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"The paradigm of Indigenous Australians: anthropological phantasms, artistic creations, and political resistance"

The Indigenous Australians are still too often identified as a supposedly prehistoric prototype, survivors from the Stone Age, because they were not producing iron at the time of colonisation two centuries ago. However, on going to live in the Australian desert in 1979, with the elders who had experienced the first contact of colonization in their infancy, living the life of semi-nomadic hunters before their confinement to a reserve, I was struck by something very modern in their relationships to images, to the body, and to dreams. This sense of modernity — some would say postmodernity — can be explained thus: the West experienced a paradigm shift in entering the audiovisual universe and then that of the internet, but the generalized connectedness which characterises the use of new technologies is also — in my view — a specific feature of the creative manipulation of myths and rituals carried out by the Indigenous Australians. In fact, the Indigenous Australians themselves use dream images as an associative memory, an articulate and contemporary virtual matrix to explain the dynamism of their combinations and connections, which are semantic, analogical and performative all at once. All the mythical narratives are rooted in the landscape: they move from place to place throughout the whole continent like narrated and sung serials relayed andpassed on from group to group. Each narrative is an itinerary. It recounts the epic tale of ancestral heroes, animals, plants, fire or the rain, who have left their traces as features of the landscape: hills or waterholes. These heroes are the ancestors of different groups to which they give their names, what anthropology has called totems.

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

Bruce Chatwin's Australian novel *Songlines* has met with a lot of critical acclaim since its publication in 1987 for its long reflection on nomadism which compares Indigenous Australians to other groups. In order to explain the Aboriginal "songlines", Chatwin uses the metaphor of a dish of spaghetti. This may be a fruitful image for conveying the complexity of the entanglements of the songs and narratives that criss-cross the Australian continent. But there is also a risk of confusion in this image, as it gives a false idea of Aboriginal territoriality: that as semi-nomads the Indigenous Australians do nothing but move around, travel, and shift from place to place. In fact, they also lived in places to which they were and still remain very strongly attached: places they named and which are as much memory traces or engrams of collective mythical and historical heritage as they are of familial and individual experiences. As it happens those songs enumerate names of places and are all linked to such or such a named stage in the journeys of the totemic beings who are all described as moving from one place to another.

A lack of awareness of the importance for Indigenous Australians of places as memory engrams can lead to major misunderstandings, such as that of the French anthropologist Paul Topinard, who in the nineteenth century came to interpret in an "inhuman" manner his meeting with an Aborigine in Paris. The scene, which occurred in 1885, is recounted by Roslyn Poignant (2004) in an excellent collection of papers entitled *Zoos humains* (*Human Zoos*):

> "Replying to Topinard, who was asking him about his notion of time, Billy [the Aboriginal man] listed the names of all the places he and his companions had passed through since they had left their region of Northern Queensland nearly three years previously, taken from there by the showman R.A. Cunningham to be exhibited in entertainment halls in America and Europe. One woman by the name of Jenny and her young son, Toby, also witnessed the meeting. The three of them were the only survivors of a group which numbered nine individuals at the start."[1]

Ten days later Jenny's husband died of tuberculosis in Paris. Roslyn Poignant stresses that the French academic Topinard did not understand "the importance of Billy's performance" in listing for him all the places in the world the Aboriginal group had passed through over three years. Topinard observes that when Billy was interrupted he resumed speaking "from the previous town" but the anthropologist drew from this the conclusion that Billy simply had a prodigious "automatic" memory. Instead Roslyn Poignant reminds us that it is actually a case of "transforming a method of

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[1] This quote is translated from French, we apologise if the original text in English was published elsewhere.Aknowlegments to Eriks Minette who translates and Charles Wolfe who gives a second reading at this quote and at this paper. s

conceptualising space by developing it", consisting of memorising the configuration of the terrain and the stages of the journey, rendering an account of this tour of the world and, Poignant suggests, a method of potentially "locating – or even anticipating — the way to return home, to Palm Island".

Here we will examine the relationship between a traditional ontology of semi-nomadic Indigenous Australians living by hunting and gathering, and the links with the land and the territories of their descendents — who, having been removed from their lands, forced to become sedentary, and separated from their families, are today searching for ways to go back to their roots on territories which they have not grown up on. Australian law since 1993 indeed privileges the principle of Native Title inheritance on condition that Aboriginal heirs can prove continuous occupation of the territory together with sustained cultural practices (hunting, rituals, etc.). In an attempt to legitimise the territorial claims of exiled Indigenous Australians, Benjamin Smith (2006) talks of their attachment to certain territories in a way that cannot be reduced to nationalist motives, and this for an excellent reason: Indigenous Australians created stateless societies, but above all — as we will see — the logic of territorial inscription does not function as a form of collective or national identity. I also sometimes describe Indigenous Australians as "internal refugees", exiled from their lands even if they live in Australia. But in order to understand this attachment to the land which is at issue for Indigenous Australians, it will be necessary to take a step and revisit some notions of ontology, particularly in the light of certain current debates which contrast identity in terms of territorial rootedness, and diaspora.

Totemism and connectedness

Lévi-Strauss, in his *The Savage Mind*, remarks in passing that the Australian myths recounted by various missionaries in the nineteenth century are hardly appealing as they often consist of a simple list of toponyms. That which bothers the anthropologist in his search for meaning becomes a goldmine for those who know how to unpack the information condensed within each toponym.

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

The connections link these event-narratives:

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

The cognitive complexity of the network of Australian toponyms constitutes what I have called Aboriginal mind maps (Glowczewski 1996, 2000).

