A Frightened Hunting Ground: Epic Emotions and Landholding in the Western Reaches of Australia's Top End

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ABSTRACT

A general theory of epic emotions is proposed. After providing terms to frame discussion, the author considers Aboriginal discourses of landed association to yield an account of the significance accorded to emotions by Aborigines during events that are attendant on situations of ultimate reference. The necessary association of specified emotions with culturally defined situations of ultimate reference is held to be a defining quality of emotions of the epic kind. In the Aboriginal case, the cultural register of emotions is brief to the point that recognised emotions are all epic emotions. Such emphasis on elemental forms has implications for the study of the development of social institutions. It is suggested that, world-wide, the words for inner states proliferate only when two conditions are fulfilled. The two loosely related variables are: (i) increments in social scale and (ii) the invention of ontologies of the divided self.

Human language and sweat have the capacity
to upset a ***sentient*** *countryside.*
(Elizabeth Povinelli, 1993:45)

Sentient, *adj. That feels or is capable of feeling;*
having the power or function of sensation
or of perception by the senses.
(Oxford English Dictionary, 1971)

L' âme est une substance, qu'a la propriété de ***sentir****:*
la propriété de ***sentir*** *est la propriété radicale*
de toutes les affections & facultés de l'âme.'
(François Quesney, [1760] 1975)

In this essay I propose a theory of epic emotions. In the tradition of social anthropology, the general theory is advanced and then brought briefly to realisation through its application to an ethnographic instance. That instance is found in the society and culture of Aboriginal peoples of the Western reaches of Australia's Top End. In this region of Aboriginal Australia, the proper expression of emotion belongs to the duration of a socially recognised state of affairs rather than pertaining to the time-span of some person's alleged experience of an inner state. Because it would take a book-length study to establish the promoted theory with reference to the conspectus of recognised emotions in our designated region of Australia, the theory is illustrated with reference to a particular sub-set of regionally recognised emotions. These are emotions invoked in discourses that have to do with the holding and the ownership of land.

THE THEORY OF EPIC EMOTIONS

The theory of epic emotions rests on the proposition that, everywhere and always, emotions of the elementary forms vest in social scenes that are experienced as situations of ultimate reference (Gilsenan, 1973). Such scenes are constructed with reference to social absolutes so that their definition is emphatic to the extent that the contraposition of distinct emotions that inform the action is clear-cut, frank and stark.

Epic emotions are constructed in situations characterised by the dominance of the scene:act ratio (Burke, 1969). Examples are elevations and situations of social gain (including pay day wherever such days are true days of reckoning), risky engagements such as fights, ordeals, elections and trials (whether trial by combat or trials mounted by judicial bodies). Then there are inaugurations, de-commissionings, funerals and executions, life crisis rituals and all the degradations.[1] Deep play is also to be counted — as in Roy Campbell's (1941:70) couplet in which the bullfighter's apotheosis is contained in an emotion. Ready to make, not the armed and final pass, but a pass of the middle passage (an elaborate and mocking Veronica during which he faces the bull without a sword), the matador assimilates risk and danger to his bearing. He stands:

> Elate, with scarlet cape outspread,
> Before a bull with lowered head.

Often, as with the bullfight, the culminating moment in situations of ultimate reference is contained within the form that is the 'focussed gathering' (Goffman,1964).

In situations of ultimate reference, the mounting of relevant action is governed by a requirement: that of total participation. This, in turn, implies both subordination of individuality and the relegation of conscientious objection. (Either the expression of deviant individuality or the announcement of any conscientious objection to the defining scene constitutes opposition and amounts to an attempt to break free from the constricting frame of epic compulsions.) Total participation is then itself made manifest in the exhibition of apposite or appropriate emotions on the part of participants according to their assigned roles as subject or object, actor or patient or, otherwise, as the permitted or tolerated (but often essential) witness to the unfolding of the piece. Required stoicism also finds its place. There is intolerance of emotional expression in culturally specified situations. (In some places: 'Big boys just don't cry.') Again, there are situations governed by solemnity provisions forbidding laughter.

By invoking the notion of elementary forms, I signal my return to conversations with the works of Durkheim, Mauss and the authors of the *Année Sociologique*. There is also a happy coincidence of ethnographic sites. It was the Australian ethnography provided by Spencer and Gillen that allowed Durkheim (1954) to propound his ideas concerning *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life,* subtitled in the French edition as: *Le Systeme Totemique en Australie.*[2] While insisting on the social rather than the biological or psychological origins and definition of key emotions, scholars of the *Année Sociologique* generally related human feelings directly to institutions. In this, I do not follow their lead. I turn, instead, to social dynamics expressed in the style of Simmel who discovered the forms for social life in performances and social action. My aim is to show that those elementary forms that shape the emotions are all programmes of activity, culturally given forms for adumbrations of social process.

In an essay in which he calls for semiotic interpretation of 'the human passions', Fred Myers (1988) provides an account of 'The Logic of Anger' as this logic pertains to Pintupi who are Aborigines of the Central Australian Desert. Myers's interpretation turns on the opposition of anger and compassion. He locates a dialectic of compassion and anger in a semantic field in which meaning is generated by and through the interplay of words and

also through those relations between words that are established in the logic of each language. Once facts of ethnography have been presented, I shall argue that contrapositions of emotions (such as grief and anger) are, indeed, to be empirically encountered as social realities. However, mine is an approach in which counterposed emotions find their proper definition and expression both through their integration into, and their containment within, meaningful flows and systems of social action. The dialectic relevant to a theory of epic emotions is, then, a processural dialectic. It is made evident when a subsequent state of emotion supersedes the emotion that (necessarily) preceded it.[3]

Let me illustrate by referring to Act 4, Scene 3, (lines 272–3) of Shakespeare's *Macbeth.* Here are words of exhortation and advice addressed to Macduff by Malcolm, who, for brevity's sake, is here best characterised as Macduff's companion-at-arms.

> Be this the whetstone of your sword:
> *let grief convert to anger,*
> blunt not the heart, enrage it.

Macduff has just had the news that his 'castle is surprised' and his 'wife and babes savagely slaughtered' by the usurper king Macbeth. Malcolm exhorts Macduff to put an end to mourning's inanition. He should get on with the urgencies that properly follow on the butchery of one's own. Macduff is encouraged to seek vengeance. Macbeth (referred to as the 'Scottish fiend') must die. Nor is Malcolm's brief advice bluntly given. It is wrapped in entendres that I shall have reason to consider later on.

For present purposes, the italicised portion of Malcolm's exhortation (the emphasis is supplied) provides an element of form:

Grief >>> Anger.

This particular conversion (or 'turning' as some versions of the play have it) is a standard progression. Once the actor has accomplished the required and self-willed supersession, grief is relegated to history; now anger informs his being. Then he, himself, becomes the very sword of vengeance; which is to say that he becomes the incarnation of that purpose. His dedication is absolute. (I indicate 'total participation' as prescribed above.) If action brings requitement (in discharge of obligation), what follows on the anger of vengeance is a quittance. This is release from the all-absorbing necessity to avenge. Such release allows the actor to return from required anger to contingency — perhaps, to open a new chapter. Thus:

Grief >> Anger >> Quittance ('All passion spent.') >> Contingency

By 'Quittance' I mean to evoke a range of conventional expressions that denote 'finishing up' as the Aboriginal English of Northern Australia would have it.

Samson Agonistes is John Milton's long poem of blank verse that charts the course of the strong man of Israel who is betrayed and given over into the hands of the Philistines by Delilah, his wife, who cuts off Samson's hair while her man is sleeping. By God's secret treaty, Samson's hair was never to be cut. It follows that Samson once he has been shorn must lose God's favour. Samson's strength thus leaves him, the lion becomes a lamb and the Philistines easily take him prisoner.

For its finale, this story has a blinded Samson (his eyes have been put out by torturers in the city of Gaza) standing in chains between the two pillars that support the roof of a mansion in which Philistines are gathered on the day of thanksgiving sacrifice to their god Dagon. During the time of his captivity and torment, Samson's hair has regrown. His strength has returned along with sprouting hair (and his silly captors seem to be unaware of

this recovery). Samson reaches out and pulls mightily on the supporting columns. These topple. The house falls in upon itself, killing the Philistine nobility and crushing the hero to death. (For us in proximate time, this implosion of a Philistine building must have a quality of reverse symbolism; it relates to the impact of 11th September, 2001, the day the West began to work to deal with the consequences of terrorism, framing action in the epic terms that exclude anything but the Presidential definition of reality given in terms of feud, vengeance and crusade.)

To our prurient delight, we pupils in the eleventh grade (class of 1955) discovered that, in the last line of *Samson Agonistes*, Milton (this paragon among Puritan poets) signals quittance as detumescence. After death and Delilah, it's not to be the deluge but: 'All passion spent.'

What I have sketched is a progression, an arrangement that constitutes a **primary string** made up of serried **moments**. This is an elementary pattern (in the Durkheimian sense) for ordered successions, progressions, and superventions. There's a point to note. Any particular moment in a string can be characterised by use of an appropriate word of the emotions. In addition, the moment can be given character by verbs of affectings (e.g. 'stricken,' 'enthused,' 'inflamed'), by words of purpose or mission, by labels for either ritual or operational stages, and by various other metonymies specific to the ages and the cultures of their life and definition. Thus we had before us the Elizabethan 'turning' in which the now incensed (rather than stricken) warrior dedicates himself to revenge, inflames his heart and takes up sword and buckler in anger. He sets forth in all righteousness on the path of vengeance. Macbeth's life-blood must stain the heather. Yet, given the context, 'He's after Macbeth' could compact it all. (The hearer is left to fill out the picture, supplying any missing terms by drawing these from the repository of culturally familiar scenes and sequences.)

Further to be noted is that inexorable sequences often lend themselves to representation as journey or progress (and pilgrimage is one sub-type of the progress). The last term in a completed string signifies destination, arrival, discharge, requitement, satisfaction, achievement, the *nostos* of Odysseus. The arsenal of military endings is also relevant –defeat, victory (real or Pyrrhic), capture, retreat, relief of siege, triumph, truce, *coup de grace*, strategic withdrawal, disengagement, flight — 'Never have so many run from so few with less ado.' After the action, protagonists may be left to a single, dominant and lasting emotion as when: 'They lived happily ever after.'

Characterised by movement towards endings that are culminations, primary strings readily serve practical narratology, their moments often featuring as stages in the thematic development of story. It should also be clear that the moments in primary strings are linked serially and sequentially both by logic and by socially sanctioned entailment. Once some standard sequence is invoked and launched into action, there is a push towards completion. Joined in a string, moments are the ordered elements of a presage; they inform one another.

In the registers of *noblesse oblige*, a party who is offended or insulted issues a challenge, demanding 'satisfaction'. The intending duellist thus invokes the moment of destination in the very act of throwing down the gauntlet. To stage a duel is to mount a sequence which is fateful and open-ended. The same goes for the consultation of oracles. In contrast, many a ritual has the character of a rote progression towards a known and boringly inevitable conclusion. (Hence the English word 'tedium' derived from the endless chanting of the '*Te Deum laudamas*' [To God be praise], which is a long, long psalm [number 106]. It gives unstinting praise to the true author of good things. The commander of a victorious Christian army would commission monks to stage a rite of thanksgiving by processing for days on end, intoning *Te Deum* after *Te Deum* after *Te Deum*. This rite put the seal on victory. It made a victor victorious by the grace of God, transforming the outcome of battle into a deliverance.)

Given this mode of modelling, one can characterise the picaresque. In picaresque nar-

rative, one moves arbitrarily from one completed string or episode to the beginning of some unexpected other, there being no projection of necessity that would serve to connect the previous episode to its successor. In the brief terminology I am setting out (in a business that resembles a reminding of readers of things implicit in our canon rather than the presentation of true novelties), moments feature as necessary parts/phases of episodes whereas episodes must end in destinations (whether these be satisfactory or otherwise as in 'the attempt that failed' with its associated emotion of disappointed hope). A single episode can be represented by more than one primary string: one couched in terms of the emotions, a parallel string in which the moments are ritual stages, a third string in which the scenic properties of each moment give character to the progression that's in train and so on. In ordinary speech, speakers are apt to shift and slide between the possible registers. The existence of parallel strings or progressions is the condition that permits elegant variation in descriptions of enchained events.

Shakespeare's Malcolm might have chosen to pause for a while and act the Comforter, allowing his companion-at-arms to continue as a patient stricken by grief, thereby prolonging Macduff's need for support and care. Comforter is to mourner as actor is to patient, the active person to one made abject because given over to an emotion that incapacitates. Grief, in this scenario, is a time-out emotion. But Malcolm works by encouragement (putting courage back in — a replacement therapy for, as the anger goes in, the grief is expelled).[4] Malcolm is then able to deliver a warrior suitably enraged to a world of action and sharp-edged obligation.

My general point is that **Mourner : Comforter** is an entity. A coupling of patient/agent roles, Mourner : Comforter belongs to the time-out moment of contained and public grieving. Also, note that a significant combination of persons can feature in the process of mourning. This is the joining together of a set of persons in grief (or some other state of abjection) to yield 'a community of suffering' (Turner, 1958). And, as witnesses to poignant scenes, there are often those who are structurally indifferent.

The role pairs and role sets socially given as necessary to the acting out of scenes of ultimate reference are defined and distinguished from one another with reference to:

(i) Presence or absence in the nominated persons of enveloping emotion states and
(ii) Ascriptions of agency, incapacity or indifference (the last being realised as Simmel's *tertius gaudens* or 'enjoying third').

Epic emotions either incapacitate or they fix purpose. They call forth either the attempt to act with decision or the distressed appeal issued out of helplessness by those whom emotion has beset and stricken. And, by convention, the appeal of the afflicted may be mute. Of itself, the situation must then speak to announce the plight of silent sufferers brought into abjection.[5]

And why the **epic** in epic emotions? Because the 'primary strings' lurk in all the oral and written literatures of active human recourse. Homer's *Iliad* is announced as the wrath of Achilles. Then, the highs and lows of Homer Simpson's career progress from excess to excess (in picaresque succession), always threatening some total disaster. (Oh, yes, the farting: so it's Rabelaisian farce in which the direness of dire straights trembles on the border that separates hilarity from pathos. 'Dire straights' means much the same thing as 'between a rock and a hard place' and these two nautical phrases have been imported into everyday English to become clichés that denote situations of ultimate reference.) The relationship between life experience and story-forms is a given of our social existence as, day by day, we present or represent the happenings in which we discover meaningful existence.

