DANCING COUNTRY TWO WAYS

Suddenly Napangardi was starting the goanna dreaming dance, and everyone was yelling at me: 'Just copy Napangardi!' I had just witnessed about fifteen women with skin names Nampijimpa and Nangala perform the fire dreaming dance, the dance of the country we were camped upon- a place called Wayililinypa southwest of Yuendumu. So I had been waiting for a crowd of Napangardis and Napanangkas to get up for the goanna dreaming dance from Mt Theo country further west. But no, it was just Napangardi and I! As I awkwardly rose to my feet and tried to catch up with the older lady I noticed that this dance had more choreographic stages to it than I had perceived in the fire dance. It had started from sitting on the ground, which was why I had not realised Napangardi had begun. She kneeled with a long stick beside her on the ground. (Someone hurriedly found me a stick and put it in my hand). I tried to follow her as she came to standing raising the stick, doing some hunting actions with the stick and then a series of searching gestures, peering into the distance in all directions, turning around as she travelled gradually forward. I recognised this part of the dance from a visit I had done with some of these women to Mt Theo country in 2006. They had then done only the abbreviated sitting-down-with-hand-actions version of the goanna dance. I recalled the story they had told me then of 'wrong skin' lovers- the woman searching longingly for her forbidden lover (they also call this dance the 'loverboy' dance, with a bawdy giggle).

Napangardi went down to the ground, placing her stick down at one stage, then up again and some shunting forward movements bouncing with bent knees, feet pounding the orange earth whilst her arms performed hunting gestures with the stick. She had a soft yet powerful presence- her muscles were not held tightly; her strength was more in her poise, groundedness and clarity. I could feel her awareness of me- the clueless novice- through her back, showing me the movements, trying to bring me along with her, guide me through the dance. At the same time she was absolutely immersed in her own embodiment of the story: she was not just representing but *being* the archetypal, ancestral Napangardi, travelling through her country. One of the eldest women in the

community, Napangardi was ever-steady on her feet, sure of her gaze, an engaging dancer.

I felt incredibly privileged to be dancing with Napangardi but overwhelmingly ill-prepared and self-conscious. I had had no instruction prior to the dance; what I was expected to do was absolutely unknown to me until the moment of its occurrence. But it was not treated as a 'rehearsal', a trial-run or a 'practice'- this was the performance! Teenage girls who knew me from my work at Yuendumu School were guffawing with laughter at my white body painted up in the ochre design, trying to emulate the elder lady's movements. Older *kurdungulu* or 'managers' for this dance (women with skin names Nangala, Nampijimpa and Nakamarra) yelled at me from the sidelines: 'Copy her', 'Look out into the distance!', 'Closer!', 'Put your stick down…' etc.

It took me most of the dance to recover from the shock that it was just a dance of two and to find my focus in spite of the girls' laughter (my initial reaction to this had been to laugh with them but this did nothing to lessen my awkwardness!). By the very end of the dance I had just begun to locate a fragment of my corporeal intelligence and was more accurately emulating Napangardi's rhythm and movements- I had finally 'tuned in' to the perceptual moment. But then that was it: there was no chance to repeat the dance, to have another attempt now that I had slightly more idea of what to expect. Alas, I would have to wait until the next camp in a few months' time.

The *kurdungulu* were all very complimentary afterwards despite my sense of humiliation: "Ngurrju, ngurrju!" (Good!), they grinned at me with 'thumbs up' gestures. I later thought that my experience of embarrassment was somewhat similar to that 'shame' feeling of which the Warlpiri teenage girls complain in the situation of dance and cultural transference- of pride to be involved in this community spirit and ceremony, but at the same time being exposed as extremely inexperienced and lacking in knowledge compared to the more senior women present.

After the dancing there were murmurs among the women that they could hear babies crying in the bush nearby, which meant that the ancestor spirits had been

stirred by the performance of the dances and songs. Everyone was uplifted by the experience of dancing together; there was an overwhelmingly positive atmosphere at the camp as the day was drawing to a close.

