

Cosmopolitics in Broome: Techniques for Destroying and Protecting Worlds

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Preamble:

Daisy Bates did research around Broome from 1901. In *The Native Tribes of Western Australia*, she mentions “Kularrabulu (*kularra*—west or seacoast; *bulu*—people). Some of their principal watering places were Jajjala, Jirr-ngin-ngan (Broome), Wirraginmarri (creek) ...” (1985: 59–60) While Goolarabooloo was never a tribal name as she implies, this passage indicates the longevity of the name given to what I hypothesise is a *cultural confederacy of language groups* along the coast from One Arm Point to La Grange. They are related not just by language; this is the same stretch of country that is covered by the *ullulong* (initiation) law and, today, much of the Lurujarri Heritage Trail. According to Paddy Roe, Goolarabooloo includes the following language groupings: Karadjeri, Yawur, Djugun, Ngumbal, Jabbirr-jabirr, Nyul-nyul and Bardi (Benterrak 1984, Roe in Muecke, 1982). Goolarabooloo is thus underpinned by the Dreaming [*bugarrigarra*] that gives the practice of the *ullulong* ceremony the authority to pass on culture and law through initiation.

My focus on the idea of an alliance, for the more ‘traditional’ cultural scene in 1901, is informed by the idea that neither cultures nor

languages are unified, except that socio-political standardisation procedures make them so. To the extent that there is ‘a’ Nyigina language, it is a product of someone writing a grammar, drawing a map, etc. which may or may not be as subtle in its variations as the distinctions made by Nyigina speakers. Just as in early modern Europe, the achievement of standard French was the result of a political struggle that degraded dialects, and a large amount of institutionalisation work.¹ Since no one ever encounters ‘a’ language, the default position is that we encounter processes of translation. These are links in network-creating processes.

I maintain the same situation exists with Goolarabooloo’s present, and that its links to other media, including social media, is theoretically no different from the ‘traditional’ situation. But rather than just describing this network, I want to try to say how it works by way of political practices of alliance-formation that work by attraction and repulsion.

1. Charm School: Attraction

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¹ Naoki Sakai rather cleverly shows that the unity of language is in fact abstract, and an effort of the imagination. No-one ever experiences a language in all its unity, but what we do experience all the time are acts of translation. So, as he says, ‘translation is anterior to the organic unity of language’. We conventionally represent translation as bridging two languages, as a ‘communication model of equivalence and exchange’, but that is not what it is, it is a ‘form of political labour to create continuity at the elusive point of discontinuity in the social.’

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On a recent trip to Broome I was having dinner with my landlady, Deborah Vincent, in the Azuki Restaurant; classy Japanese fusion stuff. Next to us was a big table with what looked like an Indigenous middle class group. When they were joined by a friend, a very beautiful woman, her attractiveness drew a word of admiration from my dinner date. People around me were trying not to stare, and since I was doing fieldwork, I was trying not to observe this interesting scene too obviously.

Next day, I told the story to my post-doc, Carsten Wergin, also doing fieldwork, but on tourism in Broome. I said, ‘Look, such a woman with her supermodel looks, could be the face of Indigenous tourism in the Kimberley.’ We discussed the politics of representation and identity, us both having had experience in the Indian Ocean. There, and in the Pacific, tourism products are sold with images of palm beaches and charming locals, mostly women, but in the Kimberley and the NT, tourism is landscapes, camels, Aboriginal paintings and artifacts, and when it comes to Indigenous people, they are mostly children. If you do a Google image search, the adults are white tourists and white locals. Aboriginal adults are scarcely represented.

The young Indigenous middle class group in Broome’s best restaurant was something new for me, having done fieldwork there in the seventies and eighties when there was no Indigenous middle class. Today they are employed by the Kimberley Land Council, the Kimberley Institute,

Nyamba Buru Yawuru, Goolarri Media, mining companies, skilled trades, the hotels, pearling businesses, and their own small businesses, including tourism. They are getting on with building their futures, and hardly need any commentary from me.

In fact, the attractive young woman could even have been a product of a charm school known as Kimberley Girl, a Goolarri Media initiative. It has been analysed by Ellie Rennie as ‘a leadership program that culminates in the catwalk parade and modeling shoot. Kimberley Girl teaches job readiness.’² She goes on to do a rough cost-benefit

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¹ “Diamonds, pearls and Kimberley girls: Without shame in the north-west” Ellie Rennie, with Jason Potts, Griffith REVIEW Edition 36. See also: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Kimberley-Girl/159198210883408>

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analysis in the context of the 2011 *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report* that has ‘40% of Indigenous people aged 18–24 neither employed nor studying’. She and Jason Potts calculated that for every participant who enters the program at a cost of \$5, 000 (privately raised), ‘the government can expect to gain \$37, 000 in reduced welfare and increased tax revenue over a lifetime.’ ‘In important respects,’ writes Rennie, [KG] ‘does not correspond to the standard policy model’ and ‘no government department could have come up with [it]’. In a disarmingly simple phrase, she notes how the size and complexity of the COAG *Closing the Gap* policy fails even to notice the success of KG: ‘It is easy to walk into “the gap”, when it might be better to go around or above it.’