In analysis of epic emotions, one must have regard to three phases in the work. Phase I is given over to consideration of social process as the active deployment of the characteris-

tic strings and moments germane to signal events. Phase II is a consideration of ontology, the cultural construction of the ways of being of the experiential self. Phase III is reconciliation of social process and the more or less peculiar ontologies discovered (during Phase II) through cultural analysis. In all, social processes (infused with purpose) serve as basic carriers on top of which ontologies ride piggyback. Yet the ethnographer does not have slavishly to describe phases seriatim in a I-II-III progression. As the data in either their outlandishness or familiarity dictate, it could at times be most effective, say, to write *in media res*. And now, before turning to exemplary demonstration, I have to say something about quantity and the elaboration of registers of the emotions. The fact is that epic emotions (infused with gravitas and socially compelling) are always quite few in number. The emergence of a new one must (in social and historical context) be hailed as an event indeed.

EMOTIONS AND INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

In a teasingly brief paper issued to encourage research on emotions in Aboriginal studies, Les Hiatt (1978) remarked the fewness of words for the emotions among the Gidgingali people of Northern Arnhem Land. He noted also that the Gidgingali had 'no generic term meaning emotion' (Hiatt,1978:186). Then he went on to consider the range of emotions an investigator might expect to encounter if ever a pan-Australian and comparative study of the emotions in Aboriginal societies were to be mounted. This was to consider not human universals, but the generalities that might be yielded by an ethnographic survey.

Responding after intervening years to questions posed by Les Hiatt in 1978, I have a four-fold answer to propose. With regard to states that we would group together as 'emotions,' the Aboriginal social formation is so constituted that it allows only:

(i) Those emotions that are evoked as governing emotions in participants whose beings are lent to situations of ultimate reference;
(ii) The state of comfort and being which is unfraught and unimpassioned existence ('Going good!' = O.K., nothing to remark.);
(iii) The business of 'feeling.' 'Feeling' is a code word of Aboriginal English that stands for moments of active participation in which the person as totemite is engaged with Dreamings or is in spiritual communion with another human being (also a totemite);
(iv) The positive (and often enduring) satisfaction experienced after some quittance, a moment when 'everything bin finish up'. (In some parts of Australia this is given metonymically as repletion or satiation — the ending of hunger. Reference is made to a full stomach: gud binji [Aboriginal English] = good belly.)[6] Any individual's sense of self-worth is built on a personal history of vital culminations.

Lexicons and ethnographic records broadly attest to the absence of secondary elaborations of the emotions in Aboriginal Australia. This is only to be expected in social formations in which social order is generally maintained by recourse to fighting or vendetta or (more generally put) to 'self-help' and in which, furthermore, nearly all deaths of humans are attributed either to overt homicide or to the covert but lethal work of the sorcerer. Nearly always, a funeral entails the ritual disposal of a person who is held to have been done to death. Always, people are compassed about by potential killers. Within local communities, the demand system of Aboriginal extraction posits that the creditor must work hard and loudly (and sometimes violently) to extort dues from a debtor. (Payday is an active occasion for public settlements, extractive routines and epic reckonings.) Rituals variously prescribe inflictions, ordeals, self-mortification and orchestrated modulations of terror. By definition, each human approach to a Dreaming Power is given as a risky business. Severe physical punishment may

also be meted out in accordance with local tradition and convention. In such conditions, each person lives but a short step away from witnessing or experiencing some impending moment of ultimate recourse. These things noted, a further elaboration of theory is implied — this time a consideration of the emotions in relation to the evolution of social forms.

The civil emotions and sentiments (*dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*) have as the prerequisite for their emergence, the founding of civil order. Then, the emotions of conscience belong to tertiary elaborations discovered in those inner-directed (and ontological) formations of the person constituted as a divided self. In European history, emotions found yet further elaboration with the institution of confession. There was consequent provision of vocabularies to enumerate the passions of the tempted and sophisticate soul. (In this vein: 'The last temptation is the greatest treason, to do the right deed for the wrong reason.'[7])

To bring preamble to a close, I add two proposals:

(i) In societies characterised by secondary and/or tertiary elaborations of sentiment and emotions, locally recognised sets of epic emotions still retain their primacy. They remain the emotions of ultimate reference.
(ii) As emotions of radical contrapositions and ultimate destinies, the number and quality of epic emotions must always be geared (with some precision) to the number and nature of the values that have **active currency** in social life.[8]

With further differentiation of values, which are then entered into spheres of exchange (Barth, 1981), there is an increase in the possibilities for experience of type situations as situations of ultimate reference. Thus, in economies of honour, pride is constituted as *amour propre* and can be put on the line (there are places where desperate honour may be lost without any possibility of retrieval). Plurality of religions introduces economies of competing gods together with the accusation of heresy (whether voiced by some Jehovah or by the human prosecutor). Developed money economies allow the imagination of infinite possibilities of acquisition and conspicuous consumption. A fostered pathology is insatiable greed and the implanting of those anxieties attendant on fear of either bankruptcy or debt. Weber's Protestant Ethic is equated with deferred rewards and the perfection in each individual of a calling; with career anxiety instilled, the economy of the leisured self is imperilled and the life of easy sociality may generally be compromised by Puritanical abstainers-from-everything who become solitary even when surrounded by those supposedly near and dear to them; information industries, which value the sign over the signified ... and so on and on.

PASSAGES UNDER AN ACT

The passing of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of 1976 (ALRA) ushered in the era of Aboriginal land claims in Australia. By 1998, under the provisions of this Act, some 68 separate land claims had been adjudicated by Land Commissioners with the result that the ownership of more than 48% of the surface area of the Northern Territory was ceded to traditional Aboriginal owners (see Neate, 1998). A consequence is that Northern Australia has become the site for two culturally distinct modalities of discursive practice given over to the constitution and discussion of connection between Aboriginal people and land. On the one hand, there is the jural discourse in terms of which Aboriginal citizens of the Northern Territory may enter claims to be recognised as traditional owners of estates in tracts of previously unalienated Crown land. Over and against the legal words and phrases, there is the Aboriginal discourse concerning the indigenous inheritors of responsibility for living countrysides. My first step is to consider processes of conversion that were instituted and made possible as a result of the passing of the ALRA in 1976.

When a land claim is brought to successful completion, a double movement is achieved at law. In the first place, historically dispossessed Aborigines enter into the jural process to

become claimants. Their claim is then heard before a Land Commissioner. If the claim succeeds, claimants become recognised traditional owners whose interests are subsequently represented by a Land Trust set up for the purpose. The land undergoes change also. Designated land is ceremoniously made subject to claim and, if the claim succeeds, that land is converted into Aboriginal freehold[9] to be held and managed by a newly created Land Trust on behalf of the traditional owners. The parallel movements may be represented thus:

A. (i) Dispossessed Aborigines >>> (ii) become claimants >>> (iii) who are turned into traditional owners.

B. (i) Unalienated crown land >>> (ii) made subject to claim >>> (iii) is turned into Aboriginal freehold

Divided into three stages, each of the parallel movements conforms with the classic pattern of the rite of passage (van Gennep, 1960).[10] People made subject to a judicial process emerge transformed. The subject land likewise emerges as land endowed with a new identity at law.

With particular reference to the Darwin hinterland, I now go on to show how the double process mapped above is, in fact, turned into a fourfold process once Aboriginal constructions of reality are taken into the accounting. As we shall see, Aboriginal constructions also yield the three classic stages by which transformations are achieved. One will deal, yet again, with the form of the rite of passage. However, the states and conditions of either the person or the country that is made subject to transformation may best be given, not in words drawn from the law, but in words of the emotions. Land moves progressively from one state of emotional experience to its successor. And so it is with claimants. The latter leave behind them the inanition of dispossession to enter into that phase of active struggle, which turns them into crusaders: 'Everybody fighting for country'

PADDY HUDDLESTON'S WITNESSING

In 1985, under the provisions of The Aboriginal Lands Rights Act, the Wagiman people pressed to be recognised as traditional Aboriginal owners for land[11] on the upper reaches of the Daly River. In the course of the Wagiman claim, a man called Paddy Huddleston appeared to give evidence on behalf of his people. In the weighted words of testimony, this witness twice averred that the owners of country were people of hurt feeling. He spoke also of a frightened hunting ground.

After searching through reams of court transcript in the Upper Daly claim, I found no further instance in which Paddy Huddleston or any other Wagiman claimant spoke either of a group's shared feeling or of a land's distress. In its own context, the cited testimony is exceptional. In its rareness of rendition, Paddy Huddleston's talking of hurt feeling and a frightened land is also true to those everyday and out-of-court trends that pervade his people's representations of their world. While words of the emotions are scarce in the Aboriginal lexicon, the use of the scarce words of emotion tends to be reserved to the making of those pregnant statements that are uttered to transform the event of the day into a special occasion of heightened significance.[12]

> **They** (whitefellas) **never been savvy this country before, they been just come in. Through.**
>
> (Nowadays) **they waking this lotta things** (that is, white Australians are waking up to a lot of things), **because we been little bit learn to hold we country. And there** (in these new times) **they come and see** (that is, they apply to) **all the traditional owners and** (they now make such applications) **before they go**

through the country. They waking up.

We should have been wake up that (lot of whites) **before to all we country. But they ripped all the Wagiman country. And that goes through traditional owners. They had feeling traditional owners when** (those people were) **ripping their country. And we can see all this country ripped up.**

While my granny used to been (a)**live, we never used to see this sort of road like that. We used to just have a pad to go hunting. But he** (the judge) **can see this place, Wagiman country: all ripping out and chopping out now.**

You can't get kangaroo anywhere now. You can see kangaroo here before: all the way (along) **this road. Biggest lot! But you look — motor car up and down. You can't see one kangaroo standing in the road, you like to have five or six mile, or more than that** (before you will see kangaroo). **They frighten you**(r) **hunting ground. They chop him up proper, and making hard for all the Wagiman people and traditional owners. They hurt traditional owners' feeling, going through their country: That's right Mum?**

(In answer to her son's appeal, Paddy Huddleston's mother silently signalled her assent.)

(Upper Daly Land Claim, Transcript of Video Evidence, p.86, punctuation and interpolations supplied.)

We have:

DRAMATIS PERSONAE
- Traditional owners (including Paddy Huddleston and his Mum).
- Them (the whitefellas who are choppers, rippers, road builders, riders in cars and so, in a chain of cumulative causation, the agents who are responsible for the absence of kangaroo).
-A sentient hunting ground or living countryside.
- Kangaroo six miles away.

EMOTIONS
- Traditional owners' hurt feeling.
- The experience of ripping that 'goes right through' the traditional owners (as totemites who experience sympathetic shock when their land is wounded).
-The 'making hard' that immediately translates as both oppression and the suffering of the land's true owners. (Such 'making hard' assonates with Dickensian *Hard Times.*)
- Fright of the hunting ground.

AWAKENINGS
- There has been a twofold shift in the savvy of whitefellas. That is, a shift in *savoir dire* together with a shift in *savoir faire* (asking before they come through and thereby licensing active through-passage that is conditional on the showing of proper respect for country) .
- An Aboriginal learning (how to hold country in post-colonial Australia).

In brief attestation, Paddy Huddleston captures the facts of a scenic transformation and he captures those facts entire.

LANGUAGE AND STATES OF BEING

In the Englished text of Paddy Huddleston's pronouncements, the phonology of Aboriginal forms of speech has been modified. This work was done by a transcription clerk who works in service of the court and the result is that Paddy Huddleston's language is given the writ-

ten appearance of a dialectic but, nonetheless, still English prose. The problem is that we have here to deal not with a dialect of English. Rather, we are made party to the testimony of a witness who draws on the modalities and registers in a North Australian version of an Aboriginalised language that has, paradoxically, become a *lingua franca* while functioning, at the same time, as a set of regionally encysted forms of speech that proclaim membership of their speakers in separate, local speech communities. Local forms of Aboriginal English are: 'Same, but different really'.

In a *Holi Biabul* published in the Kriol of Roper River (a language that has much in common with Paddy Huddleston's),[13] the opening words of the first chapter of Genesis are rendered as follows:

> Orait, longtaim wen God bin stat meigimbat ebrijing, no enijing bin sidan.

To adopt the mode of the court translator:

> All right, longtime when God been start making everything all about, not anything been sit down.

And the removal which distances Northern creoles from Standard Australian English is a matter even more of sense than sound. The derivations of Standard English and Aboriginal varieties, partake of distinct and differing world views.

The King James Bible has:

1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
2. The earth was without form, and void...

The 'no enijing bin sidan' of the Kriol Bible invokes the style and activities of those creator beings that populate the Aboriginal Dreaming and bring all things into existence. A principle of Aboriginal ontology is that the essential being-ness of things is given as an arrest of motion. Things are captured for what they are only when they have arrived at a destination — where they are to be found emplaced, inactive, 'quiet' and 'sitting down'. They then continue in that quietude of inanition that cancels the transformatory potential of the travelling modes of either 'walkabout' or 'running round'. Arrested things — like once-extruded outcrops of larval rock no longer lava — are quietly being, not evanescent and adventurously becoming; not crucially facing up to this day's challenge. Hopefully, they are still 'going good'.

THE ART OF CIRCLE AND LINE

Alternations between movement and stasis condition the patterning of the Aboriginal art of the Centre and much of the bark painting of East Arnhem Land too. Thus: 'One of the key motifs in central Australian desert art is that of the circle and the line ... Nancy Munn refers to the linked circle-line as the site-path motif ... Geoffrey Bardon refers to it as the travelling sign, with the circles being resting places' (Morphy, 1998:120). So, Munn uses scenic terms while Bardon's are agentive. And it is Bardon who captures the sense that culminations in Aboriginal narrative are nearly always the expression of an essential realisation. Strings of movement bring both storyteller and listener to the destination that yields an increment in the understanding of the quiddity of that entity which story has brought to its deposition in a station. That which has been realised and is now recumbent, is the product of its given history. Things of the known firmament are, then, repeatedly culminate. It follows that each sited object has an aetiology that is compacted into it. This last clutch of words entertains the capacity of emplaced things to re-evoke tellings — 'pulling the story

back out' like pulling on a ball of string. Note, too, that an essential and enduring quality of a culmination will be its mood.

With arrival, there must either be a residual benefit or a diminution. People are said to 'go through' significant 'times' or named events such as an initiation ceremony. Through-passage leaves them with an accretion of experience, good or bad as the case may be. A man will thus look back on the fact of his completion of initiation with enduring satisfaction; that is, with a satisfaction that is re-evoked in him whenever he has cause to rejoice in the fact that the ordeal, once over, justifies itself as grounds, qualification and potentiation for his adult performances.

Recourse to the Kriol bible may have yielded a brief sense of phonology. It should also have provided a key to the modelling of eventuality, the division of the world of experience into 'quiet times' when 'nothing happening' and the times of marked experience. The latter are the active times either of 'problems' and 'troubles' or of joyous participation in explorations, holiday journeys, visits, ceremony, or the fun corroboree. The active times of happenings are times informed by supervening emotion. Whether the emotion be fright or rejoicing or some other labelled state, each marked event takes the shape of the emotion that informs it.[14] The principle can hold good because this is a culture in which one is always certain about endings — the 'finishing up' of business. Not only are there formal rites of quittance, the 'finished happening' is defined either as closed 'business' that has discharged its value (which may be taken and carried over into life), or as a finished-up problem that found destination in its resolution (discussed at length in Sansom, 1980). There are, then, marked and culturally provided terminii to moments for required emotion.

