more so in the area of the sacred. Gelder and Jacobs make strenuous attempts in *Uncanny Australia* to deconstruct the categories of sacredness and politics, and still the trace of the binaries under erasure rule in subsequent discussions of that book. Important as it is, this book is bedevilled by more significant silences, notably its content-free, not to say agnostic version of the sacred.[1] However, the issue of the

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[1] Gelder, Ken and Jacobs, Jane, *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998.

Aboriginal sacred and how it is to be understood is, probably, the most crucial issue of our generation. This is true for Aboriginal people whose cultural survival depends on the debate biting deep, and also for white Australians. It is also crucial for white Australia which has found ways of accommodating a range of cultural 'plurabilities' (to borrow an elegant Joycean coinage) under the banner of multiculturalism, but continues to deal sometimes with good heart but uneasily, adversarily, and often disastrously and appropriatively[2] with Aboriginal Australia.

This paper documents a project, the Diwurruwurru website, and its satellite sites, among them Metacogs[3] which attempt in a small and inevitably partial and compromised way to address the issue of the Yanyuwa sacred, or at least that part of it which is public, and aims in its methodologies to ensure that it is Aboriginal voices who control their representation in cyberspace. From the Yanyuwa point of view the project is intended to build bridges of reconciliation and understanding between themselves and whitefellas. This paper explores how the project has attempted to resolve a number of postcolonial dilemmas, by examining the prehistory of the site, its collaborative protocols and the postcolonial imperatives which drive the website the dilemmas attendant upon them.

The Prehistory of the Website

The Diwurruwurru website and its satellite site has a European-focussed prehistory, in the sense that it arose originally out of a pedagogical imperative in a university course in Australian Studies taught exclusively to white,

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[2] McConaghy, Cathryn , 'Notes Towards the Cultural Politics of the Web (as Performative Postcolonial Pedagogy', Unpublished paper, 1998.
[3] The main Yanyuwa webpage is at URL:
http://arts.deakin.edu.au/diwurruwurru (follow link to Yanyuwa); the satellite site, Metacogs, which is intended for Literary Studies studients, is at http://arts.deakin.edu.au/metacogs

middle-class students of literature. After 1988, it was possible to teach Aboriginal literature and to use texts that were exclusively Aboriginal-authored. It was difficult to do so, though, in ways unmediated by colonialist and occasionally postcolonial anthropology. In the context of the build-up to the Mabo legislation in the early 1990s, the allusion to Aboriginal 'dreamtime' narratives in contemporary plays (especially in Jack Davis's *Kullark* trilogy),[4] poetry (Mudrooroo's *The Song-Circle of Jacky*)[5] and novels (especially those of Mudrooroo[6]) were problematic for students whose main exposure was via decontextualised[7] books of the ubiquitous Roberts and Mountford coffee-table variety,[8] or even their more adult counterpart in Berndt's *The Speaking Land*,[9] which seemed to me to 'other' and to trivialise their subjects, to reduce the complex to overly simple creation myths or moral fables, or at worst to the merely and academically anthropological. There was no power in them, and yet the literary artefacts rolling off the presses in the late 1980s, were powerfully political. They may have constituted a cynical attempt to engender the bicentennial reader,[10] but I think more genuinely two-way cultural understandings were then beginning to be negotiated with the mainstream culture.

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[4] Davis, Jack, *Kullark (Home), The Dreamers*, Paddington (N.S.W.): Currency, rev. edn., 1984, and *No Sugar*, Sydney: Currency, 1986.
[5] Mudrooroo (previously known as Colin Johnson), *The Song Circle of Jacky and Selected Poems*, Melbourne : Hyland House, 1986
[6] Especially *Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World*
(Melbourne: Hyland House, 1983) and *Master of the Ghost Dreaming: A Novel* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1991).
[7] The most reductive form of decontextualisation was the erasure of the link between place and story, and understanding which is most evocatively explored in Tilley (Tilley, Christopher, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments*, Oxford: BERG, 1994) in relation to neolithic European sites.
[8] Roberts, Ainslie and Mountford, Charles P., *The Dawn of Time: Australian Aboriginal myths in paintings,* Adelaide: Rigby, 1969.
[9] Berndt, Ronald M. and Berndt, Catherine H., *The Speaking Land: Myth and Story in Aboriginal Australia*, Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1989.
[10] Ommundsen, Wenche, 'Engendering the Bicentennial Reader: Sally Morgan, Mark Henshaw and the critics', *Span*, 36, vol. I, 1993, 251-263.