The point of my story is a double one, for I think (1) that *charm* is a neglected factor in the doing of and writing about cultural politics. The role of cultural critique might be less one of ‘fixing peoples’ representations’, as I joked once before³—making sure that images of men, women, different ethnic groups, are equally and correctly represented in the mediasphere—but could evolve from such ideal social normalisation to understandings of the power (and possible mobilisation) of strikingly interesting events: ‘To be enchanted is to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and

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¹ *No Road (bitumen all the way)*, Fremantle, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1997. p. 91

the everyday'.⁴ And I think (2) that Indigenous participation in modernity, that is, being co-temporal with whitefella modernity and being employed by the same organisations, is something that is still a bit too scary for whitefellas to contemplate, or to know how to deal with through their available discourses. But the normal case is that Indigenous people grow up to have no presence inside the sphere of the Kimberley *conceived of as modern*, because modernity and cosmopolitanism are whitefella things, especially as underwritten by economic modernity.

And as I write this confluence of worlds, I will try to dispense with the language of the social sciences, entirely if possible, as I experiment with a more poetic ethnography, one in which charm and vitalism are drivers. And in which, if I do use 'society', I mean 'association', and not just associations of humans, but also things, concepts, feelings as these link up to create real worlds. 'Society' is what *still* has to be made, it is not the explanatory term one can easily fall back on.

I want to try a little experiment with Peter Sloterdijk's 'sphereology'. His spheres, and the mechanisms for protecting them or bursting their bubbles, are useful for my ethnographic writing because they are plural: there are many worlds abutting each other. And they don't have the same basis in reality (e.g.: Nature, Society, Language); they are

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¹ (Jane Bennett, 2001:4).

differently composed realities. This is why we have to really try to understand what a given association of beings constitutes as its cosmos, or its sets of *cosmoi*.

I will conclude with a plea for *cosmopolitics*, following Latour and Isabelle Stengers, but first let me continue with Sloterdijk's version of spheres as *interiors*, created on the basis of 'love stories [that] are stories of form, and ... every act of solidarity is an act of sphere formation, that is to say the creation of an interior'.⁵

What? *Interiors*? In Aboriginal Australia? Where psychology and fiction and other interior-creating discourses have never existed until they were imported and imposed? Perhaps this is the reason we might have to wax a little philosophical, because so many social scientific concepts fail to translate cross-culturally (as they might say), or as A N Whitehead says, act as 'lures for feelings, food for thought' thus translating something more philosophical, that is, quasi-universal, about those literal interiors from which one emerges *in-fans* (speechless); or from those other special places in Goolarabooloo country: *jila*, living springs, deep inside of which life is shared among all those beings that inhabit and draw upon the life-giving waters. *Jila* will be occupy a central part of the ethnography I will write, because of the way they nurture all forms of life, along with the *bugarrigarra* [Dreaming] providing the concepts, stories and songs.

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¹ Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres, Vol. 1 Bubbles: Microspherology*, Semiotex(e) NY, 2011, p. 12

Interiors, then, following Sloterdijk, are spaces where allies gather, and from which they move into the open to find the ‘spatial experience’ of ‘new places’ (12). Spheres of influences and spheres of knowledges include and exclude, but there is always a formal means of attracting and repulsing (drawing into a sphere, or reinforcing its outer limits). The form of a Platonic love story is the mechanism for this, a formal technique, so to begin with I will describe a charm, part of a simple taxonomy of two kinds of charm, or spells if you like: those which attract life (by conjuring up goodness) and those which protect life, by delivering us from evil.