Back to Genesis. Concerned with endings and the business of 'finishing up', we turn naturally to the sixth and last day of active creation. The King James Bible has a masculine God looking over his brave new world, stage by completed stage; then He passes judgment on His own handiwork. On the sixth day: 'God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good' (Genesis, 1:32, King James Bible). Seeing that nothing further needed fixing, God gave himself leave to rest (thereby instituting the first Holiday).

The Kriol Bible treats godhead in its own way. There's not a business of measured judgment followed by decision. Rather, the report has it that a sensate Divinity experiences a post-prandial feeling: 'Him bin gudbinji.' After creation, it's satiation. Whether or not Godly satiety is to be judged a theologically adequate translation is in no way to the point. As Ainsworth (1985) and Harris (1988) tell us, the Kriol bible was produced in conjunction with a committee of Aboriginal consultants. One assumes it was their advice that led to the envisioning of a God of Appetite who adventures onwards again and again to experience the satisfaction of good belly as the Baibul tale unfolds.

In Edmund Burke's system for analysis of tropes, the God who is given to see things as good is glossed onto the underlying ratio Scene : agent. The quality of the creation is an absolute that overshadows the spectator-assessor's estimation of creation's worth. The Kriol bible, however, has God entering into godhead's own delight. The terminus for creation is figured in an announcement of an epic emotion in which the Creator's very being is subsumed. That which is good is taken away from created things. It is taken and put into God's belly. Bible translation thus produces an account of primary narcissism for God admires his reflection in creation — the ultimate in ego trip. (And, yet, the objective form is linguistically possible in Kriol: That fella bin look and he bin see. All that thing he bin puttim longa country really good!)

Read more of the Kriol bible to discover further triumphs of a syncretism that is built into the grammar that transfigures the God of the Judaic and Christian traditions. The most radical effect bears on Christian dogma. The supreme Christian moment—which is the Incarnation — is re-located. It's John's Gospel (1:14), the fourth book of the New Testament, that reports how 'the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us' at the beginning of the Common Era and in the person of Jesus. The *Holi Baibul* tells another story. An alimen-

tary and, therefore, a carnal God, is seen to be at work from the sixth day of creation on. Insinuated into the *Holi Baibul* are the primary strings on which speakers of Roper River Kriol rely when giving form to eventuality. An implicit rule is this: whenever a felicitous outcome is reported, quittance is to be signalled by remarking how the happy architect of success ends up with gourmand's delight (which is childhood's yummy tummy). [15]

TRANSFORMATIONS AND STATIONS OF PERSONS

In Paddy Huddleston's representations, Wagiman feature as a people of two styles. 'Old-style Wagiman' (a local notion) were passive witnesses to the desecration of their lands. The 'new-style Wagiman' are today's active parties in the land claim. Having already learnt 'little bit to hold' their country, Wagiman have gone to court to secure possession. As I heard people aver in out-of-court talking, the Wagiman now have 'got that new turn-out'. And these are people who recognise the words 'style' and 'turn-out' as alternatives.[16] Either of the two expressions signals an adopted stance — a mode of presentation marked by its particular linguistic forms, its social routines (primary strings included) and its material trappings.

The ground thus prepared, I can say that Paddy Huddleston tells how the historical hard times of infliction have been superseded by a new-style Wagiman turn-out. His evidence is therefore to be read as an essay on the conversion of his people's suffering into the assumption of collective initiative which Aboriginal claimants describe as: 'Everybody fighting for country'. There are antecedent and consequent moments, together with an announcement to the effect that an increment of knowledge has mediated the transformation of erstwhile sufferers into present-day claimants:

First moment
The country is ripped by people who savvy not its meaning. (EARTH is attacked by white-fellas and suffers inertly as patient.)
The HUNTING GROUND is frightened
KANGAROO become scarce because they have either been hunted away or hunted out.
WAGIMAN people are oppressed into abjection. (Denial of initiative or agency to the people 'makes things hard'.)

Earth, Wagiman, and Hunting Ground: these three are objectified. Denied volition, all three experience distress. In distress, they do not communicate with one another. Instead, they suffer similarly but singularly. The relationship between game and country is disjunct.

Second moment
'They come and see all the traditional owners ... We should have been wake up that (lot) before to all we country.'

By implication, this reads: We have woken them up into awareness of the significance of our ownership of country for they now apply to us in order to gain permission to come through.

The Flagged Announcement
We 'little bit learn to hold we country; they waking up' (to knowledge of country as a Wagiman holding).

I call this a 'flagged announcement' because it is prefaced by a rhetorical period. For Paddy Huddleston 'little bit', in fact, means 'that whole lot'. In general, 'little bit' is a miosis that is inserted apologetically into political discourse as if to mollify gross pretension. It works

to opposite effect. In this vein, a triumphant Minister of Finance would announce that, in these hard times, he had been able 'little bit' to cancel that National Debt. Again by implication, there has been a reflexive and so a twofold shift in awareness. Whereas Wagiman have truly now learnt to hold country, the erstwhile and freebooting choppers of country are learning (more or less) to ask before they venture to use it.

All this points to a conclusion. A transformation already more than half-completed will reach its destination when asserted Wagiman ownership of land has been legally ratified. After all, Paddy Huddleston already calls Wagiman the 'traditional owners'. In so doing, he employs not words of Aboriginal English, but the jural terminology of the Land Rights Act. Under its provisions, a judge is charged to discover whether, in point of fact, 'traditional owners' for designated tracts of land actually survive and continue to exercise 'primary spiritual responsibility' for that land. A presumptive witness, Paddy Huddleston makes his declaration: 'Traditional owners got hurt feeling'.[17] From the inertia of their previous affliction, the new-style Wagiman have emerged in fighting mode to pre-empt a judge's findings as they assert their landed possession.

'THAT RIGHT MUM?' — WITNESSED AFFIRMATION OF THE WORD

Before Paddy Huddleston entered his evidence, the Wagiman as a grouping had acted together, agreeing to assume the fighting stance that is announced in a group's profession of hurt feelings. And there is more. Whenever hurt feelings are professed, there is also a prepared story that 'gives reason' for the assumption of political emotion. When enunciated by an approved spokesperson and then 'given' to an audience of relevant outsiders, that subtending story has the status of an agreed communiqué. Furthermore, the story is entered by a set of people who by and through their conjoint subscription to both the story and its verdictful conclusion in 'the word', are people thereby conjoined to be made 'one company, one mob'.

Such a company has its genesis in response to a marked event — the injury detailed in the story. And those who join the company of the aggrieved are recruited to it one by one. Brought singly to the tale of 'damage', persons who lend assent to it, endow the witnessing of the injured with the facticity of a truth which has been received seriatim by persons whose acts of judging it will have been individually volunteered. There can always be some who walk away, declaring that the matter is not to be counted as their business. In local parlance, persons who withdraw are said to become 'private'. 'That not my business. Me, I'm really a very private fella me. That that business bla (belonging to) them other fella, bla that Maxie mob.'

The company that consolidates around damage or injury is thus an elective mob. The profession of hurt feeling has as precondition just this order of consolidation. One must note the risk. Those who bring alleged damage to wider attention may be left in unsupport having rendered up a set of details which are left as details, that is, noted as 'sayings' but not 'heard' by members of the audience to which they have been addressed. What is at issue has been the winning of support. And with support, with the consolidation of a company, with conjoint subscription to a 'word', there is a response to injury or damage which can now be registered using words of the emotions. The profession of hurt feeling may then finally be announced by a company of declared adherents, a group of people united in subscription both to the word and to their hearing of that story in which the foundation of today's word is found.

So far, my comments have been elaborations on provided text, locating hurt feeling in a progression which has suffering Wagiman at its beginning and fighting Wagiman at its end (for, in their own way, Wagiman convert grief to anger.) I now venture beyond the cited text to consider those wider traditions and practices that subtend the lexicon on which Paddy Huddleston as prime witness draws.

PERSONAL INJURY AND HURT FEELING

As an enunciated word, 'feeling' entered once and then again and again into my field notes as, over a period of weeks, I registered the repeated protestations of a single speaker. Big Maxie would end rhetorical flights with a shouted announcement:

> Just you lot listen. Me, I'm telling you, people here should have hurt feeling!

Taken by the insistent usage, I asked about Big Maxie's choice of words. In response, I was told that this was just Big Maxie's way. I now know that the replies defined idiosyncrasy. But I took them for answers which would have made Big Maxie's appeal to emotion an idiolectic quirk — an unusual and wholly personal habit of speech

In those early days of learning, it seemed that Big Maxie was the only person I knew who would attribute hurt feeling(s) to people of the Darwin fringe camp that served me as my base. (Nor had I yet caught up with the fact that Aboriginal English 'feeling' is always in the singular.) A deal of time passed before I was to hear people voice a socially considered, linguistically apposite and morally proper declaration of hurt feeling. Then I discovered that, after all, 'hurt feeling' was not only to be heard when Big Maxie made his speeches.

For reasons that need not detain us, the Darwin camp of my attachment was at odds with people of a mission settlement in the Southwest coastal zone. Some of the coastal people came up to town. They encountered members of our mob in the pub one night. These South-western enemies then voiced abusive words, impugning women. When our lot left the pub at closing time, the opponents 'crowded' the home-bent party. They compounded verbal injury by laying importunate hands on women of our group. Women of the drinking party brought a message back to camp: 'Themfella trying to abusim body. They saying anyfella cin abusim mibody'. Women of the Wallaby Cross encampment alleged that, before witnesses, they had been treated like prostitutes. They also said that they had 'bin take fright'.

When the camp woke up next day, there was a round of discussion. The pub-goers retold their several stories to the stay-at-homes, supporting one-another's assertions: 'That right, that right, wefella all bin witness for that.' Those who listened accepted the detailed accounts of the delivery of insult-after-expletive-insult. The women had 'bin take fright for (good) reason'. Indeed, there had been abuse, the kind of abuse that did 'damage' not only to persons but also to 'that whole mob we got'.

Residents of the Wallaby Cross encampment took this damage to their own selves and to their mob as well. With the damage of abuse taken into aggregate possession, the people of the Wallaby Cross mob were set to give 'the word' which would define their current stance and state.

> That Mission mob bin abusim woman; wefella alabout got hurt feeling.

Replacing the assorted plaints of individual victims, confirmed protestations of damage are announced to signal fighting intent on the part of those who own them.

On that night of insult, the home-bent party made up of both male and female drinkers was inadequate to its own defence. In reporting back the details, men left women to voice the facts, lending the silence of shamefaced assent to female announcements of this reported item: the entire company had 'bin take fright'. Because the Fighting Men of our mob had been outnumbered, the situation of itself had assumed the shape of fright. And fright comes of the incapacity of unaided, unsupported selves to find recourse. When injury or damage is taken to a company, the fright of unsupport becomes history. It yields to hurt feeling. The profession of the 'company' emotion replaces its precursor — an emotion that belongs, not

to a company, but either to a set of outnumbered contenders or to the person wholly on his/her own. Fright, then, can admit gradations of horror. These come of two sources. There is, on the one hand, the threat inherent in the fearfulness of the instigating thing or event, one's unsupport in face of danger on the other. And the paradigm of the last gradation of fear is reserved not to any brief confrontation with the taipan or the king brown snakes. Rather, it belongs to the person who is denied a company of recourse. The ultimately fearful are the socially bereft. In denial of support from Countrymen, these are persons who for some hideous space of time have been consigned; they are deliberately 'left' by all others to 'walk lonely'. In all, political process achieves a translation of injury and attendant fright into a mob's conjoint and indignant affliction.

THE ENTAILMENT OF HURT FEELING

I was brought to understand that there is a conditional logic that leads to the definition of hurt feeling. Hurt feeling is an emotion of high entailment. Such an emotion is designed to 'carry with it as a necessary accompaniment or consequence' (Webster), both the conditions of its genesis and the socially prescribed course of action which comes of owning it. Hurt feeling is thus owned in that peculiar sense which couples possession with public profession and apposite performance.

Hurt feeling:
(i) Is professed by members of a group in recognition of the fact that some named person (or some set of identified persons) has(have), by word or deed, done 'damage' to some other person or set of persons, to sacra or to country, which 'damage' has then been taken into possession by the group to be owned by all its members as the cause of the 'hurt feeling' in which group-members have all come to share.

(ii) Is never individual property, but always a shared-in emotion;

(iii) Is ardent and overweening because assigned social priority (possession of hurt feeling calls for those who profess it to engage in confrontation and work either to redress the damage or to avenge that injury which gave rise to group-felt hurt);

(iv) Is to be held in group possession until peace has been declared and 'that whole business finished up'. There is, then, a proper time-span for ownership of hurt feeling;

(v) Is an emotion whose profession establishes political stance;

(vi) Is quite rare in announcement because the profession of hurt feeling amounts locally to a declaration either of war or, at least, the necessity for negotiations towards the ending of hostilities between offended parties and offender(s).

(vii) Functions to constitute a 'company' or 'mob' of countrymen anew as the local grouping is reasserted as a grouping in and through the voiced subscription of its members to defined emotion.

(vii) A development of (vi) and (vii) above, hurt feeling can present the fear-inducing confrontation in which a whole mob of offended parties faces an isolated offender who is bereft of support, having been 'left' to 'walk lonely'.

Because each instance of ownership of hurt feeling must be conditioned by a history which begins with abuse or wrong and leads to vengeful assertion, it makes sense to charac-

terise hurt feeling as an emotion of high entailment. Whether occasioned (rather than induced) by the ripping and chopping of land, by abuse of women or the perpetration of some other wrong, hurt feeling comprehends that sense of injury which is shared in by people whom the fact of damage has also made fighting mad.

Negotiated into profession, collective in ownership and signalling the belligerence of group-intent, the owning of hurt feeling marks a state of being in which people come to share together by virtue of their participation in groupings which are political *sui generis*. In all this, no political truth masquerades in the guise of professed emotion. Rather, hurt feelings are germane to the constitution of the political contraposition that is signalled by the owning of emotion. Always the product of a history of relationships that has been made subject to group-assessment, the sharing of entailed emotion is made a moment in the political process itself. Hurt feelings are as much constituted as a political and group reality as their profession is denied to self-acting individuals.

In the register of Standard English, 'hurt feelings' (plural) ordinarily stands for the offended sensibilities of one person. In its indication of plurality, the notion belongs to that discursive practice in which it is allowed that a gamut of emotion can course through a person's breast/heart/being. In the face of your inconsideration or unkindness, I may experience pain, indignation, chagrin, shame, annoyance, bashfulness and more besides. Or I may simply say that I'm 'feeling emotional', registering my subjection to that internal 'riot of the feelings' in which chagrin and the rest all combine confusingly within me. The 'hurt feelings' of our Standard English stands for the all-at-once activation of a whole battery of dedicated little receptors. Our beings become 'emotionally charged' — which is to say, subject to the simultaneous stimulation of lots of 'nerves'. Hurt feelings are presented as a sort of ganglion overload.