Let us try first of all to follow the dynamic and "connecting" aspect of a songline. We know today that language and song are not located in the same hemisphere of the brain. In other words that which happens in song is not only of the order of speech but is also of the order of sound, pitch, the body, tone, and also the imprint of sound on its immediate surroundings, whether it be the echo, the soil or every person expected to hear this sound. A songline is thus like a flow, a soundvibration, which runs from place to place, which emerges or vanishes, each place being thought of as the trace or imprint of the diverse activities of totemic beings (Tamisari, 1998; Glowczewski, 2004).

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

It is necessary that each new connection passes through a kind of a black box: a dream-like or visionary experience. The interpretation of dreams and visions must be validated by the visionary's entourage as a real revelation of the Dream ancestors by being notably localized in one or more places. Dreaming, in the Aboriginal sense, is what I have called a relative time-space: indeed, Dreaming both traces back the formation of the pre-human landscape and has a present dimension, that of a virtual life which continues to guide not only humans but also the universe. To summarise, the networks of Aboriginal songs already resemble a complex system. Like the Internet, it cannot really be fixed down, other connections are always possible, but it is necessary to recognise some sites in order to validate the activities from whichthese links emerge. These sites — for the Indigenous Australians — are both geographical and virtual in the sense that they are like portals to another dimension. The desert Warlpiri say, for example, that through one site one can reach all the others, a holographic image in which each part already contains the whole.[2]

Howard Morphy has demonstrated very well the epistemological and performative importance — for the Yolgnu of Arnhem Land — of ancestral connections: the title of one of his books is *Ancestral Connections* (1991). The Yolgnu became famous under the name of the Murngin through Warner's *Black Civilisation* (1937) and then through what Lévi-Strauss' called "the Murngin system". The Yolgnu are also the producers of most of the bark art in the Karel Kupka collection held at the Musée du quai Branly in Paris, the Basel Ethnographic Museum (Museum der Kulturen, Basel) and the Canberra National Gallery), an art form which is remarkable for its paintings in the form of meshings, such as weavings or baskets, crosspieces of lines which form crosshatchings or "diamonds", as the Yolngu say to express the brilliance and the value of these painted structures[3]. It is precisely the kinetic effect of these

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[2] See also Wagner, 2001

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

intercrossed lines — whose visual formula differs from clan to clan — which expresses the principle of connections, amongst others. Many other words in the language translate that also: for example, *likan*, the "elbow", a part of the body thought in terms of the concept of linking. Jessica De Largy Healy (2007) works on the connectionist dynamism of the Yolgnu on the visual as well as performative level. Together we have published a book (Glowczewski and De Largy Healy, 2005) which compares precisely the Yolgnu way of translating connections with the ways of the Walpiri and their desert neighbours, whose graphical system is different: the famous network of circles/sites linked by lines/paths against a background of small dots that the contemporary art market has been familiar with for thirty years.

Since my first encounters with the Indigenous Australians in 1979, I have been very much impressed by the priority they seem to accord to an existential "future" rather than to the essence of a substance's meaning. The territorial identity of semi-nomadic hunter gatherers is defined as something hollow, as an absence. The tracker who hunts looks for prints to catch the prey: the trace of the absence is the sole proof that an action has taken place. In Aboriginal languages very complex concepts often insist on this notion of trace which is thought of as the only authenticity: the image in this sense is always true as it traces out the action which made it be inscribed on the ground, on the body or on an object.

Everyone carries within themselves a multitude of futures, including totemic futures: we are always a constellation of totems, not just a single totem. These totemic futures, some with behavioural and appearance characteristics, are virtual: they are only actualised when humans get busy with them through singing, dancing, or forming alliances according to certain rules. If they do not do so, it doesn't work. In order to exist in totemistic futures it is necessary to become connected to places which act as wells of attraction, a little in the image of synapses which according to physicists and biologists are now thought of as being dynamic and connected up according to certain laws of affinity.

The multiplicity of Aboriginal avatars as a bodily extension of such or such an ancestor, human or non human, assumes a multiplicity of points of view that I called, twenty years ago, a topological form of holography. [4] Australian "totemism", across all its local variants, insists on the fact that humans are the avatars of animals, but also plants and everything that is named within culture and nature, including places. For this reason places are simultaneously localized and subject to displacement: they walk with their avatars on dream pathways which leave identifiable and personifiable traces.

Indigenous Australians speak of the "Dreaming", an English translation of local concepts expressed in different terms according to the Aboriginal language — there is

[4] E. Viveiros de Castro, « Les pronoms cosmologiques et le perspectivisme amérindien », in Eric Alliez (sous la dir. de), *Gilles Deleuze : une vie philosophique*, Paris, Synhélabo, 1998. Glowczewski, 1991 ; Wagner 2001. We are not here in the Amazonian perspective of Viveiro de Castro (1998) in the sense where in stories, personal pronouns manifest that animals would see themselves as humans, so long as they are in a position of subject.

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

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

After the ground-breaking areas of investigation opened up by Durkheim, Freud and Lévi-Strauss, psychoanalysis and the social sciences constantly return to the cosmology of peoples successively referred to as "primitive", "savage" and "first nations". In the film *L'Esprit de l'Ancre* (Barker and Glowczewski, 2002) Tim Burrarrwanga refers to his "totemic" name as "scientific" because he knows that science classifies elements from nature and culture in the same way as the Yolngu of Arnhem Land do when they divide up everything that is named in two totemic halves and then amongst dozens of different clans. Behind this classificatory aspect, his name (*kungkutirrmirriparinyungu* "the habitat of the stingray") is scientific because — as with hundreds of other Yolngu totemic names — this name expresses a system of indigenous knowledge about relationships between species and about the environment, where the latter is thought of as being not "beyond" but an extension of the actions of all of life's manifestations: animals, plants, rain, fire, wind, humans, seasons, objects and other forms named in the language. All these levels are called *luku*, "foot", "imprint", that is to say a prototype and a mould from which other "copies" can be produced as true because the imprint is the proof of the actor (the agent) and the action that produces the trace.