Like the life stories, the novels and the plays, the dot paintings making their way into galleries were not just aesthetic objects, and commentators like Peter Sutton were alerting us to the reasons for their intensity and commitment and their semiotic polyvalency.[11] My imagination and that of my students was fired by two different kinds of texts that became available in the early 1990s: the brilliant Magabala Press production of *Tjarany/Roughtail*[12] and Stephen Muecke's conversations with Paddy Roe about country. What the glib axioms, 'land is life', or 'Aboriginal identity is vested in the land' might mean at a deeper level began to take on more substance: first in *Tjarany*, the inalienable link between particular place and story was made clear, and the painting/maps of country provided more and different 'reading' challenges; in addition, Muecke and Roe's attentiveness to Aboriginal oral structures (in Gularabulu[13]) and to different culturally contingent deep structures of understanding of country in *Reading the Country* were revolutionary. [14]

However, the most radically informative text that was available to me in this period was a film, *Buwarrala Akarriya/Journey East*, made by Yanyuwa people to educate their young boys which documents a ritual journey undertaken in 1988 to a formerly 'big place'.[15] The intent of the film was to cross into country that had not been visited by large numbers of people in over forty years,

[11] Sutton, Peter (ed.) 1988, *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, New York: Viking, 1988

[12] Greene, Gracie, *Tjarany : Tjaranykura Tjukurrpa Ngaanpa Kalkinpa Wangka Tjukurrtjanu = Roughtail :The Dreaming of the Roughtail Lizard And Other Stories told by the Kukatja* (Gracie Greene, Joe Tramacchi, Lucille Gill), Broome, W.A. : Magabala Books, 1992.

[13] Roe, Paddy, edited by Stephen Muecke, *Gularabulu: Stories of the West Kimberley*, Fremantle, W.A.: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1983.

[14] Benterrak, Krim, Muecke, Stephen, and Roe, Paddy; with Ray Keogh, Butcher Joe (Nangan), *Reading the Country : Introduction to Nomadology*, Fremantle, W.A.: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1984.

[15] *Buwarrala Akarriya/Journey East* (1989), Marndaa Productions (Yanyuwa Community; producer: Debbie Sonnenberg).

because of the ways in which Welfare and the pastoral industry disrupted traditional travelling patterns. Christianity was a minor player in this process. The journey across the ninety kilometres of country started in country well known, moved into country not known and then finished in country that most people knew about at a number of levels but the emotional impact of being there *en masse* was what moved people (personal communication with John Bradley).

The film spelt out the relationship between land, story, food, kinship, Law, and more importantly from the point of view of my students, the politics of land expropriation and despoliation by grazing interests and the complex politics of 'coming in', leaving the traditional homelands in the Edward Pellew group, and moving along with three other surviving 'nations' into Borroloola. It was also indirectly useful for helping students understand Mabo and Wik legislation and the implications of Australian government policy in relation to stolen generations, assimilation and resettlement, not to mention the outstations movement. Its focus on a particular community and place was a key virtue of the film: it made no claims to pan-Aboriginalism. Yanyuwa people spoke for themselves, with passion and confidence. They operated cameras, using an unfamiliar style of wide angle shots of groups (and often just feet) that were constructed self-consciously to represent their links with country. They collaborated with editors on the cutting room floor, devised and recorded the narrative. It remains a remarkable artefact, especially given the level of educational disadvantage of Borroloola, the second most remote place in Australia (according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics) and a place with a long history of systematic racial violence (some of it only now beginning to be recorded) stretching back to 1886. The original prototype of the Diwurruwurru site, supported even at this early stage by the community, was an attempt to value-add to this film (using CD-Rom technology) to make it more

comprehensible to our students. However, it quickly became clear that a more radical and collaborative postcolonial manoeuvre was necessary.