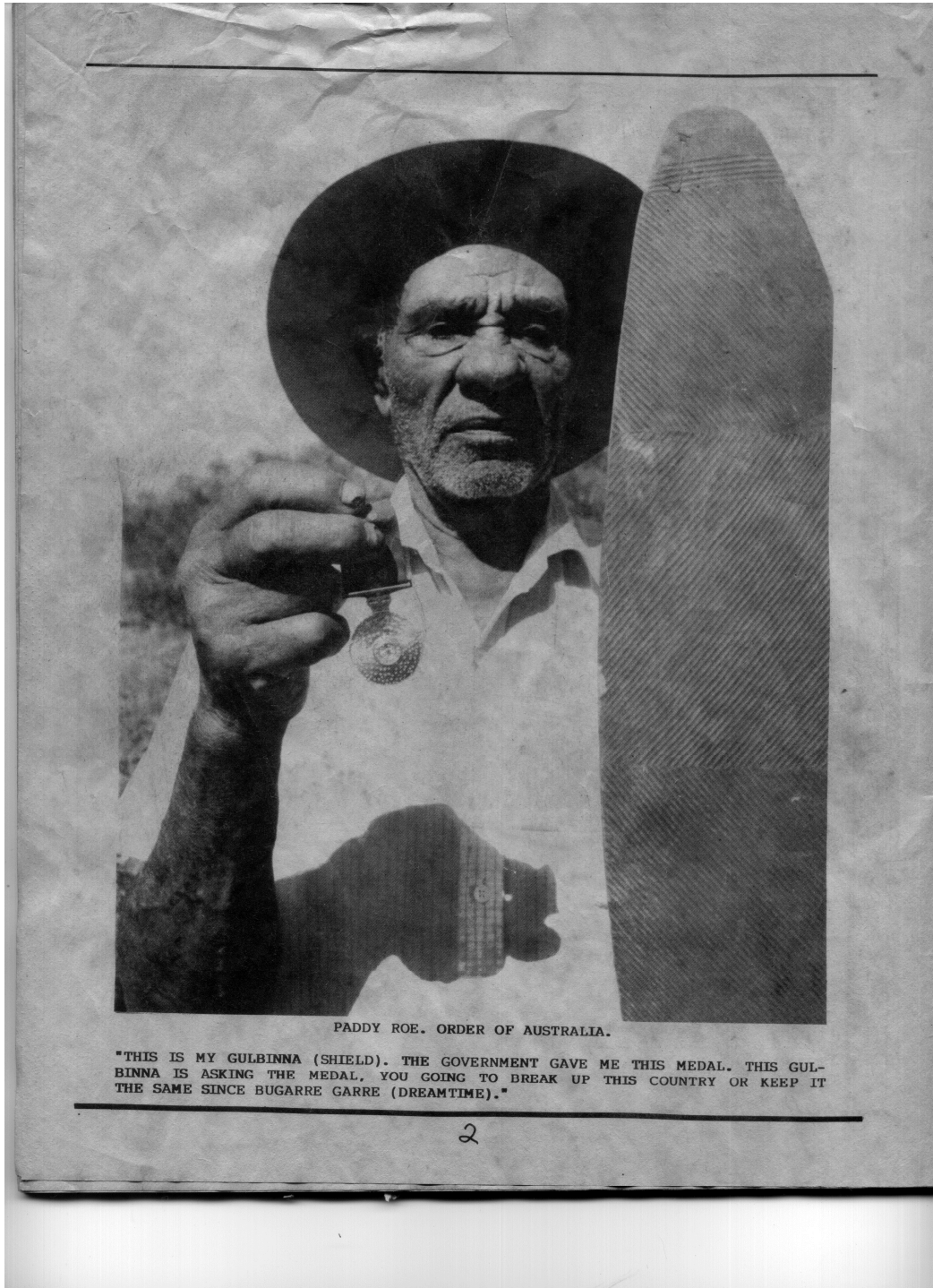
2. Charm: Protection

I distinctly remember old Paddy Roe referring to me as his *garbina*, shield, a term no doubt suited to those ‘helpful’ *gardiya* (white people) lurking around seeking to protect Indigenous people, communities, cultures, for their own complex motives of transference (not the Freudian reduction that Sloterdijk calls ‘neurotic’ and ‘pitiful’, but transference as a testing of possibilities: ‘transference is the formal source of the creative processes that inspire the exodus of humans into the open’. (12) With this kind of transference, it seems, there is always the possibility of entering a new sphere of influence.

Now when a man becomes another man’s shield the metaphor is a *charming technique* that engenders political solidarity and loyalty

without coercion. The metaphor is an articulation that puts the two men in the same sphere. A few years later, Lulu, as we called him, was up to his charming tricks again when he was photographed after receiving his Order of Australia medal. He put the medal (possibly a morphological transformation or emblem of a shield; it is a mini-shield, as invented by the Romans) into a dialogue with his *garbina*, his shield, challenging them to perform their protective role, which is in turn a more magical challenge to us, the viewers, looking down through history via the photograph, to let ourselves be drawn into *its* sphere of influence.