In the Central Australian desert, *guruwarri* are the images sown by the eternal dream-beings in the form of virtual life particles, which are "developed" and "revealed" in humans, animals, plants or places. These images — which evoke the Turin Shroud on which the face of Christ is supposed to have been imprinted, or the negative of a film — are at once mental, like mythical narratives and the songs heard in dreams, and tangible, like paintings traced on diverse structures (body, sand, wooden or stone boards,

canvases) in the form of imprinted signs. The word as sung is a moving image which leaves the imaginary space to alight on earth. The social structures which locate allies in a symbolic kinship network, the taboos which regulate drives through sexual and spatial restrictions, (eating), and (speaking) practices, the visual and performative arts which represent frameworks for pathways through dramatic narratives, all of these seem to be founded on an existential and emotional distance, in the interior and exterior of each individual and collective subject. Each is recognised as singular whilst also being part of a network which has no limits as it can combine with others infinitely, as it offers as many new relationships as new elements and emotions which can be connected. The myth reactivated by rituals gives rise to associations of meaning as an aspect of procedural or dream-like memory.

Didi-Hubermann (1997)) has pointed out the tension between continuity and discontinuity which operates in the dream work as defined by Freud, between condensation (two elements collapsed into one) and displacement which recreate the otherness: "we are not talking about isolated terms but about knotted relationships, crystallising passages". Experiencing dreams as knots and crystallized passages is something that can be observed in numerous myths, particularly amongst the Indigenous Australians, who have developed a relationship with dreams to the extent that they have become a fully fledged machine to think through the complexity of the real. Painting is mobilized to make the myths work as a process of creation which resists history by fixing itself (the process) onto places: every sacred site, which is represented by a circle (or concentric circles) in many paintings of the desert, is thought of as the space of radical transformation, a hole rather than a bridge. Every individual, seen also as a place, is thus also this hole in which are deployed different layers of stories, parallel time-spaces- which reunite through the synchronicity of the dream: the core of what Indigenous Australians call by different names in their languages and "Dreaming" in English.

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

This statement by Marcia Langton (1997), an Aboriginal anthropologist who holds the Chair of Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne, insists on the conspicuous double characteristic contrasting the resolution/closure of totemic stories and the resolution/incompleteness drive of narrative and ritual performance (such as the presentation and identification of strangers to a place's spirit guardians). If one compares this double characteristic to Philippe Descola's four ontologies, defined as combinations of the four variables relative to the relationship between "Self" and "Other" extended to all existing things, Aboriginal ontology cannot be reduced to the category which in this matrix defines totemic ontology.

Descola launched his theory on the basis of Lévi-Strauss' definition of totemism (in *Totemism Today*): a very celebrated formula according to which humans distinguish themselves from each other according to the manner in which they differentiate and classify animals, plants and other supposed natural elements. According to Lévi-Strauss, culture is also to be distinguished from nature, the differences in nature being only useful as a model of differentiating between humans. But in his second approach, Descola on the contrary defines totemism as the ontology of a double continuity based on physical and interior resemblances between humans and other existing phenomena. In order to define this ontology of totemism as continuity between nature and culture, he leans above all on Australian cases:

The resemblance of interiorities corresponds to the identity of soul-essences and to the conformity of the members of a class to a type, whilst physical resemblances are founded on the identity of the substance and the behaviour of the humans and totemic species which give them their name. (Descola, p. 323).

Descola (2005, p. 324) however returns to Lévi-Strauss in granting him that discontinuity reappears between the clans while all the "entities" (*existants*) of each clan remain mixed up, forming a sort of collective ethos within the clan. Totemism in this way demonstrates the cosmogeny which distinguishes itself from an anthropogeny illustrated by animism (according to Descola a feature found more among the Amerindians); the two distinguish themselves from anthropocentrism (as characterizing European naturalism) and from the cosmocentrism of analogism (characteristic of the European theory of signatures, or certain African, Central American and Chinese divination systems, according to Descola). The four ontologies combine continuities and discontinuities in different ways:

	Interior resemblances	**Interior differences**
Physical resemblances	TOTEMISM cosmogenism	NATURALISM anthropocentrism
Physical differences	ANIMISM anthropogenism	ANALOGISM cosmocentrism

The polarisation of ontologies according to Philippe Descola

I have been able to observe that the individual and collective practice of Aboriginal myths and rituals, when they serve to make sense of the past, interpret the present and provide future directions, seem to be deployed according to all the polarities proposed by Descola's matrix and not just that of the physical and interior resemblances which for him characterises the main trend of Indigenous Australians' totemic ontology. Certainly Australian totemism has a cosmogenic aspect thanks to the moral and human

continuity that each totemic group defines between the humans and non-humans which give their names to each entity (animals, plants, elements). But this moral continuity, brought into play when the totemic beings are set up as models of human law, does not exhaust their effectiveness in any way. On the contrary, the totemic beings can also even be the image of a transgression to be avoided — in this sense they become "non-human" (other than human, non indigenous "*yapa-karri*", say the Warlpiri) of the same sort as the Indigenous Australians situated beyond relationships of alliance with the group. That which is "beyond the law" according to many Aboriginal people is also expelled from the domain of humanity as it becomes "non indigenous": a phenomenon applying to humans as well as to all other entities (*existants*)**.**