Nature of On-Going Collaboration with Yanyuwa People & Consultative Protocols

The go-ahead from the community to use the film was negotiated via many gatekeepers over many years, and the process led me to a number of researchers whose work was mouldering on shelves, in theses and arcane anthropological journals a few academics only read. The community often express the feeling that when researchers return to their universities, Yanyuwa culture is lost. Some researchers, notably John Bradley (an anthropologist, ethnobiologist and gifted linguist), the oral historian/geographer/archaeologist Richard Baker, and ethnomusicologist Elizabeth Mackinlay, were keen to repatriate their research and make it useful to the community. These researchers know that papers, photos and books are perilously damageable in the cyclonic conditions and overcrowded housing, that there are no appropriate keeping places, and that often material is in an academic language not useable by the community. On the other hand, such research has been crucial to and instrumental in defending land claims and is supremely valued, and so, digital-archiving on web for public material and CD-Rom for private use, seems to go some way to meeting the particularised needs of the community. Elders are also acutely aware that since schooling started in the 1950s that there are three generations with a relatively tenuous hold on language and knowledge of country and see the new media (originally film and video, and now IT)[16]

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[16] To this end a school site is also being constructed at
http://arts.deakin.edu.au/bcec

as potential allies in cultural and linguistic retrieval, reclamation and revivification.[17]

The project changed mightily as we set up the consultative protocols. These included:

- a wide-ranging reference group, Li-Wirdiwalangu Li-Yanyuwa, which links up community members and academics in Borroloola, Darwin, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne and Geelong every few months.
- a commitment to many visits (the importance of building relationships and face-to-face dealings cannot be underestimated) in order to seek permissions and collaborate on the site being built, unfortunately because of lack of expertise in Borroloola, in Melbourne and Geelong.

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[17] Yanyuwa people are not alone among Indigenous peoples in embracing IT technology and realising its political and cultural potential. See Goodall (Goodall, Heather, 'Working with History: Experiments in Aboriginal History and Hypermedia', *UTS Review*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1996:43-57., Richardson (Richardson, Nick, *The Bush Track Meets the Information Superhighway*, n.p.: Australian Film Commission, 1997), Buchtmann (Buchtmann, Lydia, 'Digital Songlines: the Use of Modern Communication Technology by an Aboriginal Community in Remote Australia', *Prometheus*, Vol. 18, no. 1, 2000: 59-74), and Zimmerman (in Zimmerman, Larry J., Zimmerman, Karen P, Bruguier, Leonard R. 2000, 'Cyberspace Smoke Signals: New Technologies and Native American Ethnicity', in Claire Smith and Graeme K. Ward (eds.), *Indigenous Cultures in an Interconnected World*, St. Leonards (N.S.W.):Allen & Unwin., 2000: 69-86). Buchtmann 2000 reports the motives of Warlpiri people in adopting the new media (including on-line) as being the restoration of traditional forms of communication disrupted by colonisation; Aboriginal self-determination in the areas of health, education and entertainment, and the practical employment opportunities afforded. She argues that they located the new technologies within existing cultural systems and exploited both the new forms of technology and the new funding that was available. See also Garde, Murray, 'From a Distance: Aboriginal Music in the Maningrida Community and on their Internet Site', Perfect Beat, vol. 4, no. 1, July, 1998: 4-18, and Hobson, John, 'Where are all the Aboriginal Home Pages?: The Current Indigenous Australian Presence on the WWW', paper presented at the Fifth International Literacy and Education Research Network Conference, Alice Springs, 1997, at http://www.koori.usyd.edu.au/lern/default.html

It became clear that, useful as it is as a text to understand the Yanyuwa sacred, the film which generated the project was nonetheless more controversial within the community than I at first realised. It is limited in scope. The film and the original prototype site dealt with only ten mainland sacred sites in a territory which mainly comprises the islands of the Sir Edward Pellew group. The first prototype entered mythic sacred territory more peremptorily and directly than was consistent with understanding the relationships between Country and other aspects of Yanyuwa life, so we agreed to abandon the film as primary focus. The site could achieve more, speak for the community more effectively and reach different cohorts of institutional users if built along the lines of a dynamic and expanding virtual museum, so this decision necessitated a small change of technology. In line with an awareness that any mediated formulation of culture runs the risk locking a culture into essentialising identities,[18] a decision was taken to use the web for delivery because of the ease with which changing cultural formations could be registered, and to put secret/sacred or private material on CD-Rom so that families and elders could control access to it. Passwords are used for family photos in cases where families want to control access to ancestor photos.