Someone has transcribed what he must have said at the time, under the photo:



“This is my gulbinna (shield). The government gave me this medal. This gulbinna is asking the medal, you going to break up the country or keep it the same as in bugarre garre (dreamtime).”

I want you to stare at that portrait for a moment while thinking that the people of the Kimberley have been subjected to successive waves of fear since the late 19th century. I don't want to remind you, ineffectually, with detailed images of blackbirding for pearling fleets, rapes, massacres, deportation to Rottnest island, and so on. I think we accept that this terror was a part of dispossession, and that it continues to the present day with the compulsory acquisition of land at Walmadany, James Price Point, where they want to build the gas plant. A contingent of over 100 police was sent from Perth to Broome in May 2012 to break up the protest camps of about 30 people.





As a humanist (or rather an *ecological* humanist, indicating I want to displace human exceptionalism), I am concerned to find a practical mode of analysis that facilitates understanding of terror and violence and creates a fertile culture for effective responses. In a moment I will try to apply a bowdlerised version of Peter Sloterdijk's 'sphereology'

to the Broome scene, as a kind of analysis of collectivities (rather than a psycho-social analysis, swinging on a individual-society or a subject-object bifurcations), but first I want to reiterate that *charm, the sacred* and *beauty* can deflect terror; can make it pass by without transferring into the very subjectivity of beings, beings in all their fragility. To talk about fear, we don't necessarily have to believe in a stubborn psychology of 'inner strength' or, on the other hand, a robust social organisation. Fears, to move around and threaten people, do not need a personal subject any more than they need a government department. Fears pass like wet-season clouds, impersonal and not particularly localised.⁶ They are public feelings: hope and terror are part of the spheres of influence that drive and move cosmopolitical societies, like armies, occupiers or migrants). This impersonality of affect has consequences for how we do our anthropology or our cultural studies ethnographies. We now have to 'entertain entities in multiple, interesting and fragile, states' (Latour: *Factish Gods*, 66), while necessarily taking on board Indigenous concepts that are already circulation as public feelings and public thoughts.

Fears, then, don't attach themselves to subjects or objects in a permanent fashion, but must be deflected as they pass. This is a 'mode of existence' that Latour calls 'transfearance'—now *metamorphosis*. He says that it is 'charms [that] allow us to use trickery against fear' (52) because 'we find ourselves constantly threatened by forces that

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¹ Bruno Latour, *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods*, p. 52.

nevertheless have as a distinctive characteristic the fact that they can be overturned, or more precisely reversed, by a mere gesture' (*Factish*, p. 51). Charms are 'something that must be able to change meaning rapidly, by transforming itself all of a sudden, through a reversal of power relations, from good to evil or evil to good' (53). Charms can perhaps be symbols, and we know how much neoliberal rationalism dislikes symbols.⁷

3. Living up to the Sacred

The sacred is part of the cosmos that makes up the *goolarabooloo*. So rather than reducing this sacred to something else, my ethnography will have to try to talk to it in its own language, and this without the guarantee of Nature as a uniform backdrop setting the scene for our little dramas of cultural difference. But how can there be any negotiation at all, if we are living in 'different worlds'? Well, you have to work at it, and concepts can be translated if you take the time and trouble. 'This land is *sacred* to us,' might say the Goolarabooloo, 'you know, like your cathedrals.' And if the whitefella interlocutors hear that (rather than pay lip service with: 'Sure, mate, sure, we understand, the Dreaming and all that.') they might have to introduce divinity into their world, but that's difficult for the Woodside mob: their world is mainly composed of scientific facts, large scale

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¹ Michael Gordon, "Symbolism is not enough: Pearson," *October 10, 2011*. Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/symbolism-is-not-enough-pearson-20111009-1lfsq.html#ixzz1v6QRmMgh>

technologies, banks full of venture capital and a modernist concept of progress. ‘This is all totally rational,’ they say, unless you point out that in that last concept of progress there are quite a few gods hiding, whispering fundamental beliefs to them that so they don’t give them up in any negotiation.

‘The little children are sacred’ said the report that launched an army. There’s that concept of the sacred popping up, unproblematically bureaucratised, it seems, as the end result of a series of translations and negotiations about *fears that were expressed*. But in the application of the response, the Intervention, the translations and negotiations *going back* to Aboriginal Australia, not a trace of divinity remains attached to any subjectivity, let alone any child. It makes one think of the old mission days, when what Foucault called *pastoral power* was a useful extension of government, and the concept of the sacred passed across from whitefella to blackfella communities and back:

Etymologically, and to take the words literally, pastoral power is the power the shepherd exercises over his flock. But a power of this kind, so attentive, so solicitous, so attached to the salvation of each and every person... [is] a power which consists in the desire to take charge of their existence in detail through their development from birth to death, in order to constrain them to a certain way of behaving, to ensure their salvation.

