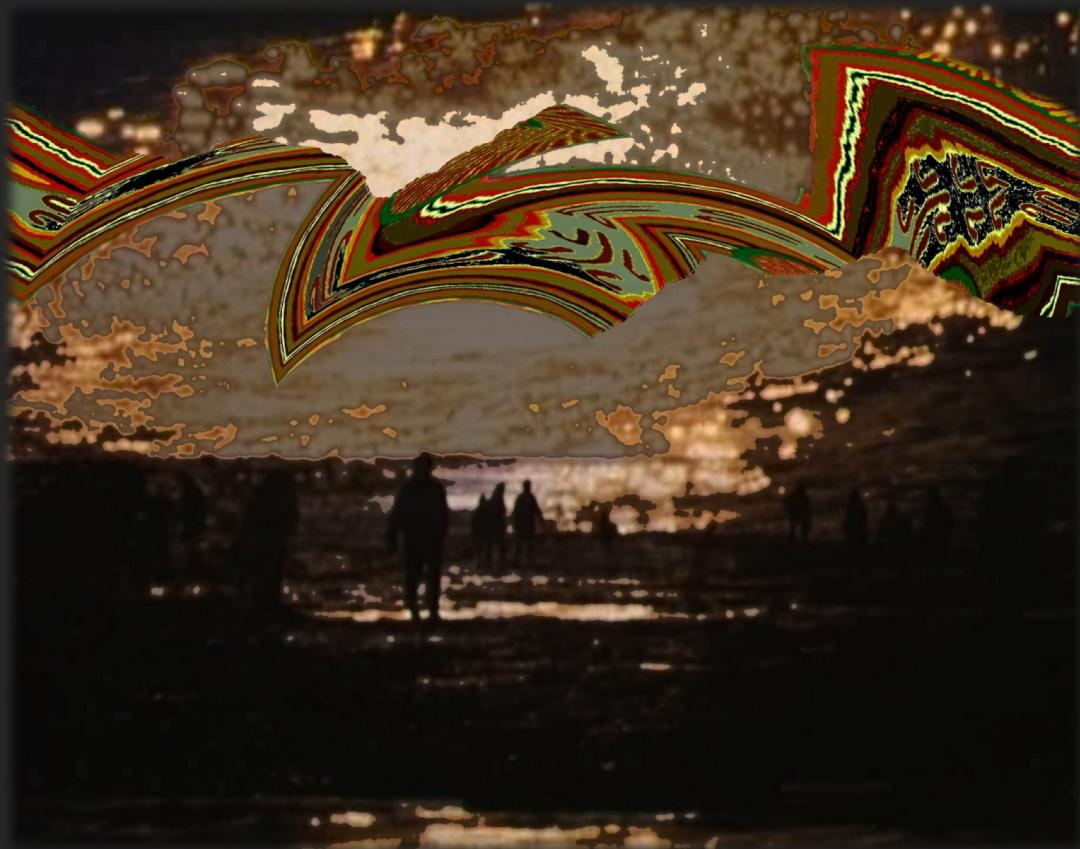


ALIENOCENE – THEORY/FICTION

INFRA-TERRESTRIAL
JOURNEY WITH THE ABORIGINAL
SPIRITS OF THE EARTH



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“**I**f I say: “Digging Sticks Women,” what do you imagine?!

With such an expression, our imaginary is wide open. Actually, several Indigenous Australian groups don't really describe these Women (Kana in Warlpiri) who traveled without men and gave them their Law before disappearing underground. Similarly, the Witi or “Tree-Men” metamorphose all the time! When they came out of the ground, branches grew at their feet, towards the sky; they started to walk, and the branches fell. Sometimes they are like humans, sometimes they are called Ngalyipi, Vines, like the rhizomic lianas that are used to fasten big leafy poles on the ankles of the men who perform the Witi ritual dance.