Once it became clear that the community embraced the technology as a means to educate young Yanyuwa people and to reach out to teach whitefellas about their culture, the first major shift in designing the site was to refashion it with community in mind and to abandon a directly pedagogical focus (though a Yanyuwa pedagogy is implicit, I hope, in the design and content). We relegated epistemology and theory to the first of what I expect will be a series of discipline-inflected satellite sites which interrogate the main site (http://arts.deakin.edu.au/metacogs). Metacogs foregrounds representational and epistemological

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[18] Zimmerman et al, *op.cit.*, p.76.

isssues, invites students to think of *kujika*, dreaming narratives, as a kind of genre comparable with and different from oral song cycles like the Arthuriad or opera, and invites thinking about how the genres differ, and how differently the sacred is constructed in indigenous and European cultures. Students are invited to think about how kinship is related to land, the multiple functions performed by dreaming stories, about how the Yanyuwa see themselves ontologically and how different it is from European ontologies. The second iteration of the site made it more suitable for students in a variety of disciplines. Adrienne Campbell, our gifted Deakin web-designer, has had to be adaptive to the changing postcolonial imperatives and has patiently and creatively embraced the required major design alterations.

Postcolonial Imperatives Driving Diwurruwurru Website

In the second major iteration of the main Diwurruwurru site a new set of imperatives, both practical and postcolonially inflected, became operational: the site had to aim to:

- use Yanyuwa voices (and a range of them) – where possible bilingual versions of myth are used;
- speak directly and as frequently as possible in Yanyuwa - preservation and restoration of threatened languages are one of the most promising uses for cyber technology;[19]
- be rejigged to accommodate the more visual and oral learning styles of Yanyuwa users of it and to minimise what had been a heavy reliance on text;
- employ, when not directly relying on Yanyuwa voices, a user-friendly, non-academic language (more formal papers, endorsed by Yanyuwa people, are to be found in the Resources subsection;[20]

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[19] *Ibid.*, p.77.
[20] See http://arts.deakin.edu.au/diwurruwurru/yanyuwa/resources and go to Online Papers on drop-down menu.

- represent Yanyuwa using their understandings, paradigms; and
- demonstrate, without hype, the everyday cultural sophistication and systematisation of Yanyuwa culture.

The issue of 'understanding understandings not our own' (Geertz 1983: 5) and imagining what others might want to know that a culture familiar with itself takes for granted are a continual challenge, and one directly faced both in the Metacogs satellite site where hermeneutic and epistemological issues are the direct focus, and in methodologies used in the main site. For example, in the History section of the site,[21] the narrative is built from oral histories done in the 1980s with every adult member of the community by a selfconsciously postcolonial historian, Richard Baker.[22] It uses Yanyuwa concepts of post-contact periods of history, already a politicised history: Macassan Times; Wild Times; Cattle Times; Police Times; Welfare Times; Land Rights Times; (These) Tourist Times.

Although that part of the site is image-rich, it could be much enhanced by much heavier reliance on the existing audio-tapes which are expensive to transcribe and mount ($500 per hour of recording), but this is a very important potentiality of the site which I hope the future will embrace. Similarly, there are opportunities for using much more archival and existing film material in the Performance subsection. There is, too, an unpublished dictionary of Yanyuwa compiled over ten years by John Bradley, which because of its illustrations and thesaurus/encyclopaedic style of operation, would brilliantly translate into a huge subsection of the site and where hypertext links would be an advance on the printed text. At present, we wait for a glossary of just a handful of words translated into the four

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[21] http://arts.deakin.edu.au/diwurruwurru/yanyuwa/history
[22] Baker, Richard, *Land Is Life: From Bush To Town - The Story of the Yanyuwa People*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999.

languages.[23] Although already a huge site (with about five thousabd documents on it), we are seeing only the tiniest fraction of the culture: four admittedly crucial *kujika* (dreaming stories) out of thousands, and a handful of stories that belong to particular sites.

Postcolonial Dilemmas

The major challenge the site currently represents is that, although very active as consultants, Yanyuwa people are not yet authoring on site and it does not yet have a home in Borroloola. Infrastructure is part of the problem but only a small part of it compared with the educational disadvantage of the owners. There are a handful of tertiary-educated people, often currently unemployed, but none has web-authoring skills as yet. Plans are underfoot to introduce web-authoring into the school, and in the longer term to establish VET and eventually university-based IT courses, but it is necessarily a gradualist and longterm plan, which we would love to get philanthropic organisations interested in. Once Yanyuwa people are authoring on site and the site is located on Yanyuwa country (an outcome desired by all parties), presumably much will change, even probably fundamentally. Firsthand Yanyuwa IT web-authoring competence may well deliver a very different fundamental design, something that the current designers and elders are fully aware of.