Background

The dance camps project was seeded as a response to a conversation in Yuendumu community in the Northern Territory in 2008 between a few of the senior Warlpiri women, youth worker Natalie O'Connor and myself, when the women voiced their concern that young women did not know the cultural dances. Women's ceremonies were taking place less often than they once did and the elders were fearful that cultural knowledge would be lost as the people possessing that knowledge passed away. Natalie and myself had then undertaken a process of consultation with these women, sought funding and formed partnerships with Mt Theo organisation, InCite Youth Arts and Victoria University to conduct a series of intergenerational dance workshops at different locations on Warlpiri country out of Yuendumu. The women created a name for the project: 'Karnta Warlu Jintangka Partu-Kurlangu Manya', which roughly translates as 'Women Dancing Young and Old All One' and 'This belongs to all of us women together'. (The women later changed this title to simply the Southern Ngalia Dance Camps, referring to the geographical area.) There have now been four camps, all very successful in terms of the women's attendance, enthusiasm and participation. Some of the women performed at Dance Site Indigenous Dance Festival at Tennant Creek in September 2011, for many their first public performance.

Processes of teaching and learning: the *Kirda-Kurdungulu* relationship

The dance is always prefaced by lengthy preparations of singing and body-painting. As they sit in a group under the shade of trees painting each other's upper bodies in bold ochre designs according to skin group (moiety), the women sing the *Jukurrpa* (Dreaming) songs and sometimes do hand gestures, as a sort of abbreviated, sitting-down version of the dances. Through the songs and painting,

the older ladies[1] tell the girls (in the words of a young woman we interviewed): 'This is your country, this is your dreaming, this is who you are.'[2] I doubt I have ever felt a stronger sense of humility than I did whilst two senior women painted my white skin in the Napangardi/ Mt Theo/ goanna dreaming design for the first time at Wayililinypa.

Having been given the skin-name Napangardi (thereby a 'sister' to all other Napangardis), I am a *kirda* or 'owner' of the goanna dreaming (*Wardapi Jukurrpa*), thus allowed to participate in this dance. I had imagined that we would all get the opportunity to learn the dance of the place in which we were camped, Wayililinypa: the *Warlukurlangu* (fire dreaming) dance, but only the owners of the country, women with skin names Nangala and Nampijimpa, are allowed to do the fire dreaming dance. The women dancing are the *kirda*: the owners/ custodians for the dreaming and country of the particular dance. As indicated in the anecdote of my experience of dancing with Napangardi senior (who calls herself my 'big sister'), there is no instruction or demonstration beforehand. The young *kirda* follow the more experienced older *kirda* from within the dance, whilst the dance is under way, and the *kurdungulu* issue corrections from the sidelines. Women with skin-names Napangardi, Napanangka and Napaljarri are *kurdungulu* for the fire dreaming. The *kurdungulu* or 'managers' of the country and dreaming sing the song that tells the story of that dreaming and also instruct and correct the *kirda* dancers. The *kurdungulu* sometimes dance at the side of the space on a perpendicular angle to the *kirda* who are dancing. Particularly for dances like the fire dreaming dance, in which the dancers travel forwards following a leader at the front of their lines, it is challenging for dancers further back to gather details about the movement, so having *kurdungulu* demonstrating from the sidelines is very helpful. (Napangardis are also *kurdungulu* for snake dreaming, *Warna Jukurrpa*, so at a later camp I was allowed to stand at the side to try to learn the *Warna* dance.)

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[1] Older women are usually referred to as 'ladies' in Warlpiri and other Central desert communities. It is considered a more respectful term than 'women'.

[2] Interview with Nangala, 19 year-old Warlpiri-Anmatyerre woman, October 2010, conducted by Gretel Taylor and Natalie O'Connor.

Anthropologist Francoise Dussart in her study of Yuendumu women's ritual life, *The Politics of Ritual in an Aboriginal Settlement,* describes the *kurdungulu* role as managing 'the fidelity of the performance.'[3] Dussart explains that both *kirda* and *kurdungulu* for the place/ Dreaming must be present for an enactment of any medium of that Dreaming (*Jukurrpa*)- singing, sand painting, painting of ritual objects or dance. The Warlpiri women often refer to *kurdungulu* as the 'policemen' or 'policewomen' for this country, this dreaming and this dance. I could only compare them to a gang of bossy yet jovial rehearsal masters.