Many transgressive totemic beings are staged in Aboriginal myths. For example, Invincible married his daughters and their daughters, and so on (over and again?) asking them to kill any of their male baby up until they saved two of their boys who secretly grew up alone before finally taking revenge on their father: they became the ancestors of the medecine-men and inaugurated the laws of kinship amongst the groups they encountered, all along playing with them nonetheless, seducing the women when changing into two whirlwinds (Glowczewski, 2004). This Aboriginal myth of Invincible and his rejected sons, called *Watikutjarra*, "Two Men" (ancestors of shamans for around a hundred Aboriginal groups who speak different languages) reminds us of the Greek myth of Chronos — who by swallowing his children was refused the production of generations and thus the production of the chronological time which gives him his name. Furthermore Invincible, who married his daughters, sends us to all the planet's incest myths. The myths of incest — common to both Freud's psychoanalysis and Lévi-Strauss' structuralism — are situated more closely to a naturalism which presents culture as springing from a tearing away from a state of disorder or chaos. This naturalism, based on a material continuity and a cultural discontinuity, embodies the anthropocentrism which, according to Descola, characterises the European world.

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

Another cloudy border also links totemism and animism. Instead of "de-socialising" plants and animals, Aboriginal spirituality think of all the forms in the universe as being "animated" by something in common which is not human, even though it can be expressed by relationships of kinship with the species and individualized tutelary spirits. In this accepted meaning of the term, certain groups in the Amazon defined by Descola as "animistic" seem to resemble pretty closely, when they practice shamanism, Aboriginal societies classified by anthropology as "totemist" but which seem to present shamanic type therapies and features. Nearly all Australian groups locate in their sacred sites this essence, soul, energy, wavelength and singularity common both to humans and their totems. The importance of sacred sites has been underestimated in the collecting of myths, in Australia as well as elsewhere; we are discovering today to what extent the localization of stories is crucial in mentally fixing the engrams of memory carried by the myths.

Descola illustrates his fourth ontology, analogism, through African geomancy and Chinese divination. Australia also shows various occurrences of analogism, a catagory Descola calls cosmocentric, corresponding to discontinuities (as much interior as physical) structured by correspondences within a system. We have seen that, amongst Indigenous Australians, thinking analogically is part and parcel of the techniques of trackers, a way of reading through association all the signs marking nature as much as culture. The imprint of the foot is an individual signature identifiable by every good hunter who, if does not know the person, can at least say the gender, the age and the time of the walker. The landscape is riddled with other bodily images which are "animated" because they are recognized by contact with humans or their totemic avatars. Thus the hole of a particular rock with an oblong shape in the desert is read as an ancestral vagina which underground water will only come up to the surface if it is stimulated by the presence of the site's guardians, who pay the water a visit, camp there, sleep, sing and dance the corresponding myth.

In the same way the Yolngu from Arnhem Land articulate hundreds of analogies which range from the public to the esoteric. For example, the anchor of the Macassar fishermen(?) who have visited the north Australian coasts for centuries, is a totem, a Dreaming (*Wangarr*) associated to the trident shape of the stingray, another totem of the same clan The anchor which allows for a boat to stop or to sail away has also its analogy as an articulation, the movement also found in lightning, or music, as is explained by a Yolngu elder, Gaymala Yunupingu. This Anchor is simply called *luku*, the name for "foot" and "the print", a term also used for the wheels of a car, the mast and sail of aboat — everything that sets something into motion, everything that "articulates" (Glowczewski, 2004; Barker and Glowczewski, 2002).

One of the fundamentals of memory — and by extension, of the unconscious, the world of dreams and thus all mythical thought — is undoubtedly the act of reading traces by means of the connections between forms (analogies). This may explain the sense of familiarity one has when looking at contemporary Aboriginal paintings, which resemble neural and synaptic networks. In the 1980s, I published work on the relevance of open networks for understanding particular Australian Aboriginal thought-systems and their relationship with the land, both — in the structures and in the discourse of Indigenous Australians about themselves. I thus referred, at the time, to the work of Deleuze and Guattari, including their analysis of the rhizome. I was criticised for this approach for some years but it captivated Félix Guattari and together we published in *Chimères* (1, 1987) two seminars from 1985 and 1986 (cf. http://www.revuechimeres.org/?q=node/19) in the form of interviews. Later, I used the topological figure of the hypercube to give an account both of kinship networks and of a cosmology where there is no centre for everything, but as many centres as there are places or sites recognised as subjects.

I followed up the exploration of the reticular model in the 1990s by engaging in a multimedia project which seemed to me the ideal way of giving full value to the reticularity of the relationships between sacred sites and the stories which link them up in the form of an interactive schematic map: a network of points connecting up the totemic songlines which — are intertwined with each other. The Warlpiri elders were

delighted that designing this experimental digital resource tool enabled us to bring to light and put into practice an insight into the reticularity required for navigating through the Aboriginal knowledges encrypted within places and songlines. A long negotiation over several years led to the production of the *Dream trackers* CD-Rom (Glowczewski, 2000), tested and used since 1998 by children and adults at the Lajamanu school and later distributed to a wider audience, notably to museums, to provide contexts for collections of Aboriginal desert art.