A DISCOVERED STRING

Though Paddy Huddleston was not brought to say it, Wagiman during their time of non-resistance were people who could but 'sorry for' their country. They lived through a space of time during which the regard of each Wagiman for land remained. But it lacked the vitality that is the wilful potentiation of one's being, the readying of self to execute a redemptive act. Permitted emotion was individual, its expression limited to grief. With regard to country, Wagiman as a grouping were reduced to a grieving inanition. 'Poorfella my country.'

While a sorrowing would afflict Wagiman in those 'old-style' times, hurt feeling belongs to their consolidated and active engagement with the law. Furthermore, in local conceptions, their more recent profession of hurt feeling was wholly incompatible with the previous commitment of individual Wagiman to an unredemptive mourning for land that had been despoiled. In those 'old-style' times, some Wagiman wept often for country. There were others who went about the business of living, unassailed by the necessity to cry. Appalled by such disregard, those who wept discovered further reason to sorrow on.

In the Wagiman case, emotions partake in an overall transformation in which the conjoint profession of hurt feelings supersedes the sorrow of the mourners. Wagiman as Wagiman are all turned to become fighters for country. They then look forward to the satisfaction that will come of winning for themselves the status of traditional owners (T.O's.). In my notation for strings:

Sorry for country >>> Hurt feeling >>> Being 'satisfied'[18] in achievement (of T.O. status).

FROM SOCIAL PROCESS TO THE TOTEMISM OF TODAY

We have now to come to terms with the fright of the Wagiman hunting ground. The task requires pure translation: the best possible representation of the relationship between T.O's.

and the country in which they participate through spirit. And the jural notions of 'traditional owners' and 'Aboriginal freehold' are only a sort of essential shorthand that allows for latter-day jural recognition of those immemorial relationships by which an Aboriginal people successively partake of and participate in their countries. The ALRA does define traditional owners as 'a descent group of people who have primary spiritual relationship for land and for sites on that land' and adds that the owners should have the capacity 'to forage as of right' over claimed land. In the business of translation, the challenge that remains is to supply a proper rendition of the nature of country both in its selfhood and its connection with those who partake in it.

Paddy Huddleston's Wagiman belong to the upper reaches of the Daly River. Launching an account of frontier and mission history along that river, Deborah Bird Rose (2000:215) writes that:

> Aboriginal people in many parts of Australia have taught me to consider country to be a conscious entity. Place is one kind of embodiment of being, and the encounters of living things are recorded there.

For present purposes, this formulation has part-right status. It acknowledges the sapience of country to the extent that country is figured as a registry of births, marriages, deaths and other events. Here, the analogue of country is either that of the librarian who keeps the newspaper morgue or, otherwise (as befits mission history), that of the ledger kept by a recording angel. We face problems when our ingrained literacy is brought to oral cultures. The next temptation would be to write that stories are 'inscribed' in the landscape and that they wait there ready to be 'retrieved' by a storyteller who 'reads' the country (Rumsey,1994:128). And the problem is compounded. The experience of most Aboriginal claimants bypasses the inscription/retrieval of those who routinely deal with information systems. However, Aboriginal people (widely and generally) speak of 'reading country' as of rote.[19] Then there is the difficulty with Aboriginal **teachings** regarding 'consciousness' — surely a Cartesian and post-Cartesian construct and not a creature of Aboriginal understandings?

Payne provides a statement that is important to present concerns. Writing about people in the remote northern region of South Australia, she shows that country itself may be brought to situations of ultimate reference. A site in country can die.

> The maintenance of a site requires both physical caring — for example the rubbing of rocks or the clearing of debris—and the performance of (ritual) items[20] aimed at caring for the spirit housed at it. Without these maintenance processes the site remains, but is said to lose the spirit held within it. It is then said to die and all those who share physical features and spiritual connection with it are then also thought to die. Thus, to ensure the well being of life, sites must be cared for and rites performed to keep alive the dreaming powers entrapped within them. The responsibility to carry out this work falls on the shoulders of those who, firstly, have undergone the training necessary to enable them to execute their duties effectively, and, secondly, have received, and continue to receive, public ratification for their execution of these duties (Payne, 1989:56).

The frightened country can lose that which inspirits it. With its desertion by kangaroo, Paddy Huddleston gave us an image of a Wagiman hunting ground already well on the way toward fossil being (my concluding image assumes Darwin and is deliberately inept).

I want us to pick up and retain Payne's two gifts to ethnographic understanding.

(1) The possibility of disinspiritment of country is real (my word processor objects to the polysyllable with the angry, red underlining of Word *Me* 2000).

Disinspiritment is what happens if the relationship between rightful inheritors and land is not sustained.

(2) Then there is the performative demand: through the generations, human guardians of country must come to knowledge of rite and myth and service in the absence of which there can be no caring for the land.

But let us now look also at an author's expressive progression. In Payne's paragraph, spirit is first 'housed,' then it's 'held' and, finally, 'entrapped'. Housing, at least, is homely. 'Held' assonates with Paddy Huddleston's pronouncement and 'holding' entertains the possible modulations of the relationship between a site and its owners. However, entrapment is coercive, its introduction a transformation, the main trouble being that the word calls for identification of an agent who would do the trapping.

It is, then, against a background of difficulty that I bring this essay to the good word for glossing realities of the Dreaming. In crafting her study of transmigrations and the holding of land by immigrant Aboriginal people on the Cox Peninsula near Darwin, Elizabeth Povinelli (1993) discovered the *mot juste* in this matter. In her book we read of the 'sentient' landscape or countryside. As the Oxford English Dictionary indicates, there are two sides to sentience. Because this is a word of both the perceiving and the feeling self (and also because the *cogito* of philosophers of consciousness is left out of the equation), 'to be sentient' serves well. Landscapes and countrysides are made sentient to the extent that ancestral spirits[21] remain emplaced within them.

THE LONELINESS OF THE EMPLACED DREAMING

Putting to rights and clearing up about a Dreaming site is like (and is likened to) the grooming of one person by another. The relevant acts are acts of service, expressions of conjoint closeness and acceptance that create the mutual intimacy that comes of an asymmetrical relationship in which a custodian renders service and a Dreaming is made the recipient of care.

Dreaming sites are visited on and off. Arrival of its custodians at an unkempt site is followed by rapid and urgent attentions in the name of cosmetic improvement. At demanding sites, the required work may be more than a clean-up: there can, for example, be re-construction of dislodged elements in a stone arrangement, the removal of rampant regrowth, the touching up and repainting of figures on the wall of a Dreaming shelter or the extensive and general restoration of the scorched site that has been ravaged by fire. The mood always puts me in mind of visiting granny in the nursing home — a brisk exercise in neatening up, cleaning and provisioning accompanied by a commentary of: 'Oh my goodness, just look at this!' The very survival of the more fragile sites depends on intermittent but reliable human attention. (Some sites in their largeness and solidity appear to be vulnerable only in geology's time frame. But even then there's the whitefella's dynamite.)[22]

Payne (cited above) emphasised the mutual dependency of a Dreaming site and its custodians. I want to remark a preternatural loneliness. Each Dreaming site is a station. Left at the place are the signs of a Dreaming's arrival at some particular pass in its adventuring. The site thus stands for and memorialises a moment: here's the place and time of Kangaroo's swollen testicle; place of the Moon-man's frustration and turning aside once he discovered that the woman he wanted as a sexual partner was forbidden to him by the law of exogamy. Along Dreaming tracks, the most poignant site is the final station, one of the sites of ending-up, as with the site on the reef out to sea onto which Kangaroo finally bounded and then 'went in,' stopping altogether in this location that story makes over into a resting place of final retirement. With finalities at the end of Dreaming progressions, the nearest thing to Aboriginal religion in Christian worship is to be found in the Stations of the Cross for, in either case, passion is mapped into a progress towards the same eventuality — termi-

nation of carnal presence followed by resurrection into eternal presence in spirit. And, for the human celebrant or beholder, that's the pity and the marvel in it. The mystery is that the Divine participates in mortality and the Divine therefore allows that humans (who are mortal) may participate as spirit in immortality also.

Every time visitors go away from a Dreaming place, they 'leave' that place and the Dreaming(s) emplaced in it. That aspect of a Dreaming that is contained in a particular place has then to endure without additional company until physically re-visited or ceremonially called up into being in sacred song or ritual enactment (cf. Wallace, 1977:130). (Otherwise, there's the uncertain possibility that the emplaced Dreaming can manage to reach out and be 'caught up' into the rhythms of a human sleeper's dream.) A feature of this religion born of nomadism is that emplaced Dreamings are fated to a structured and required loneliness that is made their lot. I noted earlier that people dread to be 'left' to 'walk lonely'. (For Yirrkala peoples and to emphasise its jural nature as a sanction, Nancy Williams[23] glosses 'walking lonely' as the legally required state of 'temporary internal exile,' borrowing her terminology from Stalinist Russia). It is a paradox of religion that peoples who themselves avoid loneliness and contrive to move around in convivial association with their fellows, celebrate spirits of Dreamings that, by constitutional emplacement, are consigned to the interim and often long-lasting durations that separate one act of human visitation from the next. It's a recipe for distress.

A general (and otherwise puzzling) characteristic of Dreamings is accounted for as a product of structured loneliness. Because often left alone and unsupported, Dreamings out of their solitude (or out of experience of the restricted spirit-company of their locale) are apt to over-react or become 'upset' even to the extent of going 'wild'. Upset Dreamings act capriciously and for no (discernible) good reason. Dreamings that are roundly upset become characters that are 'cranky' by nature. Such a Dreaming may seem no longer to have the capacity to discriminate between rightful and wrongful approaches that humans make to the site in which it is emplaced. Cranky Dreamings can randomly lash out, doing immense and gratuitous damage. Understandably then, the potential for upset and crankiness in Dreamings conditions all relationships between humans and the Divine. Addressing any Dreaming at any time is an act fraught with 'lotta risk, lotta danger'. And the really bad times are times when a series of petulant and destructive acts issue forth and are attributed to some Dreaming which thereby shows that it has entered into crankiness.

Dealing with 'upset' and 'cranky' states attributed to Dreamings, one must register a reservation. These words do not stand unequivocally for derangement. They are words to be used by an observer who can see no reason in some apparently ill-considered act (or series of actions) perpetrated either by a person or a Power. However, one is not privy to all that contributes to another's motivations. An apparently cranky Dreaming may be responding to a history of insult or injury that is beyond one's ken. Unknown events could explain either a person's or a Dreaming's seemingly untoward performances. Separation from a sited Dreaming for considerable periods is a structural condition. Its eternal consequence is that lots can happen during those periods of time that the custodians of the Dreaming site must spend elsewhere. Knowledge comes of shared experience while ignorance and incomprehension of the other can be the consequences of time unshared. So while the words 'upset' and 'cranky' are categorical attributions that come out of observation of the acts and the comportment of persons or Dreamings to posit untowardness of behaviour, they carry with them that in-built reservation which is: 'Based on the information to hand...' Cranky Dreamings seemingly are so; what is certain is that these are Dreamings whose apparently erratic acts are to be treated as signs of 'that very danger'.

We have, in all this, derived a condition of Aboriginal religion previously only asserted or posited in ethnographies. The finding is that structural loneliness experienced as isolation of being accounts for potential 'upset,' the peculiar emotional susceptibility of the emplaced Dreaming.

THE LIVING COUNTRYSIDE

Elizabeth Povinelli (1993:1) writes that: 'speech and sweat (of Aboriginal people) are seen to affect a sentient landscape'. In this vein, each living countryside responds to the people who enter onto it, recognising the familiar presence and rejecting the outsider. The relationship between person and countryside is refreshed and intensified as hunters and foragers quest over the land, winning provisions but also communicating through each act of procurement with emplaced Dreamings in the landscape. As they travel, people renew their individual reek in the memory of the land by 'chucking sweat' (Povinelli, 1993) in the direction of those sites in which Dreaming power is concentrated.

My own work yields discussion of movement along those 'pads for footwalking'. We have two words of Aboriginal English to consider. 'Footwalk' is novel coinage whereas 'pad' is a word that has been rescued from that way-back era that preceded even 'that horse and buggy time'. Specialised into Aboriginal English, 'pad' together with 'footwalk' are words that serve the usage that insists that barefoot pedestrianism (that, of itself, grooves paths and keeps them clear) is communion with country. Because country is marked and modified by a walker's traversings, the moments of each walker's communion with country are given their memorial. They are: 'Put in(to) that country'. So, during the conduct of a dispute over the ownership of land, a protagonist replies to challenge by 'singing out':

> 'My country that! Go look, you gonna findim. My footprint everywhere!'

The verb 'to find' is often used in the sense of 'discovering something from out of the Dreaming'. The designs of artists, the mimes of dancers, songs of the singers, tunes for didgeridoo, designs for paintings, new words apposite to new realities, the names for children yet to be born: all these are found things that come of the Dreaming. Vintage footprints have long been invisible to the human eye. Yet they remain as traces in the memory of country.

'My footprint everywhere!' When time and time again, the speaker has sedimented his relationship into traversed countryside, it follows that his natural allies should be none other than the Dreamings of the very country whose human ownership has been put at issue. He speaks out of the confidence of connection, his sureness grounded in his conviction that the country itself knows him and still is happy (and uncranky) in its relationship with him.[24]

Now let us come to terms with a doubling. The 'Featherfoot' features broadly in Aboriginal traditions as the commissioned revenge-killer who puts on feather-soled shoes so that he may search out his quarry without leaving tracks behind him. No human tracker will be able to follow up the movement of this man's traceless passage. However, the revenge killer is not only hiding his identity from people. He is also working to conceal the nature of his being from the sentient country on which he walks. Country could alert local landholders to his malevolent presence. In all, the sole of the foot is regarded as an organ of mediation communicating weight of person to resilience of country, touch of country to touch of person. Such tactile giving and receiving results in a mutuality of understanding. Incrementally, persons come to knowledge of country and country to knowledge of persons. And such two-way exchanges qualify, step by step, as 'feeling'. Writing about Aboriginal people in South Australia, Diane Bell remarks that:

> For Ngarrindjeri, paying attention to feelings is critical to staying in touch with the land, and the feelings are grounded in the particularities of kin and country. Thus when a person speaks of their **feelings** about a place **being hurt**, they are providing a reason why certain practices (in relation to land) are injurious. (Bell,1998:224, emphasis supplied)

The supposed ability of revenge killers to do their work without leaving signs can only increase the general sense of the world's risks and dangers while intensifying the sense of personal vulnerability also. Another fear is to be piled on top of these. There is a lively conviction that innocent people are often punished for the wrongdoing of others. Extended to the judicial system, this yields the spectre of spending years in prison 'doing another bloke's time'. That a crime was committed is conceded. However, the convicted person continues to protest innocence. Within the Aboriginal jurisdiction, there is the notion that the 'wrong man' (it's almost always a man), may well have been put to death by an avenger who has acted with efficiency but on the basis of a faulty divination of guilt. (Nor would I be so assertive had I not been witness to sessions of divination that were designed to discover the identity of a killer. I have also conducted prison interviews with a man who delivered up an item of Aboriginal prison culture saying that that he, like all those other prisoners he chose to have as mates in jail, was one prisoner among the many who were each and every one of them 'doing another man's time.')[25]

In Elizabeth Povinelli's (1993) book, a detailing of the deposition and imprinting of personal histories in countryside from generation to generation progressively unreels. All along, the face and being of country acts as a giant and complex receptor. And this receptor is particularly acute to those sensed things that proclaim the singularity of persons. To begin with, there is the sound of the individuating voice. Similarly distinguishing are the sweat, the body odour, the blood, the handprint, the buried umbilical cord, foot-pressure on ground, a person's hair in the wind and the traces of singularity in each person's very own walking style. Povinelli also deals with the disinspiriting of a country of the Darwin hinterland. The people did not say that relict country was dead, but that the Dreaming had 'gone inside' and was now sealed off from human reach. Povinelli, however, does not find reason to enlarge fully on that aspect of 'sentient' that would cause a writer to treat countryside as an entity 'that feels or is capable of feeling'. For such an account, I turn from her ethnography to another kind of writing.