A 'good dancer'

One of the senior Napanangkas I have known for several years was dancing as *kurdungulu* beside the *kirda* for the fire dreaming dance. As about fifteen women rhythmically shunted forward with both feet at once, a sprig of eucalypt leaves in each hand, led by two of the more senior women, Napanangka clapped the rhythm and demonstrated the 'correct' form of the dance at the side. 'She's a very good dancer', people told me. I wondered what constituted 'good' dancing in their eyes. Napanangka's dancing had not stood out to me; it did not appear virtuosic to me in a western dance sense. I realised my eye was totally untrained in viewing this dance. On closer observation I could see that Napanangka, like senior Napangardi, had a confidence in her rhythm, the way her bare feet pounded the orange earth as if they knew exactly what they were doing- (I want to write they were doing a job they had always done). Napanangka also appeared to be very much enjoying and engaged in the movement, singing and smiling.

This observation- of my own inability to recognise a 'good dancer' in Warlpiri terms- raises questions of cultural values and valuing. Qualities that are prized, respected and aspired to by one culture may not even be noticed by another. Napanangka's rotund figure and rounded shoulders were not my idea of a dancerly physique, and her movements were not striking, but once I was aware she was admired by the other women, I could see she was rhythmic and at one with the scene- she did not stand out, but rather absolutely fitted in- to the environment, the music, the other women dancing. Perhaps the Warlpiri

[3] Francoise Dussart, *The Politics of Ritual in an Aboriginal Settlement*, Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000, p76.

women's emphasis on dancing together in their naming of the dance camp project gives a clue to their valuing of participation and cooperation. From my own dancing in relation to place or site (to be elaborated in coming paragraphs), I also appreciate the ability –and perhaps, the aesthetic- of 'fitting in'. Napanangka's dance was the epitome of belonging- to a place, a community and within her belief system and worldview: the *Jukurrpa* (Dreaming). This self-location, this sense of belonging, was evident in every pore of her skin, every muscle of her body.

Dancing as embodiment of identity

Nineteen-year-old Nangala in an interview in 2010 stated: "Doing the dances tells you who you are and where you are from". Then she added matter-of-factly, "Like you've got nothing inside you if you don't know."[4]

Such a statement gives us outsiders a sense of the momentous significance the carrying out of these dances holds for the Warlpiri women in terms of their cultural and locational identity. Anthropologist Naomi Smith in her article, 'Dance and the Ancestral Landscape', reports that the Kugu Ngancharra people (traditional occupants of the Kendall and Holroyd Rivers area, Cape York Peninsula) believe dance is the integrating element in re-connecting with the ancestors, who are inextricably bound to the land itself.[5] The act of dancing is thus vital for the wellbeing of these clans, in that it enables a continuing, reconstituting relationship with the land and their ancestors.[6] My experience of the Warlpiri women's dance suggests that it plays a similarly critical role in community wellbeing, linking present individual corporeality to country and collective worldview. In Napangardi's performing the goanna dreaming dance I realised that she was not simply dancing 'as herself', but as an ancestral and perhaps we could say 'archetypal' Napangardi. She was embodying the story of

[4] Interview conducted by Natalie O'Connor and myself, October 2010, Yuendumu.

[5] Naomi Smith, 'Dance and the Ancestral Landscape', in *Writings on Dance* 20, Melbourne, 2000, p65

[6] 'Ancestors', in Naomi Smith's account of Kugu Ngancharra and my understanding of the Warlpiri worldview, encompass both human relatives who have passed away and the Ancestral beings of the Dreaming who formed the features and stories of the country via their travels.

her skin group[7], re-enacting the way her father's country came into being, becoming the ancestor whose wrong skin (*wadarra*) coupling had turned the earth to yellow and white ochre and brought the goannas to this place. This is the story she believes is her role to perform in order to maintain and reconstitute the *Jukurrpa* (Dreaming)- the complex and all pervasive system of belief upon which Warlpiri everyday life is structured.

Witnessing the women's dances as the ultimate embodiment of their identity- personal and collective, what might *my* participation as a Napangardi in the *Wardapi Jukurrpa* (goanna dreaming) dance of Mt Theo country connote in terms of my identity as a non-Indigenous Australian?

My dance of 'Locating'

I need to backtrack to explain my own practice and past research in order to consider how my involvement in the Warlpiri dances might resonate with my sense of cultural identity. On my prior-mentioned trip to Warlpiri country in 2006 I shot a video at Mt Theo, or *Puturlu*, which was my original connection with some of the Warlpiri women with whom I later collaborated on the dance camps project. It was also my first dancing encounter with Warlpiri country. The video work became a three-screen installation entitled *Still Landing*. The work comprises a collage of images, which draws upon my practice of moving in relation to place, which I call 'locating'. I have spent several years (as my PhD project) evolving this improvisational dance in relation to environment initiated via sensory perception. It is a dance of seeking relationship and exploring the physical dialogue between my body and a given place.