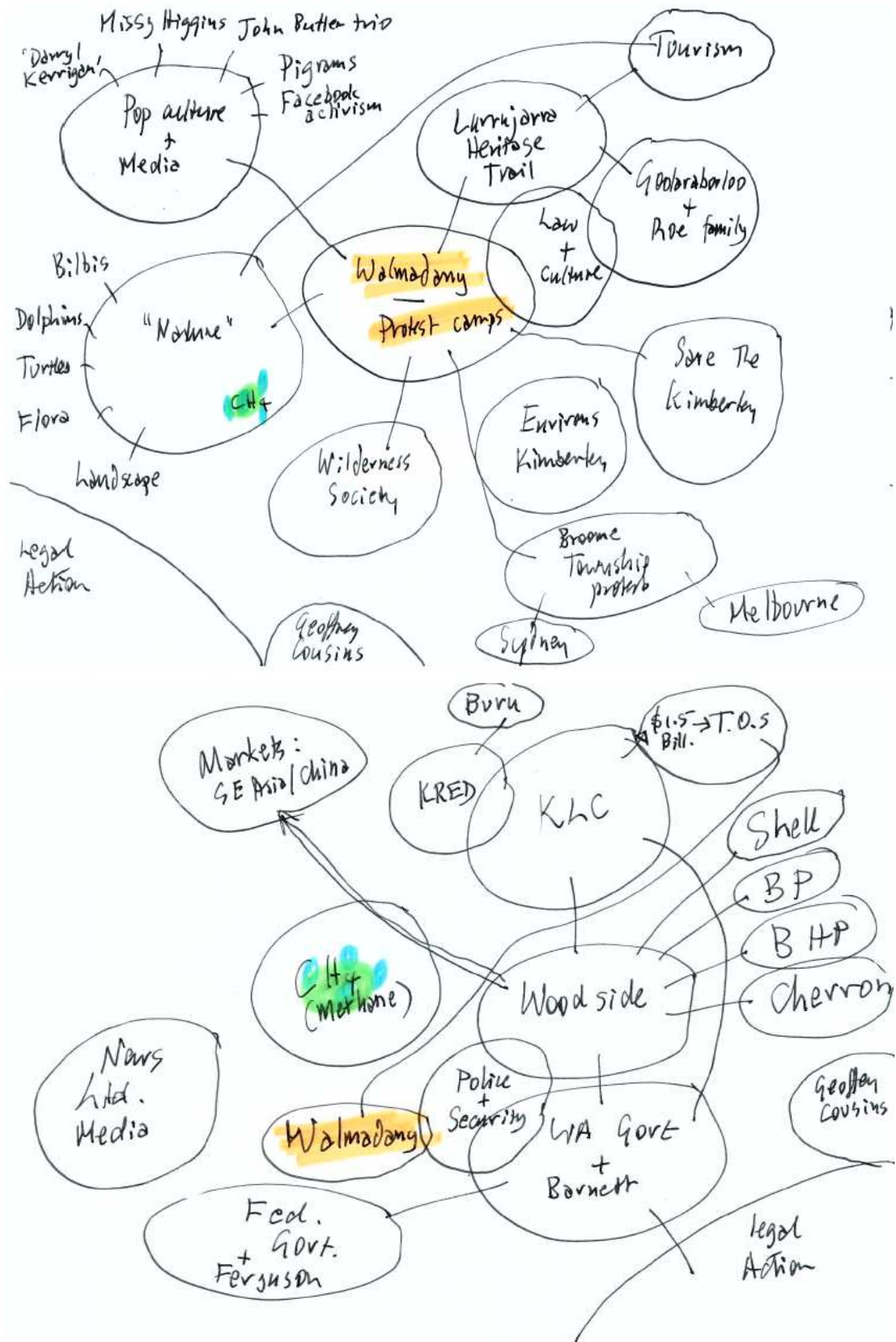
That's not the kind of intervention they are talking about today; the concept of the sacred in the title of the report is thus a philosophical betrayal, because it is a rhetorical gesture. The consequence for our cultural studies is clear, I think: divinities are real elements in the constitution of worlds, and they can't be translated out without losing the whole set of practices that go with them. And for policy-formation the question emerges about whether a rigorous secularisation of language and practice is always appropriate: if you use the word 'sacred', then treat it as having some real value, and as going both ways, symmetrically. After all, in some respects, the Intervention is failing where pastoral care (in its time) succeeded because it cared about 'the salvation of each and every person' and had an apparatus for doing so: pastoral care, the confessional, regular church services, etc.