When I presented this analysis at Philippe Descola's seminar at the Collège de France (4th April, 2007) his immediate response was to say that his four ontological categories are universal and found amongst all human societies, but certain polarities are emphasized more in certain groups. But he added that it is clear that since the birth of anthropology the Indigenous Australians have continued to throw researchers off the track by their complexity, despite the decades (more than a century) of attempts to analyse Australian totemism (including those of the illustrious Malinowski, who chose this for his first attempt at theoretical reflection before leaving for the Trobriand Islands).

Nostalgia and Otherness

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

To survive in the Australian desert it is always necessary to leave places one has become attached to. Journeying is necessary for hunting: walking can extend over hundreds of kilometres depending onthe season, due to the small amounts of available water found here and there on the way. The image of self throughout this walk cannot be restricted to a single place: it is rather the unfolding of the places which in a way make each subject implode. It is this type of process which is referred to when shamanic myths invoke the notion of the split subject. The internal otherness of men and women emerges from their experience of walking: the subjectivity thus produced and reproduced is multiple.

The notion of Otherness in Aboriginal ontology appears, in my view, neither in the supposed distance from nature (as Lévi-Strauss claimed), nor in the divisions between totemic classes/clans and the collective alter ego (as Descola has sugested), and not even in gender differences. Elsewhere I have discussed the androgyny, even transgenderedness, of numerous totemic heroes as well as of the ritual processes that lead men and women to identify with (or rather embody) such heroes . It seems to me that in Aboriginal ontology, Otherness passes through every moving creature or object, translating this ritual relationship of turning from inside to outside (like the image of a glove with its fingers turned inside out). The Warlrpiri call the outside, what lies above, the manifest and the actual*kankarlu*, and use the word *kanunju* to refer to the inside, what lies below, the hidden or the virtual. The passage from the actual to the virtual — when ancestral spirits are staged by performers — and the return from the virtual to the actual — when a ceremony is finished — characterises nearly all of the ritual activities whether they are used to encourage the fertility of the totemic species, to make the spirit of the dead vanish during mourning rituals, or to spread singular "essences", or rather life-forces, through all the members of the collective group.   The Indigenous Australians who were born on the land of their ancestors or those who were brought there from elsewhere talk about the legitimacy of the return to the land of diaspora Indigenous Australians who are the offspring of children who were removed by force for several generations by the authorities (an estimate suggests 1 in 5 children taken between 1905 and the 1970s). The indigenous discussion of the legitimacy of belonging towhat the Indigenous Australians today call "historical" people (because produced by the power of settler forced displacements) insists less on the principle of physical "detachment" than on that of performative detachment. In other words, descendants brought up elsewhere have their place on the land of their ancestors even if they were not raised there but on condition that they can read the traces of the past they claim to identify with. In this sense coming to live on the land now, or becoming initiated, or relearning the language, is as much a sign of existential legitimacy acknowledged by the group as proof of indigeneity in relation to a given land.

The issue here thus pertains less to a logic of blood and more a logic of how to locate the active and enunciating body . The land has a language (as Alan Rumsey well demonstrated in 2001 in the case of the Ngarinyin). But this language is as much made up of songs, dances and other actions as it is made up of speech. If various studies in neurosciences have shown that dance and song are not activated in the same part of the brain as spoken language, in a similar way in the Aboriginal knowledge systems language is much more than symbolic. In Warlpiri (the language of the central desert where I have worked since 1979), talking is called *wangka*. But the same term is used for birds, thunder and anything within nature or culture that is expressed by sound: from the Warlpiri perspective, everything speaks because its sounds can be interpreted by those who know how to "track" them, in other words how to make them become activated through the traces — visual and sonorous — that these sounds leave on the body and its extensions. Bodily extensions consist of everything that exists, all terrestrial and celestial elements. In this sense there is no such thing as the environment but simply an elongation in the form of the metamorphoses of multiple avatars which are deployed in a both continuous and discontinuous manner, by breaks and cuttings. In effect these forms become autonomous in order to move around and connect up with each other in infinite variations.

With the new technologies and globalization we have entered a universe of networks where each subject negotiates its existence through intersecting a multitude of connections. The reticular model, whilst it can seem terrifying and new to us, as it globalises technological and economical rationales across the whole planet, was in its way also global and integrationist for Australians before colonisation. Before first contact, their individual singularity was drawn into the meshes of a parental network, whilst their local singularity was in a sense hooked onto a topology linking each person to the infinity of the cosmos as much as to each tiny particle of material substance.

"It seems that our societies consist of interactions between 'the net' and the 'self', between the 'network society' and the power of identity." This definition, by Castells (1988), of our contemporary universe could just as well, in my view, apply to precolonial Australian ontology: to this paradoxical hybridization of a subjectivity at once localized by totemism and multiplied in the connectivity of associations and alliances, where the subject enfolded within a network society is always in a process of becoming journeys with multiple roles. Nonetheless, behind the definition it can be perceived that there are indeed (effects of) differences between globalization and the reticular cosmology of the first Australians. For example, we have a tendency to see as monsters the superheroes of contemporary films who partially metamorphose, even if their powers are a source of identification for a number of young people. By contrast, the hybridisations of totemic heroes — half man, half animal, half vegetable, wind, fire or rain people — do not appear as monsters in themselves in the perception of Indigenous Australians who practice or acknowledge a totemic logic. Still, monsters do exist for them: they are those beings that cause fear, because they spring up "out of nowhere", and their monstrousness seems to be generated by the fact that they do not belong to a given place. They can take on multiple appearances: succubae, young, beautiful women with long blonde hair, giants covered in hair, dwarves with a hole where their faces should be, etc. Once a monster is localised visitors have to negotiate their right to remain on the monster's land: one needs to introduce oneself in order to be accepted by the monster. The place in this sense appears to "familiarise" that which "deforms" it. In this way every apparent monster is virtually assimilable if it becomes familiar and mutual identification has taken place.