The initial intention of my locating dance is to become as physically present as possible in the site or place I have chosen. I work towards becoming present via a multi-sensory listening. Using perception tasks—some derived from Japanese

[7] Skin names determine one's relationship to all other Warlpiri people, as well as defining responsibility to country- part of which is to enact these dances. Skin group relations are absolutely vital in Warlpiri culture- not only in ritual 'business', but also in everyday life. Every person who visits Warlpiri country and interacts with Warlpiri people for any length of time is given a skin-name in order for other people to make sense of them and know how to behave towards them. The Warlpiri moiety system is extremely complex- I do not claim to fully understand it as yet, and much has been written about it (Dussart, Musharbash, Jackson, Bell), so I will not discuss it at length here.

dancer Min Tanaka's 'Body Weather' and some tasks of my own invention, my sensory awareness is heightened. These tasks include following environmental sounds and rhythms with particular body parts, moving extremely slowly (for example, at a continuous rate of one millimetre per second), embodying specific features or qualities of that place or space via invented 'imagery' and working blindfolded with focus upon the haptic experience of sensations. As I undertake these introductory exercises, my body unravels its tensions and releases any cognitive or emotional surface layers—like topsoil, the residue of other places—until I am present to this moment, this place: to listen to it, let it affect me, to respond. Observing my surroundings visually, aurally, kinesthetically and texturally, my body awakens to the place I am in; we begin to merge. This gathering of sensory information leads into an improvisation, whereby I combine or loosen the tasks, using them as tools or ways-in and develop an exchange of perception and response. Gradually the gap between my perception of an aspect of the place and my response to it reduces, until eventually these seem to fold into each other. I let go of cerebral decision-making and I am simply moved by the surrounding elements, or feel that we are moving together.

Whiteness (or corporeally incorporating a history of dispossession and genocide)

My locating dance is also an acknowledgement of my identity as a 'white' Australian. On my first trip in the Northern Territory in 2005 I observed that my skin appeared white to me more emphatically than ever before. Against the red earth and among Aboriginal people, my white skin made me feel like a foreigner—in the country I had presumed was 'mine'. With this feeling came the realisation that in my Melbourne life I can (and do) usually assume my inclusion in the category of 'normal'—with all the privileges this entails. In performance works thereafter my acknowledgement of and attention to the particularity of my whiteness sought to redress its 'normality', which Richard Dyer explains is so ingrained that:

> …Whiteness is felt to be the human condition … it alone both defines normality and fully inhabits it… white people, unable to see their particularity, cannot take account of other people's; white people create the dominant images of the world

> and don't quite see that they thus construct the world in their own image… White power … reproduces itself regardless of intention, power differences and goodwill, and overwhelmingly because it is not seen as whiteness, but as normal.[8]

Moreover, inhabiting a 'white' body not only implies the privileged position of presumed 'normality' with all its accompanying socio-economic benefits, but also, in Australia and other colonised nations, it infers violent conquest. Whilst to white people white bodies are so normal as to be seen as almost lacking ethnicity, to many Aboriginal Australians the presence of white bodies is a very visible and constant reminder that, as Indigenous academic Aileen Moreton-Robinson notes, '[their] lands were invaded and stolen, [their] ancestors massacred and enslaved, [their] children taken away and [their] rights denied, and these acts of terror forged white identity in this country.'[9] White corporeality, Moreton-Robinson continues, 'is thus one of the myriad ways in which relations between the colonising past and present are omnipresent.' Similarly, Reina Lewis and Sara Mills in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory* state that 'the link between past exploitation and present affluence, and indeed the deeds of past colonialists and oneself, is one which white people have found difficult to deal with in constructive ways…'[10] My insistence on my own whiteness is part of my concern to create site-specific performance works that remind audiences of the continuing impingement of colonial history upon our present places and bodies.

Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs use the word 'unsettlement' to describe a condition of being in postcolonial Australia comparable to the one I evoke through my practice of 'locating'. Gelder and Jacobs suggest that 'reconciliation is never a fully realisable category; it can never be completely settled', and thus they seek to give this prevailing condition of unsettlement 'an activating function', proposing 'unsettlement' as a 'productive feature of the postcolonial

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[8] Richard Dyer, *White*, 1997, pp9-10

[9] Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 'Tiddas talkin' up to the White Woman: When Higgins et al. took on Bell', in Michelle Grossman (ed.), 2003, *Blacklines*, p67

[10] Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (eds.), *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, 2003, p7

landscape.'[11] The desire that intrinsic polarities within Australian society—united nation/ divided nation, innocence/ guilt, modern/ sacred, in place/ out of place, etc. –will somehow simplify or integrate into peaceful, synthesised, stable rest is, according to Gelder and Jacobs, a fantasy. The contradictory forces implicit within each coupling keep them ever moving. It is the movement between—this soliciting, folding, unpredictable, perpetual motion between features of the postcolonial socio-political-spatial landscape that is highlighted by Gelder and Jacobs as the pertinent, 'most activated' zone to dwell within.

My notion and practice of locating inhabits an endless (or very long) process that involves engaging with the intrinsic tensions and contradictions of post-colonialism. I believe that consciously co-existing with the mobile, uncomfortable, irresolvable forces that are inherent in this nation and our Australian identities is appropriate and of value to our times. Non-Indigenous Australian theatre maker and academic Anne Thompson states, 'at this time I consider it strategic that whites identify themselves as part of a colonial history which devastated and continues to impact upon indigenous Australians.'[12]

My presence in Australia is on some level unsettled, guilty, yet yearning for belonging: seeking embodied location but not expecting to ever attain it. My conflictual, oscillating dance of on the one hand, attempting to fit in, and on the other hand highlighting my disassociation from Australian place, seems to represent and embody my position, my sense of identity in relation to Australian country (and perhaps the sense of unease shared by others of my generation and similar 'white' Australian background). In this way my locating dance parallels the women's *Jukurrpa* dances: we are both embodying our sense of locational identity. In the Warlpiri case there is a pre-existing, culturally endorsed, formulaic method for this embodiment, whereas my process is self-invented and ever changing.

Still Landing

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[11] Ken Gelder and Jane M Jacobs, 1998, *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, Intro. p xvi

[12] Anne Thompson, 2001-02, 'DIY? Ecologies of Practice', in *Writings on Dance* 21, Melbourne, p32

The video work *Still Landing* explored these notions of white Australian identity and my 'locating' dance practice in relation to Mt Theo country, before I had witnessed or participated in the *Jukurrpa* dances. Wishing to propose the white body's alterity or relative newness in relation to Australian place, I chose to work on what was officially 'Aboriginal land' (and in 2006, pre-Intervention, much Warlpiri country had restricted access: the permit system then in place has since been abolished).

When I asked a senior Warlpiri man, a Japangardi whom I had met on my first visit to Yuendumu, for permission to film my dance on his country, Mt Theo, *Puturlu*, he granted me permission but suggested I also ask the women custodians of this country. Several of these 'ladies' then travelled out with me to show me the 'good spots', to clarify permissible sites for filming. This was a wonderful introduction to the country. The women emphasised that Puturlu is Goanna Dreaming country and Napangardi and Napanangka country, encouraging me, as a Napangardi, to feel personally enveloped in the *Jukurrpa* of this place. As we approached Mt Theo the women began chanting songs of the country and wailing in mourning for their recently deceased sister. We made a fire and cooked lunch: five goannas that the women had hunted down with their crow-bars on the way, as the women continued to sing the story of this country of the wrong skin lovers searching for each other. Anthropologist Georgia Curran also accompanied us that day. Her own study involved documenting the women's songs and she had brought her recording equipment. To my delight the women were more than obliging in allowing me to record their singing for use in the film. They even offered to paint me in ochres for my dancing in the film. (I declined their kind offer; I was not attempting to represent myself as Warlpiri.) Later that week I returned to Purtulu with my friend, artist and filmmaker James Geurts, for a week-long film-shoot. Whilst acquainting with Puturlu via my perceptual process and improvisations that week, I often thought I 'heard' the women's singing voices emanating from the dusty orange earth itself.

Dancing from a different cultural body

I am hereby attempting to consider my 'locating' practice in relation to my experience of participation in the Warlpiri women's dances. Does my involvement in *Jukurrpa* dances 'solve' the rift I feel between my body and place in Australia? Does it challenge, delegitimize or trivialise my own locating practice in comparison with this ancient, ultimately site-specific art? I have no conclusions to these provocations, but throw them around for contemplation.