Now, an ethnographic writing can give fuller value to forms of the Indigenous sacred (the very reason people won't give up their land), by describing the close links between words (the special intensified language), rituals, actual places in the country, other living beings and things that participate in *bugarrigarra*, etc. This is done with detailed description, but also tries not to reduce this sacred to something else, but to describe what sustains it in its world. Equally, it pays attention to its performative aspects, what makes it strikingly real, 'enchanted', as opposed to ordinary quotidian life.

Speaking of performance: music clip?

4. Sphereological Analysis

My rough sketches show how the spheres of influence for (1) Goolarabooloo, with Walmadany as central, and (2) CH₄ (Methane gas) as central. The one sphere in which both camps operate seems to be the law.



Spheres are interiorities that are defined, as Sloterdijk said, by their passage to the outside through mechanisms of attraction, repulsion and

flow. Inside a sphere individuals are ‘co-isolated associations’, drawn together for protection and immunity from outside threats. Society, for him is seen as

an aggregate of micro-spheres (couples, households, companies, associations) of different formats that are adjacent to one another like individual bubbles in a mound of foam and are structured one layer over/under the other, without really being accessible to or separable from one another. (Sloterdijk, quoted and translated by Borch, 553)

The interiority of a sphere is constituted by the elements inside breathing the same atmosphere, or having the same values, while being surrounded by a membrane that provides immunity. To this, I would add Latour’s idea of partnerships or allies in political causes, and different spheres might be drawn together in political association. Yet, these spheres are fragile, and tactics of imitation (Gabriel Tarde) are political tactics that attempt to redraw the spatial map of associations of different spheres. That the bubble of capitalist confidence is constantly under threat of bursting may not be such an arbitrary metaphor, and it certainly applies in the case of Woodside’s tenuous relationship with its joint venture partners.

5. A Platonic Love Story





Sunday 13th May 2012 in Broome, Mothers day, provided an 'atmosphere' in which the anti-gas protesters tried the charm of love hearts, etc., to lure the police into imitative association and hence into a mutual sphere of protection. The protesters are trying to create a common sphere with the police, they cannot assume they are already securely in one (as co-citizens of the Nation, for instance). This spell is exercised in the context of the 'transference' remembered as last year's 'Black Tuesday' when police got quite violent. The rhetoric of this 'Platonic love story' seems to say, 'We are all within the charmed circle of mother-love-fertility, within yet another sphere of national

celebration. All this is spatially organised; and imitative rather than communicative.

The spatial turn in sphereological sociology has some congruence with indigenous spatial organisation: the home country, the *buru*, is also the site to be protected from destructive forces, and sites are linked in lines of association. They are even depicted as concentric circles in the iconography: waterholes contracting and expanding seasonally, these concentric circles are *interior* spaces from which ‘generation after generation’ (Roe) of living beings emerge.

So, what are the consequences for the writing of a more poetic ethnography? Documentation is one thing, because the ethnography does not want to be isolated in its own bubble, it wants articulate influentially with other spheres, like the law, and it can only do this by presenting the facts. But facts, as we learn from Latour, can’t speak for themselves. They have to be made up, literally *fabricated* so that they are really real. They are coaxed into existence by a heterogeneous array of partners, which is why we apply for research dollars, from the secure base of our institutions, and they are sustained in that existence by practices like peer review. So perhaps the ethnography, so as not to give the appearance of presenting facts as if they were always in existence, ‘out there’ somewhere in a common cosmos, will have to trace their careers; take these facts aside and interrogate them about their history and their values, for facts and values always emerge hand

in hand, and within a conceptual architecture that, in the so-called cross-cultural encounter, is more or less symmetrical.

I want to discuss this conceptual architecture before moving on to strategies for writing.

When Bruno Latour started doing anthropology at ORSTOM, he noticed that his predecessors, his teachers, had no trouble going to Africa for fieldwork and in 3 years of ‘extremely refined analyses’ come up with the ‘central kernel which would explain [the] coherence ... of the Alladians, the Baoulés or the Mossi traders ...’