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

In this game, to which we are all subjected, indigenous people today play a very particular role. First of all because they add the dream dimension to our disciplines, which find it more or less difficult to accept the loss of the wild and the exotic within critical approaches. But more important, indigenous people are having their say and are

taking initiatives to prove first of all to themselves — and to others by extension — that the ontology of the "performers of thought" that the Indigenous Australians are still have a future.

Articulating indigeneity

My approach in anthropology is experimental as it has been fed for thirty years by conflicting thinkers. With writing, images and the new technologies, I am looking to restore from the inside the words and experience of indigenous peoples. And I am still on a quest for arguments to legitimize an anthropology which is really in touch with our world. In the 1970s, anthropology was shaken by the arrival on the stage of minority, indigenous and alternative groups, a trend which was carried by the explosion of the Internet. This dynamic fed the way I worked. But for many years the inventive social responses of each discriminated group were trivialised or ignored. The media, public authorities and humanitarian institutions manipulate, deform or simply confiscate the spaces of action created by all those who, under the pretext that they are victims, are witnessing the denial of the right to be not only political subjects but also human beings. If, as anthropologists, we have the responsibility to present, analyse and criticize the manner in which each group engages on an existential quest, all too often — in anthropology as well as in cultural studies — this existential quest is reduced to terms of identity and territory as if identity localization guaranteed the authenticity of the group in question. Certainly anthropology is built upon the study of societies considered circumscribed by a place and a name, and often a language. However these last thirty years have shown in diverse disciplines — including anthropology — the relativity of the various ways identity is arranged.

Since Roy Wagner's *The Invention of Culture* (1981), Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Rangers' *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), or James Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture* (1988), there has been a burgeoning of writing which questions these contours, which were formerly reinforced by the "total social fact" . In addition to the overall process of "*metissage*" or hybridization , population displacements and the dance of genders, all identity concepts have been critiqued in the name of historical dynamics — notably the colonial empires of the West and the East — and the right of each society and its individuals to reinvent itself. In this process — certainly as salutary as a dose of spring cleaning — we have forgotten that each of us fixes onto diverse anchorings, which have a good or a bad press depending on the time or the place. In the comfort of lounges or aeroplanes, for example, we are happy to call ourselves cosmopolitan or de-territorialized and to feel at home no matter where we are: de-territorialisation has become a programme which serves above all the wealthy who have the means to situate themselves beyond borders which themselves continue to be produced through the new technologies in order to prevent —the Others" from journeying.

"How is 'indigeneity" both rooted in and routed through particular places?"[5] writes James Clifford (2001); "How shall we begin to think about a complex dynamic of local

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[5] The question seems to play with the homophony (?) of root and route, as in the routers which transmit computer traffic.

landedness[6] and expansive social spaces? Should we think of a continuum of indigenous and diasporic situations? Or are there specifically indigenous kinds of diasporism? Lived dialectics of urban and rural? On and off the reservation? Island and native mainland experiences?" according to Clifford "There are real tensions, to be sure, along the continuum of indigenous locations" and that "we need to distinguish, and also (carefully, partially) to connect 'diasporism' and 'indigenism)." Clifford cites in this context a Sioux shaman and Catholic catechist, Black Elk, who on a visit to Paris said something like "Harney Peak [in the North Dakota Badlands] is the centre of the world. And wherever you are can be the centre of the world". This discourse on the multiplicity of "the rootedness in displacement" characterizes a great number of so-called postcolonial writings. But Clifford is rightly attempting to critically point out the fact that the cosmopolitanism of being at home in the world is not exactly what the indigenous people of the Pacific Islands want to stress when they talk about journeying.

In a text in the journal *Littérama'ohi*, founded in Thaiti by Polynesian writers, including Flora Devatine and Chantal Spitz, I spoke of "pasts that anchor" and pasts that "help to move forwards" (Glowczewski, 2006). It seems to me that one cannot talk of putting down roots without talking about movement. Not because supposed postcolonial societies are adrift and diasporised because of colonization and globalization, but because the ontology of these societies were even before colonization thinking of movement in terms of the displacement of existential anchorings **.**

The dynamism of a tradition in movement is very appropriate for the Pacific Islands, considering the incredible distances covered over the sea by peoples sharing languages and customs, and the reach of systems of exchange established well before colonialism. But if this paradigm of localization within movement is claimed by many Pacific islanders (whether Polynesian, Melanesian or Micronesian), I am persuaded it is also the case of Australian Indigenous Australians whose navigation was not maritime but mental, ritual and geographical, notably in the desert. It is mental navigation, walked, sung, or painted, that I have called the reticular systems of thought that the Indigenous Australians modelled in their own fashion by the projection of stories in a network of places connected by them over the whole continent.

I have had the opportunity to share with the Elders since 1979 their experience and their memories as semi-nomads in the central Australian desert. The majority of these Indigenous Australians had their first contact with white people in their youth. I have also travelled a lot across the desert — by car, certainly — with Indigenous Australians who knew how to exist in this environment. I was very struck by the semi-nomadism of people who had been forcibly made sedentary in the reserves, this semi-nomadism being reproduced in their knowledge systems and encrypted in the myths and rituals that they deployed in order to travel virtually across their lands. This experience and performance of the world seemed to me a form of resistance to something ontologically incompatible with that which the capitalistic bureaucracy attempted to

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

impose on the Indigenous Australians: money, the consumption of prefabricated food, the management of budgets and plans which were supposed to lead to development.