DE PROFUNDIS: *STORY ABOUT FEELING*

My chosen Aboriginal guide to meaning is Big Bill Neidjie whose book of exposition is an assisted publication called *Story About Feeling*, based on oral deposition and edited by (anthropologist) Luke Taylor. This pocket-sized paperback contains 171 pages of essential text sub-divided into 59 'stories'. The stories are articles of faith and are presented in stanzas of irregular length. There is no rhyming. Not the form alone, but the intensity of passion together with the breathless pace of the work, makes of it a canticle. (Pace of attestation in *Story About Feeling* puts me in mind of Francis Thompson's [1922] *Hound of Heaven* running relentlessly in pursuit of the reluctant soul that plunges down 'the labyrinthine ways' of counter-religious argument.)[26]

Big Bill Neidjie proselytises. He works to extend participation in Aboriginal Dreamings. He wants to endow those who visit his region with the capacity to recognise the significance of the up-thrust of earth even as they step off the tourist bus and put foot to ground in Kakadu. If only you've been readied for the moment, you'll discover that first footfall on a country is 'new feeling'. It's the tremor that signals the beginning of one's engagement with the sentience of new place. So, *Story About Feeling* can function as a needed and religious alternative to the prattle of the tourist guide whose spruik is grounded in a knowing ignorance: 'Just look at all the paintings and see what they used to paint. It's all the things they ate. You've got to say this: Aboriginal people used to come to these rocks to paint their **menu**.' (The last word, proclaiming the totemism of things that are 'good to eat,' is uttered in a cadence of triumph. Use of the past tense has relegated Aborigines of Kakadu to history, creating an absence.)

You listen my story and you will feel im
Because spirit e'll be with you.
You cannot see but e'll be with you and with me. (p.115)

Big Bill Neidjie deals with a situation of ultimate reference. He speaks out of fright. 'We fright little bit we can stop him mining' (p. 81). 'E'll destroy our plants, tree, fish and might be people ... That way I bit fright or scared' (p. 157). Then Big Bill looks back to the ancestors who have passed away, leaving him behind as one of the perilously few survivors who still command knowledge of the Dreamings: 'That mob dead ... oh me ... I fright.' His is a twofold dread. Big Bill fears (i) that country may be despoiled and (ii) that the new generation will be deaf to the Dreaming stories. Without stories, his successors will live neither happily nor long because, without the knowledge that opens self to feeling, a person cannot survive to continue in the land.

As I construe Bill Neidjie's work, the central and scene-setting exposition on social and religious realities is contained in the long story I characterise as: **Parable of The Severed Head** (pp.123–142). In Bill's cousin's tribe 'over on Ulbu side,' a father with four children, all old enough to go foraging, is eager to tell stories about feeling whenever the family settles about the camp fire at night. There are two brothers. One brother always runs away, dismissing stories: 'Ahh ... that only silly that' (p.127). The other brother always listens. Two grown daughters in the family join the truant male whenever the old man launches into story. The two women are outspoken. They say the stories are all worthless because these tales cannot 'give them flavour' (p.128). The boy who listens is put through nature's litanies. He learns to name all things and all creatures. Then he receives the lore that tells of the properties of each named thing. Spirit is brought alongside him. Both inspirited and knowing, this boy always will find game.

The old man tries again to persuade the recalcitrant lad. The boy's reply is an insult: 'You only telling us liar' (p.134). The women together with the boy of imprecations and refusals then go off heedlessly into the countryside. They disregard the old man who predicts that they will get into trouble — Might be crocodile! In the evening, the careless brother does not come home. The virtuous brother wants to set out right away to search for his closest countryman. Father is stern: not until morning or you'll get killed yourself! When morning comes, the boy sets out to find his brother. What he discovers on the riverbank is a severed head with staring eyes.

Crocodile bin kill im.
That head he brought im back.
In the bank he left it.
Crocodile he cutted his neck...
And all that body e ate it.
That old man he was know. (p. 137)

Meanwhile, the two women catch up with 'that short bloke Warrawarrarrayngumuwar' (p. 140). Because they haven't listened, they don't recognise this short spirit with the long name for the devilish character he is. Before sunset, Warrawarrarrayngumuwar has killed the sisters. The old man had prophesied misfortune. He felt that the sisters would not see the end of day. (While a nocturnal predator took the victim boy, his sisters were taken by a spirit of the day. If they'd all have gotten feeling, they'd all have had the guarantee that they would neither be smitten by creature of the day nor by any being that goes about by night. Feeling gives the kinds of immunity apposite both to darkness and to light.) [27]

The story ends only when The-Boy-who-Always-Listens goes to find his reward. He finds flavour in nine varieties. First, of course, there's honey of stingless native bee; then

there's green fat of sea turtle; richness of goose egg with its deep yellow yolk; goose meat browned on the outside but, underneath, a succulent white; file snake's round steaks that are neither fish nor fowl nor beef; then fish and, after the ordinary fishes, that fish of fish, the barramundi. Finally, to round off the list, the long-necked turtle of fresh waters, this one both food and aphrodisiac. Whatever this boy puts on his wish list, he then finds — all because he listened and got feeling.

What's that noise going in the sky?

Well e never go before ...sky.
E never listen plane, chopper...
You worry (for) country.
Used to be beautiful, nice green.
But now I just look tree
Where that bulldozer pull it out. (p. 151)

Big Bill Neidjie lives up against Ranger, the biggest open-pit uranium mine in the world. The pit is next to Kakadu, a world heritage national park. All about this country are wetlands subject to annual inundation. The mine has a tailings dam sited near a great river. There are bulldozers and the exploration choppers that fly about and there's chopping down of trees. There's a lot to make one worry for country.

Big Bill is concerned about contriving a future in which people will have feeling and relate properly to country. He looks back to the inception of relations between indigenous Australians and the incomers with regret. 'First go,' in the moment of first encounter, the white man 'he put chain' (p. 164). The police used to bring Aborigines into town marching in single file, all strung together by their necks. Police practice was to detain the 'material witness' as well as the alleged perpetrator of a crime. Looking back, Big Bill disapproves mightily. His answer is to make a joke for whitefella and blackfella to consider when coming to terms with history: 'Aborigine had chain in the neck (i.e. not **pain** in the neck) first go!' (*ibid.*). Big Bill's pun puts a laugh into the statement that, in Aboriginal experience, whitefellas have been a right pain from the very start. Having made this point, Bill returns us to the present by pointing to the persistence of 'rough' whitefella ways with fish. European fishers waste fish by leaving flesh, bone, scrapings and by-catch on the riverbank. They have no feeling for fish as a totem animal deserving of respect.[28] With regard to miners, Big Bill says that people from the big corporations badger traditional owners till they wear them out. The miners win a forced consent and then get on with their ripping and bulldozing. Teachers and missionaries are, perhaps, the worst of all. They bring boys and girls to alternative realities; they're the ones who give young people grounds for asserting that the Dreaming stories are all 'liar'.

Whereas Povinelli emphasises sweat as the mediating body-product that brings one to familiarity with Dreamings, Bill Neidjie speaks of hair.

While you listen this story,
E (the Dreaming) may be longside you and you feeling.
You say ...
'Oh! I bit fright. My hair is standing!' (p. 111)

That's frisson of the Dreaming.

Now consider this image. In the sacred 'ring place' (forbidden to women), a man is standing with a string of about a metre length in hand. The string is fixed to a bullroarer and this string is made of human hair that has been twisted strongly into form by a woman's manual labour, rolling string on thigh. The man sets the roarer whirling. It spins and twists

through air. Even distanced people hear the instrument give voice to ebb and flow of sound as of a rising and falling gale. Here is special and magical concentration. Almost every day, wind rinses through men's beards or pulls one's head of hair gently against the scalp — that's feeling. But the mystery of the bullroarer is that voluntaristic wind is moved by human agency to sound its cadence at a human's behest. Out of thin air, the man calls up the honey-thickness of a whirlywind to move and sound about him.

On those days that are very still, Big Bill Neidjie feels furthest from the Dreamings. He is then all but unable to recite the Dreaming stories. Whenever he tells stories, he likes to be in touch and feel spirit in its moving. He often speaks of string, string that connects people to the Dreamings. As I said before, string can be unwound like a story line that was rolled up in a sacred site. String functions in ritual to join together and capture things that become tied into the enactment (e.g. Morphy, 1998). Power runs along the vital strings of hair and people feel it running. Trees are important. One reason why is this: trees answer so evidently to the wind's movements, feeling more strongly than other things with their myriad leaves in the air and their hair roots stretching down, sensing the under-earth in which located Dreamings finish up. The trees, Bill Neidjie says, 'are pumping'. Also, our blood is pumping. And we are topped with hair.

Story About Feeling is directed to an outside world. Out of the depths of worry and concern, Big Bill Neidjie sends out his stories and pronouncements trying to convert a world so evidently at risk: 'Maybe you only spoil it world or spoiling our eating' (p.85). You'll notice that Big Bill Neidjie's use of 'only' has everything in common with 'little bit'.

BILL NEIDJIE AND 'HEART CRACK'

In the country around Kakadu, a new and epic emotion has been brought into existence. The predicament Big Bill Neidjie describes is the threat of discontinuity of 'culture'; that is, the failure of inter-generational transmission of knowledge and, hence, the death of feeling which comes not of blood nor of genes but of knowledge. The prospect brings Big Bill Neidjie to 'heart crack' (p.95).

It's due to mission and to school that Bill Neidjie enters into discourses of the heart. Yet he's heartfelt in his very own way. 'Heart crack' may seem to be reminiscent of the 'broken and the contrite heart the Lord will not despise'.[29] But in no way is it this. 'Heart crack' is Big Bill's term for his response to perceived crisis. And there's something about use of the term that I don't know. Back to Big Maxie: is 'heart crack' a term invented by the author of *Story about Feeling* or, otherwise, is it a word that the people of Big Bill's speech community now have and hold in common? Either way, 'heart crack' has ended up in print. There it functions as the term for the traditionalist's despair at the threatened passing of tradition. In The Parable of the Severed Head, two women and one boy died. In Bill's cousin's tribe 'over on Ulbu side,' only one of the old man's four children could be brought to listen and (through listening) come into a due inheritance of flavours.[30] The message of this story is contained in a ratio. For the author of *Story about Feeling,* the measure 1 / 4 is about the deafness of a generation. Small wonder that it leads to 'heart crack'.

The arrival of 'heart crack' is consequent on alterations in the calculus of value in Aboriginal communities in the Top End. Throughout the region, there is awareness of the death of Aboriginal languages; there has been burial and 'putting down' of sacra that once functioned as icons in ceremonies nobody now remembers; people of whole language-owning groups have died out; there are moribund groupings represented by a few elderly and childless survivors; in some communities, young men refuse initiation; some of the Seers and Songmen say that they can no longer see or hear the Dreamings that used to visit them. In some communities, local tradition runs strong. And the strong traditions and languages can embrace and then absorb to themselves members of populations who, in times past, would have rejoiced in the independence and distinctness of their own tongues and

stories and rituals and law. Within the field of inter-group relations, the cultural imperialism of demographically favoured groups is real. I am pointing not only to loss of classic forms, but also to an uneven distribution of growing and diminishing repertoires of traditional practice.

Outside agencies participate in the politics of culture. One of the most important culture-preserving events has been the decision in a multi-lingual community, that such-and-such a language will henceforth feature locally as a language of instruction in school. A well-made and informative film on the introduction of mother tongue education into the initial years of schooling has the evocative title: *Not to Lose you my Language*. The title implies that an urgent recouping is in order. But what of the local languages not thus chosen?

In this regional context, Aboriginal people have taken the word 'culture' into their speech. In *Story about Feeling*, Big Bill Neidjie invokes the word 'culture' many times. Sometime between that 'first go' when Aboriginal people 'got chain' and the present era of uranium mining, Aboriginal people of the Top End entered into new awareness of 'culture' as the medium in which they lived and found their being. The Australian North has always been a place of many languages and, hence, of separate linguistic identities. Often, a person's parents had prime allegiance to separate tongues. Children generally became bi-lingual and individuals 'caught' further languages as their lives took them abroad. There would, historically, have been waxing and waning of groups. But now people envisage the possible loss and disappearance of Aboriginal culture and the continuance of the 'new generations' as ignorant children of 'mixing', of T.V. babble, rude rap, and the take-over of Aboriginal English or creoles. What's seen to be at stake is the survival of Aboriginal culture in the face of all that would overcome it.

CROCODILE'S CONCESSION

We're left with a puzzle. Why did a crocodile render up that head? The first step towards an answer is to recognise this Crocodile for the prodigy that is a Dreaming Power incarnate. One manifestation of a Dreaming is its incarnation in the most prodigious (and/or aged) local representative of a totem species. It was a Dreaming Crocodile that enacted a placement, siting severed head on riverbank. Big Bill supplies the reason for the act: Crocodile-of-the-Dreaming gave up the head to signify that no crocodile can bear to look a human in the eye. This is to reassert the significance of feeling.

In human affairs, people demand preliminary eye contact (the eye-flash of consenting engagement) whenever they set about pronouncing on some matter. Crocodile cannot enter into the routines that convey shared meanings that humans gain from one another by way of speech. So crocodile returns eyes, tongue, mouth, lips, ears and voice box—the anatomy for the business of rendering and receiving messages in language. Crocodile's delivery of the severed head is commentary: 'Have back that in which we have no share.' Crocodile could devour the boy because this stubborn fellow in his arrogance (a knowing 'deafness') had in no way tried to work through feeling and so enter into fellow-being with those spirits of the Dreaming that use no spoken words.