Participating in the *Jukurrpa* dances might seem to be 'the answer' to my quest for embodied location, but thus far I still feel rather disembodied performing these dances- the movements are foreign to me, danced from and by a different cultural body. Although I do feel welcome, I am also always blaringly an outsider, and as many years as I spend dancing with the Warlpiri women I will always be dancing from a different cultural body. My body's knowledge, experience and physicality may become more empathetic with the Warlpiri women's, but it will never be the same. (Nor is that my aim… I do not wish to 'indigenise', even if it were possible!) I do however wish to practice the dances over and over to become familiar with the movements, the way of holding my body in relation to gravity and the earth, the rhythms, etc. But the women do each dance once, lasting less than ten minutes, then not again for several months, so I have little chance to become fluent in my execution of the movements, and even less chance to go beyond the rudimentary movements to glean any more nuanced kinaesthetic understandings. (Incidentally, at the camp following my first experience of Jukurrpa dance at Wayilinpa, just when I was feeling a little more confident to perform the goanna dreaming dance again, Napangardi decided to do a totally different goanna dance! So I was once again left guessing, flailing through the movements feeling utterly disembodied.)

No need to practise

That the women do not seem to feel a need for rehearsal or repetition of their dances may indicate a different valuing and notion of performance. At the camp in April 2010 at Mission Creek they also only performed each dance once and the actual dancing was very brief compared to the body-painting preparations. At the camp I recently attended at a place called Beantree, the women spent more

time dancing, but that was because they did a greater quantity of dances; they still only performed each dance once. The system of *kurdungulu* correction (yelling and sometimes demonstrating from the sidelines) ensures that the dance remains the same; that it does not mutate with time, but I do not think it aims to aesthetically 'perfect' the dance from an audience perspective. Indeed the Warlpiri women have rarely if ever performed their dance for an audience other than themselves. This lack of need for rehearsal, and perhaps even the absence of necessity for the dances to be 'seen' by an external audience, may indicate that the point of executing the dance is not primarily its aesthetic- kinaesthetic effect. The main motivation for the women seems to be that in executing the dance they are enacting their relationship with country, and (simultaneously, almost synonymously) with the ancestors. The rumour following the dances at Wayililinypa that the ancestors had heard us (by the babies crying) indicates that the women believe the dances quite tangibly 'do something'. The act of performing the Warlpiri dances creates not only movements and a visual, kinaesthetic experience for anyone who happens to bear witness, but the definite, solid 'thing' of a connection with country, an embodiment of one's place within *Jukurrpa* (the Dreaming), which is for the Warlpiri women the ultimate embodiment of their own identity. Thus we begin to understand the elder women's urgency to transfer their knowledge to younger generations: if the dances became extinct, so would Warlpiri connections to country and ancestry. Future generations would feel that they had 'nothing inside' them (to return to 19-year-old Nangala's words).

To draw again on Naomi Smith's account of performance by Kugu Ngancharra clans, Smith notes that the dancers are seen as the reincarnation or manifestation of the Ancestral beings themselves, and suggests that the ceremonial performance space or place is, for the performative moment, transformed into what she terms 'the Ancestral landscape'[13], or the landscape that was in the process of being formed by the travels and experiences of ancestral beings. According to Smith, the dancers do not merely represent but *become* the ancestral beings whose story they enact. Each ritual performance is a

[13] 'Dance and the Ancestral Landscape', *Writings on Dance* #20, 2000, p65

'recreation of the Ancestral journeys where dancers portray Ancestral characters moving through the Kugu Ngancharra landscape', yet she suggests the dance performance also creates a 'world of Ancestral presence'. [14] A similar presence is also evidenced in the Warlpiri example I experienced, by the women's pronouncement that they heard 'babies crying' in the bush after the enactment of the dances. This claim was expanded upon in a later conversation with Warlpiri women who stated that by communicating with country via the songs and dances they then would sometimes see and/ or sense guardian spirits of the country 'just standing around nearby'. Clearly tidying up the line of dancers or unifying the timing of arm movements is secondary to creating a space in which ancestral beings or spirits of the *Jukurrpa* may be manifested and contacted.

No need for an audience

Arguably then, the intention of the *Jukurrpa* dances is the relationship it engenders for the dancers with country and ancestors, more than its aesthetic/ kinaesthetic affect for a live audience. The dance exists well and truly without ever being seen by an audience other than the *kurdungulu*. In this sense it could be called a 'practice' rather than necessarily a performance technique or form. My locating dance is also a 'practice' that does not require a witness. It exists when I am dancing alone in relation to a place. In fact, performing it to an audience holds many challenges in terms of retaining its (my) sensitivity to the place. It is a mode of articulating my relationship to a place, more than it is a performance form. I then might evolve or transcribe material *from* the practice of locating into a choreography or structure for performance.