I do not want to say absolutely that it is a question of a conflict between tradition and modernity. On the contrary the attitude of the Indigenous Australians in the 1970s and 1980s seemed to me to be something strangely modern. In the 1990s a young researcher, Stéphane Lacam (2007), observed the same phenomenon amongst the young generation, who only rarely referred to myths and rituals but travelled around for hundreds of kilometres in makeshift cars, and without luggage. Lacam labelled them "People "(*"Non-Travellers"*, thus distinguishing them from the gypsies. It was a form of nomadic experience which had survived the supposedly functional nomadism of way of life of hunter gatherers who must move around to feed themselves. The desert Indigenous Australians seem to be always on the point of leaving, as I have written elsewhere. It is not an idealised vision of the noble savage roaming in search of food. Very much to the contrary, as this being on the point of constant departure is often painful, unprompted, almost a form of a nostalgia cult, as the attachment to places is sorrowful when one knows that one will have to leave. It is not a question here of forced exile or of travelling for the pleasure of journeying, but more of an endless walk searching to inscribe and discover a series of traces. This walk is existential: it says a lot about humans who only exist through action, when tracing the imprints that prove their existence. Such journeys are not as idyllic as suggested in Bruce Chatwin's *Songlines*, and in fact have become nowadays very self-destructive. But a sedentary life is an even greater source of anguish.

Clifford suggests defining indigeneity (in the Pacific, following the example of America) as being by nature "articulated". He here draws on — whilst nonetheless criticising — the postcolonial theory of articulation as defined, for example, by Stuart Hall (1986), — in part inspired by Gramsci — which presupposes that indigenous discourse and the claims of peoples called "First Nation" are only the historical result of worldwide decolonisation in the 1960s and the postmodern identity politics which followed, highlighting traditions which are said to be invented and claimed, as is the case in numerous intellectual milieu nourished by exiles. Clifford (2001), on the other hand, emphasises the importance of the Pacific sea of islands because, he says, it "helps us conceptualise practices of subaltern region-making, realities invisible to more world-sytemic, center-periphery models of globalization and locality"**).** Clifford seems to have been inspired by the numerous students originating from the Pacific, such as Teresia Teaiwa, and who have published much ever since.

> "I have no solutions to the problem of the Pacifc's marginalization in a global arena. What I do know is that we must NOT stop our investigations, explorations, ruminations in Pacific studies simply because the world marketplace of knowledge does not value this region as we do. Neither must we give in to the tempting rhetoric of Pacific exceptionalism — our greatest crime would be to ghettoize ourselves." (Teaiwa 2006).

The vogue for the reinvention of culture has had the merit of making postcolonial and indigenous studies emerge into the light — even if only to open up new debates — and has given history the privilege of an anthropological re-reading which has today led

to a criticism of colonialism[7]. All the same it should not be forgotten that the notion of the "reinvention of culture" has been criticized by many indigenous actors. It is a war of words which sometimes turns sour or even becomes a blood bath. We urgently need to understand — as Clifford (2001) says — what this "desire" that indigenous people call "the land". It does not consist of an essentialist vision such as those which motivate various nationalisms, sacrifices for a country and ethnic cleansings. Clifford thus suggests that we replace the notion of the invention of tradition by that of a politics of articulation. The proposition is a very attractive one, all the more so as the word evokes speech: being articulated means being capable of being understood.

The Warlpiri of the central Australian desert say that a child is above all the reincarnation of a "spirit-child" (*kurruwalpa*) that gives it the power precisely to "articulate", that is to say both to speak and to move in order to walk, its way of being in the world. The double sense of articulation — language and the movement of the body — is interesting in this indigenous perspective. It also provides a response to the false debate concerning "whether or not the Indigenous Australians know about the relationship between reproduction and the sexual act": the articulating spirit-child is said to choose its parents in order to be born, because a sexual act is not sufficient to make life emerge; there is no speech without a moving body. The other ontologically crucial aspect, along with the Aboriginal notion of the spirit-child as a condition of "articulation" of body and spirit, is that it comes from a particular place and this place will be the child's secret name, its conception totem. In this sense we would have everything to gain in rethinking through indigenous knowledge systems in the light of various disciplines, notably the neurosciences which, in carrying out experiments on the brain, are knocking down many given assumptions.

The future of anthropology faced with agency

Long live interdisciplinarity, is the message from academic institutions, but in this alliance between the disciplines there is not always an equal balance. The French National Centre of Scientific Research (CNRS) announced in 2006 that in the new allocation of "disciplinary" departments anthropology would be a part of the history department. The petition appeal launched by French anthropologists — supported online by colleagues' professional associations in Brazil, Australia and elsewhere — saved appearances in managing to obtain some changes in the details of the proposed disciplinary schema. But it remains the case that the whole of the technical apparatus which evaluates research in France — and abroad — continues to operate as if anthropological questions arose from either history or from the cognitive sciences. In other words, either we are asked to play the ostrich when confronted by the current chaos in looking for historical explanations which render legitimate and necessary the changes within (or even disappearance of) the societies we are expected to describe, or we are asked to restrict any attempt at social discussion or action to the determinants, so called biological, of the actors involved. These two sales offers, historical or cognitive, quite simply exclude people acting as agents in the social arena: they are no more than extras, no better than mounted butterflies. It is furthermore not surprising that the term

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[7] For Australia and New Zealand, see for instance Attwood Bain and Fiona Magowan (eds), 2001.