In *Story about Feeling*, I see a parallel with Berndt's (1962) account of the Elcho Island 'adjustment movement' of 1957. Berndt reports how men of Elcho Island (now Galiwin'ku) brought out their sacred icons and put them on public display to keep company with a crucifix in an outdoor sanctuary fronted by a preacher's lectern that faced serried rows of forms arranged to seat all those who came to hear the ministry of the word. Elcho Islanders sought to combine and synthesise two traditions of the sacred. They entertained a hope. Whites invited to services would be exposed to the power and feeling of the icons. A mystical synthesis would ensue. Triune Christian spirit would commingle with Dreamings in the souls of participants during rites of amalgamation. As Keen (1994:276) has it, there was an attempt 'to extend relationships of amity to whites through shared sacra'.

Through publication of his book, Big Bill Neidjie is also trying to effect rapprochement. He works to achieve transference of Aboriginal religiosity. His intention is to bring his unknowing readers to some appreciation of the vibrant channelling he knows as 'feeling'. The Elcho Island mob broke taboo by revealing icons celebrated in secret men's business. But Big Bill is adamant: never will he say anything about concealed or 'inside' truths of men's ceremony enacted at 'the ring place' (p. 101). Rather, in discussing relations with the Divine, Big Bill has much in common with people of the Cox Peninsula as represented by Povinelli. He talks about quotidian religion. Concerned with day-to-day experience of wonders of the living creation (and their measured consideration before sleep at the fireside), Big Bill announces that feeling's found in each renewal of encounter with live things of the countryside. But to make sense of any encounter, you have to know the right story ('Them people no story. That way they get [fatal] accident' [p.120].) As for the food quest, success comes out of an educated appreciation of the spirit of one's prey. Diane Bell (1998:220) remarks that (in South Australia) coming to knowledge through cultivation of feeling is a potential vouchsafed to all people, 'but not all develop this aspect of their *sentient* selves' (emphasis supplied).

In the story of the severed head, crocodile acknowledges the barrier that limits voiced conversation to exchanges between living human beings. To bring the world to the channelling he calls 'feeling,' Bill Neidjie recited to create a book that resembles Dryden's *Religio Laiici* or the *Religio Medici* of Browne. Drawing as much on received tradition as on personal experience, *Story about Feeling* is an exemplary text. The document is 'framed' to attest its author's 'particular devotion' (Browne, [1643] 1886:17). [31]

SENTIENCE AND BLÜCHER'S BOOTS

'You know that olfella? Long one, gottim white hair, quiet man, ceremony man, can't walkin right. They callim thatfella Blücher for that boot.' One is brought to wonder: does ol Blücher take his boots off when he climbs into his swag at night?

The retired Blücher still goes about in Stockman's gear. And his Stockman past is taken to his frame. Stand behind him and look to see how years of riding have twisted Blücher's hip-joints and bowed his legs to turn them into saddle-clamps, a specialisation of the body that has compromised his walk. In a pocket of Northern Australia, the name 'Blücher' evokes no tale of a Prussian general who brought his cavalry to bear at Waterloo just in time to turn the battle and save the day for the British and for Wellington (another general and another type of boot). Rather, 'Blücher' is metonym that stands for everything a distinguished one-time Stockman has been and is. And see what's happened to the type of boot? It's called for its inheritor. 'Blücher boot? Thatta boot like that olfella Blücher always puttin on.'

The Blücher story is brought to this accounting so that I can deal with an alterity. Aboriginal discourse reaches towards summative appreciation by way of cumulative attribution — the presentation of a string of traits followed by the privileging of one of these traits which then becomes badge-trait and sign for the distinguished set.[32] So it is with Blücher and his boots.

Again, Aboriginal discourse refines broad and inclusive categories by referring to realisations. This is to work by 'for-instancing' — a way of working that proceeds by pointing to happenings, to situations and to scenes. So I can tell stories to give character to three, five, ten sorts and kinds of fright. There was the time we came home from the pub and that Mission mob abused the women; time ol Paddy tangled with that Python Dreaming at Bury Springs and got all crippled up; time the Buffalo charged at Humpty Doo; time they grabbed me for circumcision; time when that Cyclone Tracey coming up; time when that policeman Sergeant Murphy got me — he charged me for duffing cattle though I had done nothing wrong and he gave me the trifecta.

In its primary sense, 'trifecta' is a punter's term that stands for predicting the outcomes of three different horse-races when making a single bet. Applied to police practice, 'trifecta' stands for a well-used combination of three add-on charges. These are: resisting arrest, swearing at a police officer and aggravated assault (whacking no ordinary mortal). From a police standpoint, the beauty of the 'trifecta' is that even if the accused is found 'not guilty' on the cattle duffing (or other primary) charge, the circumstances of the arrest remain to be considered by the magistrate. An accused can be sentenced not for doing anything wrong in the first instance, but for vigorously (all too vigorously) protesting innocence. And, I must add, solely on the say-so of the police.

Primary charge plus 'trifecta' is a whitefella invention; furthermore, as add-on charge it's a four-bit string that has the character of cumulative attribution so evident in Aboriginal discourse. But now we come to difference. Once upon a time, some policeman-punter made the definitive connection between three-race betting and the three-charge combo. While this policefella and metaphorical sense of 'trifecta' now vests in Aboriginal English, the concept only got there by police transport. Aboriginal way, a speaker originally would have been inclined to say: 'And that Sergeant bin give me that whole lotta charge like themfella always putting on.' (Again, Aboriginal customers at McDonalds cheerfully order 'the combo'. Their native wit would give you: 'Themfella selling that hamburger, fries and big bottle lolly-water altogether for five dollar.') My point is that 'sentient' is a whitefella word like 'combo' and 'trifecta'. It stands for a combination of things and the connections between them; in short, for a complex. Such words carry discourse to levels of abstraction removed from primary characterisation. In a world where systematic and habitual abstractions are not routinely made, Aboriginal discourse deals with sentience in its distinct manifestations.[33]

There is 'jus watching'; then there's watching for witness (attending to detail and providing running commentary) and there is watching out (or special alertness). There is general 'looking round' and the intensified form, a 'looking out for' which is active search or quest. There is 'peeping' which means intruding on the privacy of others by giving ear to their confidences. There is 'hearing' which means taking in messages, processing those messages and concurring in them. People said to be 'deaf' are the socially autistic; such men or women refuse either to 'hear' or 'listen'. They won't be told but choose instead to live in space beyond reasonableness and outside the moral law as did the three doomed characters in The Parable of the Severed Head. One learns quite a lot from smell (sniff the seat of the truck to discover who was last driver). Then there's 'feeling' in all the ways advertised by Bill Neidjie. A further dimension to feeling is tuning in to others — sensing where an absent child now is; receiving the waking premonition that someone's about to walk into danger; sympathetic participation in the actual sorrow or the let down of another (either the sorrow or the disappointment of the other itself reaches out to embrace one; this is given as emotional jointure rather than empathy — like being wreathed together in the emotion-smoke of a single camp fire). Finally, there's the capacity to dream and, through dreaming, to travel to far-away country, to 'find' songs, designs and ceremonies or to be given intimations, premonitions, warnings and visions. To all this add experience of emotion attendant on perception. The resulting compendium is sentience. Being sentient can, indeed, be recognised as 'the property in which all the faculties and affections of the soul are rooted' (my translation of François Quesney [1760], cited in epigraph above).

DREAMINGS AND ELEGY

In Aboriginal belief, it's along the planes of sentience and communication that people are distanced both from Dreamings and from all those living things that are not human. Essential themes in Dreaming histories concern shifts that have transformed or altered the capacity of each being to communicate or sense or act. An important Daly River story tells how

Dog fails to make fire in order to cook a cheeky yam. In his moment of misdirection, Dog eats this dangerous vegetable raw and unprepared. Having used 'wrong wood' for firesticks, Dog's hands are turned into the swollen, big-blistered and un-dextrous paws that are dog feet. Dog no longer sweats but salivates and caustic cheeky yam has done Dog's voice-box in to the extent that Dog barks and howls and growls but no longer speaks. So much for the deficit side. But Dog is fleet of foot, has acute powers of both scent and hearing, has a weaponry of teeth, his hairs bristle expressively and he is credited with sight into the invisibilities of the Dreaming. Dogs can 'look that spirit' and so watch-dogs should alert their owners whenever a spirit presence looms. Dogs speak a language on its own. Dog-language, the languages of each sort of bird, the bee-buzz tongue, bull-buffalo bellow and the answering lowing of the cow: these are tongues accessible only to those born to them. There's an *After Babel*[34] aspect to the Dreaming. Speciation brought with it linguistic differences that signal the hermetic separation of kinds of beings for all that long duration that succeeds the era of first creation.

The Western Kimberley is famous for anthropomorphic Dreamings called Wanjinas. A Wanjina is associated with each Kimberley clan and is manifest as a painting on a cave wall or rockface in the clan's estate. The Wanjinas participate in a division of labour, each having responsibility for the increase of a particular species so that the work of all the Wanjinas taken together accounts for the yearly renewal of the world (Blundell, 1980). Capell (1972) has detailed the stories of the Wanjinas of the Ngarinyin clan by clan to show how each Wanjina story finds its destination in the punch-line that brings adventure to its end: 'And the Wanjina turned into a painting.' In the paintings, Wanjinas are manifest as great white Caspar-like figures with owl eyes and faces. Before they turned into paintings, Wanjinas spoke up and spoke out — Capell's recorded stories register their reported speech. But Wanjinas of the rock walls (now become paintings) have no mouths. And this is a great mystery (Wise, 1985:80).

The mystery of the mouthless Wanjinas can be resolved to assist us towards the appreciation of a generality of the Dreamings. Whenever Dreamings 'finish up' and 'go inside' to become emplaced, they leave behind them the world of everyday communication and enter wholly into the word of feeling. Nor do they eat as do the humans or animals they leave behind them. They have no gusto, no satiation in 'good belly'; they no longer seek for nor find 'flavour'. If the Kimberley Wanjinas can stand for speechlessness, certain of the anthropomorphic Dreamings painted in East Arnhemland can stand for the enlargement of desire. In these figures, penes are tree trunks while vaginas are vast caves. Dreamings constitutionally are randy. Driven by desire, they can be very jealous. We have already noted their proneness to upset and rage.

Parable of the Severed Head, Dog's story, Wanjinas and the genital Arnhemland paintings are to be taken together and made cumulate to yield a perception of the differences that separate people from Dreamings and Dreamings from people. Histories of the Dreaming beings are dominated by a destiny principle, the principle of diminution. In and through their transformations, Dreamings end up by experiencing a particularisation into lesser and more limited being. Diminution is also made evident through the relativities that are evident when, species by species, one contemplates the particularities of talent (and relative disadvantage) peculiar to each kind of non-Dreaming being. And where does such contemplation lead?

J.R.R. Tolkien (1983) protested that the Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Icelandic sagas that were his special study, were not to be generically represented as tales of the heroic. He instructs his readers that, overall, the tone of these sagas is muted; the mood is elegiac. (A century before, this was also Tennyson's perception as he used a Viking funeral to model the solemnities that bring his *Morte d'Arthur* to its end.) So with the mood of Dreaming stories in Australia. The origins of the differences that separate the sorts and kinds of beings, are historicised on the principle of diminution. In this world, Dreamings of passions unbri-

dled, great power and the petulance that is crankiness are diminished beings, bereft of speech. In human experience, Dreamings often seem to be wantons acting out of the immediacies of desire unmodified. And they are left to communicate with humans through feeling which, as a two-way channelling, is far less certain than is speech.

To uncertainty, communication through feeling adds invidious discrimination. People do not all have equal access to the Dreamings. Rather, unequal access functions as a source of differential privilege projected politically into the hierocratic domination of Elders, Clever Men/Women, Seers, Songmen and the rest among the chosen.[35] The high times of the Dreamings ended with those finishings that each and always were reductions. The legacies consequent on reduction then all add up to yield a speciated world inhabited by beings whose proclivities come of their own and particular woundings.[36] And so, in Tolkien's grave and measured sense (he deals with a whole literature), we in our turn come to deal with storied religiosity unendingly predicated in regret. Again, it's 'sorry' and 'poorfella my country' a tenor which is the product of all those stories that end up at the poignant site where a diminished Dreaming is to be found resting. Resting, that is, until desire mounts again to make manifest the wounded and amoral incompleteness of a depleted being that must become possessed wholly by desire. Humans may marvel at the enormity of a Dreaming's wanton acts; they cannot also help but pity the desire-filled Dreaming in its throes ('Can't help himself, poor thing!').

As Dreamings all have chronically been bent or scarred or wounded and depleted, think again of that old and grey-haired Stockman Blücher as he walks on his bow legs towards mortality. Attend to Blücher's tracks in sand. The toes turn in and his sole is never flat for this is a man who must walk on the outside front edges of his feet. The steps are short; the imprints are precise, for this is a walker who does not drag his boots. These prints bespeak the controlled yet mincing totter that is the Stockman's hard-got gait. In old Blücher's tracks we discover more than sign of unmistakable identity. Blücher's tracks signal diminution for they contain his medical history — an aetiology of work-related injury and bodily deformation that makes old Blücher 'crippled up'. A reading of old Blücher's tracks yields appreciation of his fatedness; so it partakes of elegy. And is elegy to be extended to all Stockmen of a receding generation; to all the originals for the figures of the Aboriginal Stockman that Australian painters like Pro Hart have made the bent-leg clichés of their prolific outback art?

There are two locations for pity (we're back with strings), the first linked to beginnings, the second to finalities. Pity for a person in distress should provoke and call the generous (or dutiful) soul to act and render the saving service that may turn things round. Such pity, then, inaugurates. The pity of finalities is post hoc contemplation of some completed sequence of events whether located in lived experience or in story. Reflective pity is the post-cathartic familiar of Aristotle's *Poetics* — an after-*Macbeth* emotion. But with Tolkien as with the Dreamings, the 'elegiac' comes out of the compounding of many pitiful instances into a great and greater sorrowing about a range of most pitiful things that have been done and cannot be undone. In this vein and instance after instance, a government enquiry rendered to Australia the compounded stories of 'the Stolen Generations' of Aboriginal children who were taken away from their parents by welfare authorities. The Aboriginal response was clearly voiced as the call that each and every Australian should stand forth and 'Sorry'. Such sorrowing can be turned, can be taken onward if proponents join together and, leaving the grieving behind them, then enter together into a discourse of redemption.

RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT

Total participation is a basic doctrine that refers to the consequences of an individual's passage into engagement with the Divine. The point is that absorption into such engagement is

socially incapacitating. One cannot, at one and the same time, attend to mundane issues and commit self and being to spiritual encounter. A general problem is posed concerning time and the division that separates the sacred from the mundane. In a poem, Wordsworth (1984:281) sets out to evoke for his readers the nature of a 'holy time'. He envisages a sacred moment by resorting to an image of female embodiment. His 'holy time' is given as time: 'quiet as a nun, breathless with adoration'. I have then to raise the spectre of evil. Here's the rude question that breaks frame: where in this religious portrait (painted, I believe, by Botticelli) is the armed guard who stands ready to fend off the intending rapist?

As their precondition, moments of religious absorption require a security system. Individuals who yield their selves (and souls) to religious service need somebody (and preferably someone who is bound by duty) unfailingly:

(i) to watch their backs and
(ii) attend to the correctness of their performances as they busy themselves, making addresses to Divinity.

The more time people spend on ritual and religion, the greater the need for permanent and instituted arrangements that would secure them in their removal from the mundane for the time that they engage absorbingly with spirit. In the Top End, the great ceremony called Kunapipi (Stanner's 'Punj') endures for periods of six weeks to three months and the most religiously active of the regional congregations seek to stage this ceremony every year. Great ceremonies apart, there are, as well, the unavoidable rituals attendant on death, the rituals exclusive to women and the conversational rites of everyday observance. 'Looking after country' is also a business punctuated by acts and moments of religious dedication. In all, the religiously active are given over to total participation time and time and time again.

In many places in Australia, to ensure the physical survival and the bodily well-being of persons during times of religious absorption, the moiety system divides the people of a region into 'owners' and 'helpers' in relation to both ceremony and land. Special rights in estates of land vest in members of the patrilineal clan. Those who own country as 'father's country' and 'father's father's country' are identified with the patriclan estate and wear the 'mark' (or design) of that estate painted on their bodies during ceremonies. Persons linked to estates by patrifiliation are the people who will feel in their own bodies the ripping up of patrimonial country by the bulldozers — the ripping that 'goes right through them'. Theirs is the onus if country is damaged or if sacred sites on country are made desecrate.

When people enter into rites which refer to the Dreamings of their 'father country', they proceed at risk. Theirs is a vulnerability and they are imperilled. If a 'wrong ceremony thing' is done, the human guardians of ceremonial forms may put the culpable patrifiliate to death. Otherwise, angered Dreaming Powers may avenge wrongs of ceremony. The persons held in thrall by the Dreamings of their patriclan estate, are glossed into Aboriginal English as 'owners' of that country and its rites. The 'helpers' are persons whose ties extend to mother's father's country. Helpers are the people who work to see 'owners' through dangerous ceremonial progressions. They also police events, punishing any trespassers who do violence to the susceptibilities of Dreamings. Working always to keep things 'straight', the 'helpers' see to the preparation of the ceremony ground and it is they who paint the clan mark onto the bodies of clan members. They also fine 'owners' if sacra within the landscape come to harm. In sum, 'helpers' organise ceremonial while the 'owners' all 'go through' ceremony in engagement. At times, owners are the living objects upon which the Dreamings work; in other moments they are the beings in which Dreamings find embodiment and through which Dreamings are made known.

'Owners' of today's rites will, in their turn, act as 'helpers' in relation to the 'owners' of their respective mother countries. For the system to operate properly, the moieties must maintain exogamy. Also, the grand ceremonies must fall into two categories to match the

overall division of the population into those on whom onus falls and those who are unfettered by ownership and, in all practicality, see things through.

Take these cultural assumptions to a reading of *Macbeth* and we have Macduff as the grief-stricken owner of a trouble. One must then infer that Malcolm is a man of the opposite moiety, the natural comforter. Had a brother of the bereaved Macduff appeared on stage, his also would be the part of a primary mourner. Brothers have the same patriclan Dreaming and those who thus share in primary connection feel injury either to Dreaming site or fellow totemite 'go through' them.

When either a totemite or a totem site suffers injury or death, people of primary connection should rally to repair 'hurt feeling'. A moiety of those foregathered will 'sorry'. Those of the opposite moiety will rattle spears and vent anger. This division of emotional labour is well illustrated in *Journey to the Crocodile's Nest* which is published both as a film and a written text.[37] The journey is that of a human spirit to be returned (post-mortem) to the Crocodile Dreaming. Text and film capture that moment in the rite of disposal when the congregation about the hollow log coffin falls into two sections, a division made up of those who manifestly grieve, while the other division is arrayed as a phalanx of warriors armed, prancing, angry and calling out for vengeance.

In sum, a division of emotional labour has its structure for recruitment in the exogamous moieties that, quite obviously, were invented to structure such reciprocities of service. A principle underlies the invention of moieties which are divisions that creator Dreamings put in place. Moieties were given their form to ensure that those who mourn shall be comforted, that the sick shall find succour, that deaths should be avenged and that all those who enter holy times shall be provided with statutory guardians to watch their backs. In the last analysis, the moieties, given of the Dreamings, are to be seen as an armature for recruiting persons to impact of emotion and for recruiting persons also to abject emotion's complement, which is the rendering of support to troubled souls for the time-span that is proper to the duration of today's particular distress. And where things are not organised on a categorical basis, there's a sliding cline from 'close up countrymen' to known others who, while significant and known, are not thus close. The division of labour is then referred to an ontological distancing that distinguishes between those gut-wrenched by distress and those whom social distance makes sufficiently indifferent to the loss or infliction of the day.

THE DISALLOWANCE OF EMOTION

There is something left over in the business of accounting — Big Maxie and his exceptional routines of speech. I have to explain that this man's repeated invocation of 'feeling' was no quirk of idiolect, but always an untoward appeal. Years and years have passed since Big Maxie first entered my notebooks as a man who, unlike others, was wont to appeal to feeling. My appreciation of what he got up to in those days is due to the benefit of hindsight. I have discovered that, in 1974, Big Maxie conducted his relationship with me on the basis of a lie. Again and again, he 'gammoned' me and nobody was then game to tell me that I was the unknowing victim of deceptions.

Big Maxie spoke (and still does speak) English that is 'high'. I saw in him a potential interpreter — not a mere translator, but a man who might well offer up helpful exegesis. He declined the part. His explanation was that his very facility in English came of his distancing from Countrymen. He owed command of English to a Station Lady who let him 'run with' her own children when he, himself, was still a boy. He used to eat whitefella tucker and, at night, he bedded down with his whitefella playmates in a fly-screened 'sleep-out' on the veranda of the station manager's house.

Until his teenage years, Big Maxie (not then actually yet Big Maxie) spent all his time with the station-owner's kids. He became a stranger to the 'blackfella' encampment in which his mother, father and younger siblings lived. Then he went on to work as a station

hand. By this time, he had taken the surname of the station manager for his own. Having missed out on 'all that tribal business' as a youth, he now held himself to be at a disadvantage. Claiming to know less of ceremony and tradition than Aboriginal contemporaries, Big Maxie said that this was due to the fact that, in the past, he had gone 'whitefella way'. He had been unwilling to participate either in 'ceremony business' or secular camp affairs 'In that native way, you know, like that Myall.' ('Myall' is frontier English for an unreclaimed 'tribal' Aborigine who lives as a nomad in the bush.) But, Maxie added, the whitefellas were, in the end, to 'rubbish' him.

Big Maxie's patrons left the Territory. Without their special sponsorship, he had no recourse but to rejoin his mother, his five siblings and the other people of the camps. By this time, Big Maxie's Aboriginal father was dead. Big Maxie married, as he said, 'Aboriginal way' — his Countrymen would say 'Blackfella', not 'Aboriginal' — and then he became a local presence, moving between town camps and station camps of the Darwin region. General recognition of Big Maxie's fighting prowess attached the epithet of enlargement to his name. Not only did Big Maxie know how to fight to effect; by general agreement, everyone also recognized that he never knew when to stop. Against odds of five or more to one, Big Maxie would fight on till, as the legendary accounts all finish up: 'They bin callim up that ambulance to pickimup thatfella.'

By 1974, Big Maxie was married and father to a clutch of kids. He was also given to 'running round'.[38] His frequent love affairs seemed always to end in trouble. And his fighting reputation led irate husbands to attack him, not singly, but supported by 'back ups'. Discharged from hospital, Big Maxie would return to his wife in the Darwin fringe camp, the evidence of a received bashing patent in bandages and facial scars. (Once he came back with his right arm in plaster.) He would then be fierce in representations. Displaying damage, he would appeal to feeling. He was asking the people of the encampment to take his injuries to themselves. And this they would not do. Nor were they frank about their refusals.

The problem was that Big Maxie's fighting comportment threatened everyone. He was a dubious Countryman. By birth and kinship one of ours, Big Maxie posed repeated dilemmas. Nobody was willing to deny him as a Countryman. He was, after all, too strong and violent, too useful as a potential fighting ally and — besides — too well connected and, in his own way, too good a man: a member of a numerous family and a man with a rare reputation for providing for his own children. Among locals, he was acknowledged as top Stockman of his generation. Nor, in the regard of his Countrymen, did Big Maxie's wife-beating proclivities cancel his positive contributions. This order of violence was neutered because he usually beat his wife after she had made derogatory and public comment on his philandering. And that's 'own business', a domestic matter for a couple to resolve without recourse to outside intervention unless the wife has strong, bold and particularly supportive men among her kin who, furthermore, are willing to take her troubles to themselves.

The outcome of such episodes was that Big Maxie would (as I now will put it) be 'gentled' out of town. He was encouraged to return to the cattle station that served him and his family as residential base. The argument presented to Big Maxie was that our urban camp had insufficient resources to cope: not enough Fighting Men to do battle with all Big Maxie's enemies. In the openness of town, those bent on vengeance could 'sneak up' anytime on the unsuspecting shopper. It would be better that Big Maxie left. Once he had left, Big Maxie would be consigned to membership of 'that Station mob.' His adventuring and alleged wrongdoing would then no more be counted as our camp's business. The Darwin campers thus worked to withdraw protection from this too-fractious man but without telling him that he was their Countryman no more. Nor was I purblind to the politics of all the inflicted and threatened violence. What then I did not comprehend was Big Maxie's special cry; his apparently unique and particular appeal to feeling.

If anything I have so far written has made sense, the reader will appreciate the import of Big Maxie's calls. They were all pre-emptive. He was asking a mob to take the injuries

consequent on his philandering to themselves. The mob would have been fool to do so. But the demand was entered by no ordinary man. I rather think that people wondered at me whenever I asked why Big Maxie spoke of feeling. If I could not see for myself, who on local turf was going to spell things out and so expose the expediency of the nervous argument used over a period of days to persuade Big Maxie that station country was calling him home? In this account, Big Maxie stands for the untoward appeal to feeling. The response was disallowance of hurt feeling. Despite his fighting presence, Big Maxie could never manage to rally a company to unite together with him in hurt feeling. Countrymen would not be gathered up to requite the injuries to which Big Maxie's love life made him prone.

Essential to my charge against him of deception, is the fact that Big Maxie is now to be numbered among those whom Elkin (1945) characterised as *Aboriginal Men of High Degree*. A leading man of ceremony, Big Maxie is now prominent as a teacher of the law. Those who achieve this position ordinarily serve during their years of middle passage as acolytes, learners and the evident followers of senior men of ceremony. Somehow, Big Maxie skipped apprenticeship. Quietly, he contrived to listen and to learn without acknowledging debts to sponsoring seniors. He was, as he remains, never a man to admit subordination on any count, even that of a law-receiver's pupillage. Yet this is not quite right. He always paid tribute to that Station Lady who opened her kitchen to him, whose surname he still bears and whose legacy is his competence in English that is 'high'. But then, as little Maxie, he always used to call her 'Mum'.

In general, professions of emotion are essayed more often than they are allowed to pass as permitted utterance. There is active suppression of any speaker who untowardly tries to make some emotion pertinent to the definition of affairs in train. And the social particularity of the Aboriginal construction and allowance of each recognised emotion is essential to the maintenance of a scheme of things in which act and emotion and person are related each one to the others in epic terms.

PROSPECT

The Abstract at the head of this essay is really the blurb for the book on epic emotions that I never find time to write. I have still sometime to show that all emotions in Aboriginal cultural conspectus are of the epic kind. I have yet to discuss the proliferation of emotions in other places, relating emergent forms to new currencies and values. One day I intend to compare Aboriginal ascriptions of covetousness with the construction of jealousy in the Hebrew Scriptures (especially in the writings of the minor prophets) and thereby come to a proper appreciation of the institution of marriage in Aboriginal tradition and custom. I should do my proper duty and set the notions developed here in the broader context of the anthropology of emotions.

With regard to analysis of the emotions in Aboriginal studies, I can identity a brief series of works in which each contribution relates somewhat to trends of analysis developed here. The series begins with Catherine Berndt's (1950) pioneering paper on 'Expressions of grief among Aboriginal women'. Catherine Berndt's contribution raises the issue of gender and emotion. She points to the leading part that women play in mourning. Their expected and grief-stricken slashings of head and body call out for a comforter's intervention lest their self-woundings lead to death by loss of blood. To bloodied abandonment in grief, I would add the public 'worry' by which women bring either the absences of those they love, or their dread concerning personal futures to present attention; worrying for that kid that's away visiting, worrying for what this or that person might have to face tomorrow. Sylvie Poirier (1996) brings dreams into focus and deals, in particular, with the extent to which private emotional preoccupations can through announcement of dreams be made relevant to the public business of the day. Vikki Burbank (1994) devotes a book to the anger of fighting women while Marcia Langton (1988) treats female hurt, protest and anger expressed in diatribes of

swearing as aspects of traditions of dispute settlement. These considerations of emotion in situations of public engagement all invite analysis of described emotion as moments in strings of consequential and epic progressions. I find it interesting that the notions I develop in this essay have (within the Australian context) been most nearly foreshadowed in gendered studies (including Povinelli, Bell and Payne, all cited above) in which attention is paid to women's expressive acts. More broadly, one may note that because the emotions we deal with are epic emotions, scenes of and for their enactment will have been captured for anthropology to the extent that the ethnographer has attended to both actor and performances. An anthropology of epic emotions requires the modelling of those forms that constitute events; equally essential is consideration of moments of the participating self.

While further applications of the theory of epic emotions to Aboriginal ethnography are in prospect, the essentials of the theory are all stated in the introductory sections of this piece. In early paragraphs, I deliberately worked to set out a general theory with reference neither to any particular place nor to any designated people but located, of course, in English. This resolve accounts (in part) for my literary allusions. The important thing is that the cited words and phrases have been taken from sources that are public and available. With the exception of Roy Campbell, I count them to be well known by English-speakers of my generation. And when I venture a citation, I do intend (in the manner of the OED) to transport meaning from its context of origin.