There are other fundamental postcolonial issues which the site raises. A binary which bedevils thinking, and which needs to be continually dismantled, is the traditional/ modern. Like any community, Yanyuwa people occupy a diverse range of subject positions in relation to cultural expression. However, these are infinitely more dynamic and hybrid as race (including mixed race and stolen

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[23] Bradley, John with Jean Kirton and the Yanyuwa Community, Yanyuwa Wuka. Language from Yanyuwa Country. A Yanyuwa Dictionary and Cultural Resource. Unpublished manuscript, 1992.

generation members, and even whitefellas who are deemed to be Yanyuwa, of which there are a few), gender, generation, institutional location and education, and geopolitical locale effect subtle differences in what it means to be a Yanyuwa subject. Those most influential in shaping the site, a group of women elders and middle generation women, place themselves at the more traditional end of the spectrum but they agree that there is a place on the *People and Everyday Life* pages for those who live outside country, and allow that those not as deeply woven into the traditional life of the culture and those living remotely from Yanyuwa Country have a place on the site. This polyphony is important because, although one expects debate and conflict within such a community especially over matters of cultural capital, adherence to a traditionalist orthodoxy or a limited range of Yanyuwa performativity could jeopardise the site.

It is crucial to the future of this site that metanarratives of progress and modernity be questioned (something the History subsection attempts to do) and that traditional notions of the sacred be not relegated to prehistory, or indeed separated from politics, another often exclusionary binary. Metacogs, the satellite site, implicitly critiques the notion of the sacred as prehistorical and pre-political; the main site does so implicitly. The sacred represented on this site is archaic and the Yanyuwa insist on this (the rhetoric and belief is that Law is unchangeable), but it is certainly not outmoded and it is certainly being re-visioned, often in response to European pressures (eg., in response to Landclaim legal requirements). European ethnocentrism with its stagist and progressivist historiography is implicitly interrogated by a new and challenging subaltern historiography. What the site intends is to demonstrate the need for a hermeneutic in which thought and meaning is

'intimately tied to places and to particular forms of life'[24] and a historiography in which time can be circular, the past and present and future overlapping and in dynamic interplay.

Another difficult binary which seems commonsense but which presents huge difficulties in relation to traditional knowledge is the male/female one. The fact that Li-Wirdiwalangu Li-Yanyuwa, the reference group, comprises mainly indigenous women (there are two active men and no middle – or younger-generation men) is in fact hugely problematic in a culture which has separate and complementary spheres for women and men. This absence of representation of men on the site constitutes one of the most destructive outcomes of colonialism in that men and boys since the 1920s have been required to leave Yanyuwa country to work as cattlemen and in that process have lost subtler ties to country, some deeper knowledge of it, and language. The knowledge of men's business which women have, but often feel they cannot acknowledge in mixed company, and the work currently being done on language to some small extent redresses that imbalance, but it remains a worrying structural cultural issue for Yanyuwa people. There is need on the website to celebrate women's very active traditional life and to do so in a way that is attentive to the perils of eclipsing the proud traditions and relatively impoverished present life led by men. Where younger generation men tend to be active is in the political sphere, in such institutions as Mabunji, the organisation which looks after the Outstations. One of our participants is a senior man at Mabunji, and there is scope on site for foregrounding the more empirical, pragmatic, day-to-day politics arising out of health, education, housing and land politics.

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[24] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. p.16.

One of the empowering aspects of the website is its encompassing of a variety of discourses and ways of being Yanyuwa, its refusal of disciplinary boundaries: the sacred can be political; it can express itself through care for the breeding grounds of dugongs,[25] or by mapping out a plan to improve Yanyuwa input into the delivery of health services. So, the site has to refuse locating Yanyuwa people in the traditional mould, and to focus on the multiplicity of ways in which traditional understandings are being dynamically and strategically reformulated in response to colonisation and decolonisation. *Buwarrala Akarriya* is an example of neo-traditionalism (comparable to the work of Third World film-makers in its critique), a thoroughly modern and politicised defence of an archaic way of relating to land, and a demonstration of new ways of doing so. It constitutes Bhabha's 'transformational' 'hybrid moment of political change',[26] as does the existence in its current form of the website itself. The video documentary, *A Dying Shame,* a savage indictment of health bureaucracy, and another use of modern technology made exclusively by Yanyuwa people, is another example and the critique and solutions it proffers are not just materialist ones, but oppositional and subversive ones that speak directly to the hegemonic culture and use its media to do so. They focus on the need to value the subaltern culture, to build cultural self-esteem through cultural revival and pride. There is much work to be done on the highly strategic nature of Yanyuwa hybridity. Spivak's and Bhabha's warnings about the interests of western capital in keeping such cultures economically and politically dominated[27] perhaps needs to be updated in the light of the kinds of opportunities afforded by new media which are increasingly being used by subaltern groups.