Belonging?

By the women's inclusion of me in their community, their friendship and welcoming of my participation in their cultural ritual, my 'anxiety to belong' (using Peter Read's wording and notion[15]) in Australia is perhaps assuaged. As a Napangardi I am included as part of the Warlpiri 'family', sharing knowledge and joining in the enactment of the Dreaming via dance and gradually learning

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[14] Ibid. p65

[15] Peter Read, *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2000 and *Haunted Earth*. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003.

details of the associated stories, history, mythology. That I am not only permitted by the Indigenous custodians to be present on their country, but also encouraged to engage with country in *their* way, *with* them, does, (or should?) give me license to feel I can 'settle in' to the place. (I think…) As you can tell, I am still hesitant to embrace this, or to easily accept the Warlpiri generosity as absolving me of the colonial legacy I feel I drag around with me as a white Australian. There are many nagging problematic elements in the fundamental situation of being an outsider attempting to facilitate a camp as platform for the transference of cultural knowledge that once occurred on a daily basis[16] as an almost instinctual part of Warlpiri life. Other *Kardiya* (white, non-Indigenous) staff and I are confronted constantly with incommensurable moral dilemmas, such as: How will *Yapa* (Aboriginal, Warlpiri people) ever reclaim their power to galvanise positive and productive activities if we keep doing it for them? Even in creating a space for the transmission of Warlpiri culture, *Kardiya* are perpetuating colonising power dynamics: we are the ones with the keys to the sheds with the food and camping gear, we have access to the vehicles, we are the ones with the money to distribute as payment… it goes on and on. (But if we do not assist making events like this happen, they may not happen at all, which is why the senior women asked for our assistance.) And that 'old chestnut': Am I by my involvement in this project on some level attempting to assuage my own inherited guilt, trying to rectify what my people have made awry?

'Two Ways'

From the Warlpiri women's perspective however, I have not experienced any indication that they find my presence as problematic as I do. I have never encountered any resentment or anything other than generous inclusiveness from Warlpiri people. The women are adamant that the involvement of *Kardiya* or outsiders in no way changes their experience of performing the dances; in interviews I conducted with Natalie O'Connor in 2010 interviewees repeatedly advocated 'learning both ways'. I think in this they refer to the girls and young women learning cultural knowledge from their mothers and grandmothers-

[16] In an interview with middle-aged women from Yuendumu, the women recalled their mothers and grandmothers dancing every afternoon. (October 2010 by Natalie O'Connor and Gretel Taylor)

"Yapa way", as well as learning whitefella 'knowledge' from us *Kardiya* mob. Indeed there is some regard for the fact that we *Kardiya* possess some useful skills that few *Yapa* do, chiefly fluency in whitefella systems and practices, such as money, writing and access to technology. Yuendumu School claims in its mission statements to operate along the lines of 'two-way' education: 'Yapa way and Kardiya way'. The senior women consider that the dance camps provide the girls with some 'Yapa way' education to complement the regular, mainstream Australian education they receive from the mainly *Kardiya* teachers at school. They also consider *Kardiya* learning from the *Yapa* elders to be a sort of complementary exchange of knowledge.

Participating in the Warlpiri women's dances does trivialise my own dance of locating, yet it does not dispose of it. As a dancer and artist, I still need to physically articulate my relationship with place in my own way, as well as being ever appreciative of the privilege of participating in the *Jukurrpa* dances. Perhaps in growing to know Australian place, country—a journey I do not expect to ever complete—these two practices are or could—for me—become complementary. Indeed I have always felt that a foremost part of my locating process of acquainting with a place is to research its significance to its local Indigenous people (ideally by listening directly to them), to try to get a sense of the place from their perspective, as well as representing my own perspective as a descendent of colonisers. It is my wonderfully good fortune in the Southern Ngalia dance camp project to be permitted to participate in the ritual dance of country, actively engaging with country *with* its Aboriginal custodians, in their mode of engagement. My participation in the *Jukurrpa* dance could thereby even be considered to be *part of* my locating practice, a step towards lessening the physical rift I feel between my self and the country- towards landing.

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