With regard to possible self-delusion concerning qualities of emotions of the epic kind, I've never been so sure of my own proposals. I could have uncovered the necessary illustrative material in Homer's *Iliad* or in the feud and controlled anger of the Bedouin or by comparing biblical times of the kings with those earlier times when there were no kings in Israel. An alternative project would be the examination of the novels of Ernest Hemingway who liked to depict bullfights, *agon* and the pitting of Man against nature. It's my claim that any of these would do as well. To deal with all of them together and in comparative perspective would be even better.

OF SAMENESS AND GREAT DIFFERENCE

The primary strings yielded by attending to Aboriginal discourse about land are these four:

A. (i) Dispossessed Aborigines >>> (ii) become claimants >>> (iii) who are turned into traditional owners.
B. (i) Unalienated Crown land >>> (ii) made subject to claim >>> (iii) is turned into Aboriginal freehold.
C. (i) People who sorry for country >>> (ii) profess 'hurt feeling' >>> (iii) and end up satisfied as T.O.'s.
D. (i) A frightened hunting ground >>> (ii) is taken into care and >>> (iii) returned to well-being.

When Paddy Huddleston said 'traditional owners got hurt feeling,' he paired A (iii) with C (ii). Jural precision would have been in the pairing of A (ii) with C (ii). However, Paddy Huddleston intended to do exactly what he did. To him, the ratification of traditional ownership by all Wagiman was in the very mounting of their claim; therefore, he scorns to acknowledge the liminal time of due process.

Parallel strings are yielded up as patterns for cultural regularities that inform action. And if we return to Malcolm and Macduff, we diagnose the hops and skips and jumps that are germane to Shakespearian expression. Strings allow one to diagram the nature of conceits.

> 'Be this the whetstone of your sword: *let grief convert to anger*, blunt not the heart, enrage it.'

Swords are sharpened before bellicose encounter and the sorrowing Macduff must be taken out of grief and put into fighting mood. So far, so good. But then the notion of sharpening that which is unready for battle is transferred outrageously to the mourner's heart. One needs to attend somewhat to heart talk and excess.

Some condescending wit refers to the 'hydraulic theory' of the emotions[39] and a major characteristic of the hydraulic theory is that it posits emptying and refilling. As one emotion is pumped out, its replacement pumps in because the relevant receptacle dislikes emptiness. In terms of the theory, there's always a 'feeling' *in situ*, even if it's only the mild content of 'going good'. The second law of the hydraulic theory is that the receptacle can only entertain one colour of emotion at a time; so we can't have Violet, Slingsby and Lionel regarding sea creatures with 'pity mingled with contempt'.

For much of the time, the hydraulic theory has the heart at its centre as a pump. But hearts do not only fill and empty. They also throb more quickly in response to the beloved. They break, they are hardened ('as in the wilderness'), they may be soft, they may go all out (as in 'full hearted'); unpretended emotion is heart-felt. The black heart/ white heart contrast is not about emotion but about moral disposition as is good-hearted. The Hebrew Scriptures deal with 'circumcision of the heart', perhaps the most startling heart figure of all time. And it's the King James Bible that made heart talk the central discourse of the emotions in varieties of Standard English.

Heart talk in English is often a figuring of one or other of the epic emotions. And further to it all, I propose that while people figure and dwell on experience of emotion, they only rarely envisage the reality of the progressions that I depict as strings. Like grammar, strings are real enough but belong generally to the implicit rules that govern performances. The stringing of epic emotions, as indicated in the first part of this essay, is encountered everywhere. Like rites of passage, primary strings are common to organised humanity. The general proposition on which all else rests is that each culturally defined situation of ultimate reference will have its set of strings that catch up epic emotions and point to endings — surcease of pent emotion.

I want to end by remarking a great gulf of cultural difference. I refer again to Shakespeare. At the beginning of his History, Richard III is caught between two grand episodes in life. And he gives voice to the long mood-of-the-times soliloquy that begins Act 1, Scene 1, (line1):

> Now is the Winter of our discontent made glorious Summer by this sun of York
> and all our troubles in deep ocean buried...

That Richard deploys epic emotions is obvious. Fittingly, he deals with a switching for an era of troubles has been superseded through their happy resolution. And we are given the contrasting tenors of preceding and subsequent times by analogue with seasons.

I need now quickly to remark Richard's relation with Divinity. It's only because Richard's God is a visage vastly distanced in time and space from king and court that great liberties can be taken with the language. Because Elizabethan drama has historically been released to the freedoms of secularity, there's pathetic fallacy rampant.

When Divinity is close-up in country and inheres as a Dreaming in every one of the known creations; when seasons are controlled by Dreamings; when people sediment selves in country as they walk; when Dreamings and the right to represent them or to embody them are owned by law; when each person is a totemite, there's then a skein of intimate and particular connections, string upon string, joining all things and all persons in defined and particular relationship. When things are all thus to be discovered ('found') in authentic place, mighty twists of metaphor must wholly be ruled out. Any one of them would call for violent rearrangement of the firmament. Above all, this is a world of inter-related familiars that are contained in sites and set along the paths where they belong. Here's no Elizabethan playwright's universe of abstracted entities and cosmological disjunctions. Rather, it's a

world peopled somewhat as Saint Francis has things in the Christian animism he invented. Knowing local identities for what and who they are, one can reckon up and have to do with that Brother Sun and Sister Moon and that Little Friend the Apricot.[40]

POSTSCRIPT

The ABC broadcast the news of Big Bill Neidjie's death just as this essay was going to press. Big Bill's relations have lifted the ban that forbids all mention of the names of the dead. We can therefore salute this elder, author and sage who worked to perfect his Kakadu stories and make sure that they were 'exactly right'. We should sorrow in his passing.

NOTES

1. Garfinkel (1956).
2. After Durkheim's death in 1917, it was left to Mauss (Durkheim's surviving colleague, nephew and sometime collaborator) to write the essay of social determinations that was intended to snatch back studies of emotions from psychology restoring their consideration (as outward and manifest states accorded social recognition) to sociology. Sadly, Mauss's (1923) late essay found no audience and rallied little response in France where, by 1920, Mauss had himself become a lonely and almost anachronistic voice. He was bereft of a generation of younger supporters because, almost without significant exception, the younger members of the *Année Sociologique* had been killed in the carnage of the Western Front. In England, Radcliffe-Brown carried Durkheimian interpretations forward. My characterisation of epic emotions has more than a little in common with Radcliffe-Brown's ([1922] 1948) consideration of grief in his study of the Andaman Islanders. Renato Rosaldo's outbursts (e.g. 1989)against Radcliffe-Brown on grief deserve detailed attention for his is an attempt to disallow the very capacity of epic emotions to frame situations and accord emotions to scenes. Rosaldo has it that ethnographic recognition of situationally constructed emotion is an act on the part of the western scholar that denies people of non-Western societies the capacity individually to experience grief. The theory of epic emotions would then be a form of Orientalism. Considerations of space do not allow the development of the polemic here.
3. There is a second sort of contraposition — that between actors who situationally embody contrary emotions as they play out complementary or opposing roles.
4. The emptying and filling up visions of emotion which belong to English usage have been referred to as aspects of the 'hydraulic' theory of the emotions (cf. Myers, 1988) and is briefly discussed in the conclusion to this piece.
5. 'The sick that do not speak' (Sansom, 1978) deals with the abjection of the person discovered to be seriously ill and documents the proposition that Aboriginal people who experience abjection lose the capacity to relate the history of their time of travail. Histories of travail belong to those who work to rescue or heal the afflicted.
6. The 'good belly' of Aboriginal English around Katherine and the Roper River is direct translation from local Aboriginal languages. Similarly, Berndt, Berndt and Stanton (1993:287) write that Murray River peoples in South Australia locate 'the source of all emotions' as *miwi* or 'soul substance' located in or behind the stomach. The people with whom I moved in the Darwin hinterland sited 'feeling' as overall but inner bodily sensation: 'Your body got feeling', 'Something wrong, your body tell you, that feeling', 'Feeling right through that body'.
7. This quotation is from T.S. Eliot's play *Murder in the Cathedral* in which the words are given to Thomas a Beckett, Archbishop of Canterbury, who is contemplating the certainty that he will be put to death. He fears that he will go to his death in pride of martyrdom, knowing that, post mortem, he will be canonised.
8. 'Active currency' is an essential term in this exposition which has the expression of epic emotions integral to systems of exchange of socially recognised values. See Sansom (1973).
9. Aboriginal freehold is a special form of tenure. A creature of the ALRA, it is distinguished from ordinary freehold in that the land, while freehold, is not alienable but is held in perpetuity for the benefit of traditional owners, their heirs and successors.
10. There is also a form of progression for the 'try' that fails.
11. 'Owners for' rather than 'owners of' is now standard usage in Land Claims matters. In this usage, there is acknowledgement of the order of relationship that is custodianship of living country.
12. 'When I heard *miwi* it was said rarely and with reverence. It is not a word that is bandied about in casual conversation' (Bell, 1998:218). Bell writes of the Ngarrindjeri of South Australia for whom the word *miwi* designates the source of all feelings, located in or behind the stomach.
13. Rhydwen (1993:160) discusses the mutual intelligibility of Roper River and Daly River varieties of non-standard English noting also that speakers make much of certain lexical differences which serve as markers of regional identity: 'The differences appeared to be either phonological or lexical, with lexical differences mainly restricted to ancestral language words.'
14. This formulation leaves point of view out of the accounting. An event has a public and hegemonic mood which is an aspect of scene; personal experience of an event is expected to vary according to the part each person is called to play during the enactment.

15. One is aware that the *Good News Bible* also defies the original Hebrew and represents a God of satisfaction. There are indications (e.g. the arrangement of text into paragraphs rather than verses) that the *Good News Bible* served the creators of the *Holi Baibul* as base for their translation. This, however, does not destroy the observation that God is given as a sensate persona of good belly throughout the *Holi Baibul* in the Kriol version.
16. Actually, the word 'style' belongs more to Darwin, while the phrase 'turn out' is more often heard down at Pine Creek and on the Daly River. But speakers of the North West region know both usages. In fact, how one labels 'style' is an index of which local style one adheres to or has adopted.
17. Things have changed since the mid-1980s when Wagiman sued for land. Not only is 'traditional owner' now thoroughly naturalised in Aboriginal English, people tend more and more to use the abbreviation: 'T.O.'
18. As I have registered previously (Sansom, 1980), being 'satisfied' vests in the Aboriginal English of the Darwin hinterland as a standard term for expressing quittance and discharge after the completion of a ceremony.
19. The 'inscription/retrieval' metaphor is to be found in the writings of both Povinelli (1993:33) and Rumsey (1994:128).
20. Payne's 'item' is the smallest unit for the focus of a witness or performer in a rite. This unit belongs to a moment in the rite. Payne's 'moment' has aural, visual and tactile qualities which may be combined with reference to topography. An item has the form: A member (or the members) of a nominated cast did a certain thing with reference to the place called X. 'Usually a break in performance occurs to separate items' (Payne, 1989:44). In general, Payne's insightful, performance-centred analyses (represented in a line of distinguished publications) all fit well with my consideration of 'strings'.
21. Morphy (1991) has educated us in the matter of ancestors through publication of his *Ancestral Connections*, a work on the art of Eastern Arnhem Land. For Aboriginal people, proximate ancestors are the still remembered dead who were known in life in human form. More distant ancestors (about four generations removed from living adults) are the emplaced Dreamings of the countrysides.
22. With the broadening of possibilities for entering land claims under the Native Title Act, a question arises as to the extent to which Aboriginal custodians of sites can look after Dreamings by celebrating them in rites performed at a distance, dispensing with acts of visitation.
23. Williams (1986).
24. While country should not reject human familiars, a country that is 'upset' or 'cranky' may, in excess of emotion, nonetheless, harm those to whom, in all reason, it should grant immunity.
25. The claimed status does not sit well with parole boards. In the interviews leading to consideration of the possibility of parole, the potential parolee should own up to wrongdoing and indicate that, his lesson learnt, he'll not offend again.
26. The devil in it is that pace and terseness could both be artefacts of work done by the editor. There are problems of attribution when dealing with assisted publications (see Sansom, 2001a). Luke Taylor (1989), editor of *Story about Feeling*, explains that the text is reduced to a third of the transcripts of the original oral renditions and that the arrangement of Big Bill's stories in their published sequence is the editor's doing.
27. Towards the beginning of his book, this author divides birds into the like of the owl and the like of the geese, dividing the world of darkness from the world of day. The divide is germane to his view of the cosmos.
28. I have discussed 'the plaint of riverbank and beach' in some detail (Sansom, 2001b).
29. From Oscar Wilde's poem, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*.
30. The 'flavour' in *Story about Feeling* is that which leads to yummy tummy as in the Kriol bible.
31. Like the *Religio Medico* of Sir Thomas Browne or the *Religio Laici* of John Dryden, Bill Neidjie's *Story about Feeling* is personal testimony of lived experience of religion. He has the right to broadcast this story because it is made of the cloth of his own life. He discovers a way of witnessing concerning that which is private to himself and to his spirit. His only offence can be to himself as totemite.
32. Previously I have discussed these trends of representation with reference to the ideas of Levy Bruhl (Sansom, 1980).
33. All this is of a piece with Hiatt's (1978:186) previously cited observation that the Gidgingali had 'no generic term meaning emotion'.
34. Steiner, 1975.
35. I was close to a Songman and he explained that his songs were vouchsafed him by a spirit and that listening or talking to the spirit was, for him, no different to listening or talking to a person. The difference is that, were they to be witness to the Songman's spoken conversation with his spirit-muse, those not favoured or chosen would only hear the human Songman's part. The Songman would appear to be talking to thin air. Otherwise, they might witness the Songman's silent channeling. For the chosen, 'feeling' gives direct access to the Dreamings and it is only by discovery of the fact that ordinary people neither hear nor see spirits that those chosen of the Dreamings come to realise that they enjoy special privilege of Powers. Again, my data indicate that conversations between humans and the Dreamings are always one on one. However, a set of people can together encounter a physical sign or manifestation from a Dreaming (Povinelli, 1993; Sansom, 2001b).
36. I have dealt elsewhere with the significance of 'woundings' for human life story (Sansom 2001a).
37. Morphy (1984).
38. I have previously discussed 'running round' under the heading 'Moral Words for Movement' (Sansom, 1980).
39. Cited by Myers (1988) on the logic of anger.
40. Elsewhere (Sansom, 1996) I have sought to show why Aboriginal insistence on metonomy rather than

metaphor belongs to a totemic formation in which significata are given qualities and attributes because they are all animate and, therefore, have characters of their own. Metaphor requires displacements and re-sitings that would not only be irreligious but would defy cultural canons and a priories.

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ERRATA

The author has asked us to make the following corrections to a figure in his paper.

On p. 123 of Vol 72, no 2, December 2001, in Figure 2 in the article by Mark Harvey entitled *Oenpelli Kunwinjku Kinship Terminologies and Marriage Practices,* the glosses under ZDD and ZDS should read *kakkak* and not *kakkali.*