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[25] See Bradley, John, Li-anthawirriyarra, People of the Sea: Yanyuwa Relations with their Maritime Environment. Ph.D. thesis, Northern Territory University, 1997.

[26] Bhabha, Homi K. 1994, *The Location of Culture,* London: Routledge, 1994. p.28.

[27] Ibid., p.20.

Another issue which is more than a category problem in devising the design of the site is whether we needed a separate subsection for *Performance*. There is a case for including *Performance* under *Country*, given that performance traditionally is linked to sites in country. However, the History subsection of site makes clear the ways in which Yanyuwa people came away from their traditional lands and into town, and the tentative movement back onto them by way of the Outstations movement. Furthermore, not all performance is sacred in nature, though even what we might call secular songs, in Yanyuwa, *A-nguyulnguyul*, or funsongs,[28] often allude to sacred phenomena. However, the determining argument for separating them out, in a separation which in some ways reflects European categorisation rather than Yanyuwa holistic practice, was Yanyuwa people's acknowledgement that much performance in the post-colonial period occurs in Borroloola itself or at festivals like Lijakarda, Barunga, or more recently Garrma or for the Spirit of Australia Qantas advertisement. These opportunities, some of which could be seen to be exploitative, nonetheless have the potential to assert the existence and vitality of a culture which barely makes it, or does so inaccurately, into Tindale's 'authoritative' map of Australian tribes of 1974 and whose language was first set down in any complete form only in 1992.[29] This dictionary, as mentioned above, remains unpublished.

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[28] Mackinlay, Elizabeth, For Our Mother's Song We Sing: Yanyuwa Women Performers and Composers of A-nguyulnguyul. Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Adelaide, 1998, and Bradley, John and Mackinlay, Elizabeth, *Songs from a Plastic Water Rat: An Introduction to the Musical Traditions of the Yanyuwa Community of the Southwest Gulf of Carpentaria*. St. Lucia, Queensland: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit, 2000.
[29] Tindale, Norman B., *Aboriginal Tribes Of Australia: Their Terrain, Environmental Controls, Distribution, Limits, and Proper Names*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

A further postcolonial dilemma is posed by the need to use translations of Yanyuwa and Garrwa. This is done in the hope of protecting, preserving and promoting highly complex and elaborated languages which have fewer and fewer speakers. There are many different methods used on site: bilingual translations, free translations and transliterations, but what continues to concern me is the politics of translation and the inevitable incommensurabilities of different languages,[30] especially the plainness of the translations, and ways of expressing affect which present difficulties for non-indigenous users of the site. How even to convey the feeling for particular sites, for what strikes my eyes as the most ravishingly beautiful of lagoons, when I do not observe Yanyuwa people talking about them in English in aesthetic terms at all (though they do so in Yanyuwa), when affect is expressed by action, for example burning the land and pleasure is derived from that sight.[31] It is to learn a different and more vernacular form of aestheticising[32] and one unfamiliar to Anglo-Saxon usages (though less surprising to those from an Irish background), to shake the cultural frames for the non-indigenous reader of the site. Aesthetics is not the same in Yanyuwa as in English, and to begin to tease that out, dialogue is central. So much of culture is language, and yet culture is much more, and more familiar and homely. Time and time again, one rubs one's nose up against the unpalatable fact that even a small-scale culture cannot be adequately represented in any media, much less cyber-technology. The consolation is that the goal of the exercise is reciprocity, building understandings, and deconstructing

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[30] See Becker, A. L., *Beyond Translation: Essays toward a Modern Philology*, Ann Arbor (Michigan): University of Michigan Press, 1995 and Chakrabarty, op. cit.

[31] See Bradley, John, Fire: Emotion and Politics: A Yanyuwa Case Study, Proceedings of the 1994 Symposium on Biodiversity and fire in North Australia, http://kaos.environment.gov.au/portfolio/esd/biodiv/newsletters/biodivser_3/fire6.html

[32] Becker, *op.cit.*, p.300

the translations and glossing them when translation fails. The process is both deficient and exuberant, indeed utopian.[33]

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[33] *Ibid.*, pp.298-9.