Then he goes on:

But despite all this I was struck by the fact that when they turned their tools, concepts or methods on themselves, towards us, towards Paris, they modestly stated that they could deal with ‘only certain aspects’ of contemporary society, the aspects which seemed to me the most folkloric, archaic or superficial, or in any case the least central ones of modern societies. Unless—and everything was poised on this word—unless they changed their methods completely and started to trace the emergence of reason, of nature and of the modern economy in their battle with tradition, culture and superstition. We have already forgotten this period, thank goodness, but let me remind you of the mountains of discussion, documentary films, newspaper articles,

theses and studies of peoples ‘pushed and pulled’, ‘torn’ or ‘divided’ between ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’.

So what he realised at the time (25 years ago) was that one could either carry on doing ‘normal’ anthropology (by studying the centre of other cultures or the margins of our own—subcultures, etc.) or ‘recognise that we were torn between an anthropologisable existence and another radically ‘unanthropologisable’ way of being in the world.’

Now, from that moment on, I started saying one of two things to myself: either we are much too arrogant when we pretend to analyse cultures in all their centrality, or we are much too modest when we set ourselves up to study our own societies and are content to nibble at the edges, without having a go at the central kernel: reason, nature, let us say what I call the three sisters, the three conjoined divinities: (technical) Efficiency, (economic) Profitability and (scientific) Objectivity. So I said to myself that we need to ‘symmetrise’ these approaches...In practice this came down to using the same ethnographic methods for the ‘whites’ and the ‘blacks’, for scientific and ‘primitive’ thought, but actually it came down to being very cautious about the very idea of ‘thought’.⁸

So, a symmetrical anthropology would analyse the ‘central kernel’ of any culture it comes across bearing in mind that the modernist conceptual architecture in play conditions thought from the very start. You know what the central kernel is when people will lay down their life for it: Joseph Roe says the last thing he will give up in any negotiation is the right to protect law and culture, *bugarrigarra*: his very existence as a *garbina*, shield. While his major opponent, Premier Barnett, might say that the last thing he will give up are Latour’s three sisters, Efficiency, Profitability and Objectivity, core values that never seem to migrate into Indigenous Australians’ spheres of influence without threatening their very existence as Indigenous.

A radical ethnography, therefore, does not mask its own conditions of production, at the conceptual level, for instance by singularising the concept of Nature, so that against that backdrop a whole array of cultures could appear as if differing by mere convention: you have your feather headdresses, we have our high heels. And that same concept of Nature in the singular was invented by Europeans to facilitate its alienability from humans, it was put into its own sphere, while the humans occupied an artificial sphere of culture and modernity that was fake in its presumed purity. And from that bifurcation flows exploitability and commodification of materials. I have elaborated further versions of the fake asymmetry: ‘we’ are modern while ‘they’ are ancient. Or: There is nothing ‘remarkable’ (Barnett) at Walmadany because exploitation (also known as ‘improvement’) hasn’t reached

there yet. The radical ethnography will have to juxtapose core values and make them talk to each other, like Paddy Roe makes the OAM medal talk to the shield. This is how I would read a statement from Joseph Roe about those T.O.s in town who are keen to take the compensation money: ‘All they have done over the years is sit around playing cards.’

6. The Need for Counter-Spells

In other words, they have been seduced by the appearances of capitalism. Like assimilation ideology, it looks like it is doing the right thing, while doing the opposite. To paraphrase your own Robert Musil (who was writing about ‘stupidity’; I have replaced it with ‘capitalist values’):

For if capitalist values ... did not so much resemble cultural values, as possess the ability to be mistaken for them, and if they did not outwardly resemble progress, genius, hope and improvement, the chances are no one would want to embrace capitalist values, and so they would disappear. Unfortunately, capitalist values have something endearing and natural about them...there is, in short no great idea that capitalism can't put to its own uses; it can move in all directions and put on all the guises of truth (after Musil, TMWQ, p. 57)

In other words, the card players have been ensorcelled, or ‘sung’ by capitalism, as we might say, confident that their modernity/assimilation to modernity will protect them in their lack of belief in any mumbo-jumbo:

[*Capitalist Sorcery*] tried to deal with the question of our vulnerability to capitalism starting from the idea that what’s at issue is the hold over us a type of sorcery has, and the fact that because we take pride in no longer “believing in sorcery” we have failed to produce the necessary protections. It’s an issue of dramatizing, conveying how unprecedented are the questions raised by what we call global warming or climatic disorder, and by all of the “inconvenient truths” whose common characteristic is, precisely, to “inconvenience” the perspectives put in place by this same “we” who pride ourselves on no longer believing in sorcery. In both books, there is a nonacademic commitment to use a “minimum of references.”