"agency", which crosses over the fields of anthropology, cultural studies and so called postcolonial studies in English-speaking countries is used very little in France. The Quebecers translate it in French, creating a new word on the model of the English one, — even though it was in part inspired by trends in Bourdieu and a large number of French philosophers, from Foucault to Deleuze. It is necessary as a matter of urgency to restore a place to an anthropology which does not reduce human experience either to the effects of colonial history or to cognitive systems. We must give full value to the fluidity of traditional identity organisational systems such as are flourishing today because they were founded on a fluidity which was underestimated at the time of colonisation, but which express very well the functioning of these pre-contact societies. It is in ceasing to contrast and oppose tradition and change that an archaeology of knowledge searching for moving signs will aid us to hear the power of people who are resisting.

When I speak of resistance I do not necessarily mean it in a militant or destructive sense. What I understand by resistance is simply that which pushes humans, individually or collectively, to be creative in order to survive whilst leaning on certain values. It falls to us anthropologists to unpack what these values mean. To do that we are obliged to take into account the analyses that are today being produced by the spokespersons, university based academics or otherwise, of the peoples and populations we are working with.

For example, Martin Nakata (2006), an Aboriginal academic working at the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning (University of Technology, at Sydney) points out that indigenous studies —— whether in Australia, the Pacific, or amongst the Amerindians

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

In the Pacific, an indigenous elite, previously trained and educated by non indigenous peoples within a Western university framework, carries with them representations of identity which are in part fed by ideologies produces and supported by colonial interests. Nonetheless it would be very arrogant to allege that the West has anticipated all the political, social and cultural responses of colonised indigenous peoples. One could be cynical, but it would not be intellectually profitable to suppose that the West knows and controls everything just when so many things are going badly, conflicts which cannot be controlled are breaking out, when violence is rising and above all when — despite all this dysfunctioning — people survive individually and collectively and do not cease to create astonishing things, as Marshall Sahlins[8](1999)) has demonstrated very well.

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[8] Essays published between 1990 and 1999, referred to by Alain Babadzan at Philippe Descola's seminar, College de France, 14 March 2007, and partially translated in French (Marshall Sahlins, 2007).

As far as the Pacific is concerned, it is first of all necessary to take into account the non-Western powers disputing this strategic area. Indeed, other than the United States (who certainly have bases everywhere), Australia, which is acting the policeman, and France, which is trying to get people forget its nuclear explosions, there is also Japan, China, Taiwan, Indonesia or the Philippines. These Asiatic powers are competing with each other in the Pacific, and beyond their military and economic resources they benefit from two advantages: the size of the legal and illegal workforce which lives in diasporas across the whole of the Pacific and the geographical proximity which today sees piracy transformed into an institution which no doubt suits all the governments.

Anthropologists' observation sites are today more than ever defined by the junction of the perceptions of the different producers of images: the media, sciences, and the social actors concerned about the way they are presented through images. The contradictions of perspective often insist on this old paradigm: how can one claim to be different without necessarily bringing into play relationships based on dominant/dominated, elite/excluded, etc. An engaged anthropology must of necessity highlight the value of the manner in which groups express and live on a daily basis their right to speak, and act to keep or regain possession of their destiny and hold it in their own hands (Bensa, 2006). An original response has recently emerged precisely from the example of indigenous peoples who have chosen to step onto the stage of the media and national and international institutions to perform their existence in a world which lurches between spectacle and politics (Glowczewski and Henry, eds, 2007).

Let us take the example of the process of drawing up at the UN the charter for the rights of indigenous peoples, voted on in June 2006 by the Universal Human Rights Commission[9]. Since the arrival in Geneva of the New Zealand Maori delegation in the 1980s, which was followed by hundreds of other representatives of indigenous people, the majority of associations and militants (activists?) who selfdelegate themselves within this task refuse to fix the notion of indigeneity. The rights of indigenous peoples rest on the idea that age old (prime ancestral?) occupation of the land and genetic filiation guarantee "indigenous status", or the indigeneity of the people concerned (close to 6% of the global population, or 370 million people) which would grant them the legitimacy to maintain the traditional links with the land which existed before notions of state sovereignty. But in the last instance it is the self declaration and the recognition of indigeneity by peer groups which guarantees this status is conferred[10].

It should be stressed that all these peoples — to which the UN reserves indigenous status — were before colonisation essentially hunter gatherers, and did not practice agriculture or sedentary farming. If the indigenous peoples' ties to the land— defined economically beyond the "working" of the land or a transformation of nature through buildings and structures — are today defined in Western terms as ownership of the land,

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[9] 33 member states voted in favour, 13 abstained, and 2 refused the charter (Canada and the Russian Federation).

[10] See the « Majeure Réseaux autochtones » edited by B. Glowczewski et A. Soucaille, *Multitudes* n°30, Sept. 2007 (also online in 2009).

they themselves refer to this as an existential link which defines a certain ontology of the people concerned.

The anthropologist Benjamin Richard Smith (2006) in an insightful article on Australian diasporas formed by the descendants of Indigenous Australians who were deported from their traditional lands in Northern Queensland, suggests a connection between contemporary selves, previous generations and "a stable and presentable" essence of place in the sense Derrida (1993) uses it. For Smith, Derrida's "ontopological" understanding, when linked to "displacement", can be applied to the manner in which indigenous people affirm their connections to the land, that is in differently from the way classical ethnographic interpretations which describe an affective attachment to the land (such as those discussed by André Béteille, 1987; and Adam Kuper, 2003).

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

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