The project has to stand on its own, it has to activate knowledges that are already there, transmitting a minimum of information, to the extent the term implies that the reader is lacking it. Instead, it has to produce new connections with what we know, or a change in the mode of connection. When I say “we” it’s about bringing into existence an openended “we” called forth by those connections, whereas the academic mode of reference implies an exclusive circle whose references establish that the author belongs, that he or she has read everything they should have. This produces an aftereffect of exclusion, often self exclusion, of all those who will say, “because I haven’t read this or that, I can’t understand.”⁹

The ethnography I will write with the Goolarabooloo communities will dramatise and poeticise its prose, and so make new connections among

the spheres of influence. It will deflect dogma and fear by being charming, by mixing up recipes for counter-spells.

An important aspect of Sloterdijk's sphereology is that he asks us to 'abandon the idea of space as an empty field'¹⁰ (ten Bos & Kaulingfreks, 142). Like Latour, who wants to trace real chains of association and transformation, Sloterdijk does not invest the gap or the 'in-between' with utopian potential. Spheres, as I am trying to imagine them, must abut like living cells in a body. Applied to James Price Point, Walmadany, we can now see this as a space that is full of Indigenous (and now resistance) tactics for togetherness; it is not an *empty* space for Woodside to occupy. Living in a sphere is a vital experience of being animated together; the same experience applies to media spaces like Facebook as used by the Save the Kimberley and other allies: it is an in-spired community.

This spatial tightness, with spheres abutting each other and sometimes dissolving into each other when they find they are swimming in the same atmospheres, breathing the same oxygen, also means that discourses of emancipation don't work so well for the analysis and the writing we might perform. It will not be a question henceforth of cutting ties in order to liberate, but cutting ties in order to engineer further and more productive connections. This has consequences for the

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¹ René ten Bos & Kaulingfreks, *Interfaces*, *Theory Cult & Soc* 19/3 2002, 139-151

writing of ethnographies which work in close with their partners in a critical proximity (immersion) characteristic of forms of fictocriticism, like that of Kathleen Stewart. Critical proximity means not withdrawing to a ‘perspective’ out in that empty space somewhere, that claims overview and impartial judgement. It means a contingent and negotiated ‘earning the right to participation’ (as I have said elsewhere, *Contingency in Mada*, p. 19) in a particular sphere.

And in the light of what Isabelle Stengers said above about the ‘minimum of references’, I am proposing an ethnographic writing that might not pass the ERA test to be classified as “A1 Book scholarly research” because it would try to attract academic, non-academic and Indigenous readers into its sphere and hopefully enact real negotiations and collaborations.

It will be apotropaic (Taussig) and avoid the reduction to the kind of academic genre that Taussig calls ‘agribusiness writing’.

Agribusiness writing is a mode of production (see Marx) that conceals the means of production, assuming writing as information to be set aside from writing that has poetry, humor, luck, sarcasm, leg pulling, the art of the storyteller, and subject becoming object. It assumes writing to be a communicative means, not a source of experience for reader and writer alike (see Raymond Williams’ critique of George Orwell, model of the English language at its transparent best, and, guys, watch out for those mixed metaphors, please!).

And it assumes explanation when what is at issue is why is one

required. What is an explanation and how do you do one, and how weird is that?¹¹

The presence of *cosmos* in *cosmopolitics* resists the tendency of *politics* to mean the give-and-take in an exclusively human club. The presence of *politics* in *cosmopolitics* resists the tendency of *cosmos* to mean a finite list of entities that must be taken into account. *Cosmos* protects against the premature closure of *politics* and *politics* against the premature closure of *cosmos*. [Bruno Latour, ‘Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics?’ *Common Knowledge*, p.10:3, 2004, p.454]

It will mobilise the *beautiful* that it finds at the heart of culture (Butcher Joe¹²), that beauty that charms us and draws us into its circle, its cosmos. This is why, in these sketches of his, I have blown up details that I see as the product of an old man not looking properly and not concentrating on more formal notebook production. These *brouillons*, created in the glimpse, are the translation of his memories of sight, sound and his own dancing movements performed over many years: the leg lifted in Dance Detail No. 1 about to stamp in virile

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¹ Michael Taussig, ‘The Corn-Wolf: Writing Apotropaic Texts,’ *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Autumn 2010), pp. 26–33 (29)

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¹ Stephen Muecke, *Butcher Joe*, Documenta 13: 100 Notizen – 100 Gedanken No. 054 English/German, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern, 2011. 27 pp. ISBN: 978-37757-2903-1

strength on the ground and raise dust and the admiration of the ladies; the erotic sway of the body captured in Dance Detail No. 5; the static pose in Dance Detail No. 4 at the end of the song, as the voices in the choir are fading and the boomerangs are trilling, vibrating together.