That's true of all totemic Dreamings. Of Wallaby Dreaming or of Emu Dreaming whose traces in the ground are attributed to a Giant Emu traveling across the continent, Karnananja. His story is one of the hundreds of songlines shared by at least forty groups of different languages from the coast of the Indian Ocean to the central desert. It follows the places he and other ancestral Emus stopped at during their journey. In Broome, dozens of footprints are visible

when the sea recedes: arrow-shaped footprints, such as the ground tracks left by most birds. But these traces of a meter wide have been identified by scientists to a species of feathered dinosaur: for the Indigenous Australians, the Giant Emu. This Emu Dreaming which is sung, painted and danced by the Emu people also concerns the current emu, a species where the males hatch the eggs: so the Emu Dreaming is the dreaming Law of the males who take care of the couvade of the eggs and then care for their children at birth.

Dreamings are first and foremost journeys in the Dreaming space-time when the land was soft and transformed by their actions. They are also Images-Forces imprinted in sacred sites on the land, the singular texture of each human who can say: “my Dreaming” or “my Image-Force is Yam, I am Yam.” As yams grow in a rhizome network, if someone says “my Dreaming is yam,” he says: I am a rhizome ... that is, I carry within me the becoming of the Yams, as a species, as a human, and as a series of places.

The terrestrial topology of the Central Desert Aboriginal people do not bring into opposition the underground inside and, beyond it, worlds of parallel dimensions. The journeys of Dreaming beings, who have traveled on earth and disappeared underground, are mirrored in interstellar and galactic space. This does not mean that the Indigenous Australians do not make a difference between the inside and the outside, on the contrary. The Warlpiri, for example, have actually two words: kanunju (below) and kankarlu

(above), two different words which come with different suffixes to indicate what is inside or outside, depending on the different positions of enunciation and relationship between speakers - according to whether one refers to oneself, alone, to oneself with another person or as a group, and whether one speaks to one person, two persons, or several. But these two words are also geo-temporal concepts that distinguish between worlds: on the one hand the world we inhabit, “above,” that is to say on earth, and on the other hand a multitude of other worlds with which we communicate in dreams and also sometimes at awakening when invisible portals suck us up...

Our present world, with its memorized history and its near future, is thus above, kankarlu, while the world below, kanunju, is the world of matter and its memory, a matter that lives, thinks, and dreams. Many dreamers of the earth watch what lies underground, and in the spring water and stones, but also in the rain and clouds, or in the rainbow and the Milky Way beyond the earth, wherever there is matter, that is to say, wherever in intergalactic space, including the Magellanic Clouds, two galaxies only visible in the Southern hemisphere, where some Aboriginal groups say that the spirits of the dead are going. Hence an effect of continuity between the infra-terrestrial and the extra-terrestrial. It's a little like when Hubert Reeves says “we are all star dust.” For the Indigenous Australians the opposite is also true, life on earth leaves traces in

the cosmos, like the Giant Emu - which all over Australia is identified to the black hole of the Milky Way.

Dreamings' time, or Dreamtime, is actually a multiple space-time (or even a multitude of pluriversesⁱⁱ). To imagine this geo-temporal topology, it is necessary to detach ourselves from our linear space-time and let ourselves be carried away into an n-dimensional universe. This universe is not that of the cyclical, eternal return. Many people, including anthropologists, continue to say that there are only two models: the linear model of the Western and Christian calendar that has imposed itself on the global history of the world, and the cyclical one that would be that of all peoples supposedly without history. But such binarity does not reflect the complexity of time among the Indigenous Australians (or other peoples for that matter). I found it particularly relevant to translate when I got back from Central Australia in 1979, the Warlpiri concepts kankarlu – "above" - by ACTUAL and kanunju – "below" - by VIRTUAL in the very sense of the actual / virtual concepts articulated by Deleuze and Guattari. In this regard, the philosopher and the psychoanalyst saw themselves in the Aboriginal Australian mode of thinking by evoking, each one with his own manner, the networks of the Aboriginal Dreaming Trails that I analyze in my books.ⁱⁱⁱ

Let's now listen to a shaman from Southern Queensland in Australia, a Ngankari as desert people say, a "cleverman" as all Indigenous Australians say, a man of knowledge who could be called a psycho-philosopher in the Western system:

"I always look with my Mungun,
and that's the way I can look into the spirit world,
I can talk to them when I use my Mungun,
I can talk to them, they talk back.
And if I try and explain it to somebody
they might think I'm crazy you know?
But I, it's like this glass, someone is underneath here,
you can look through, you can see them,
if you got your M..., but its night now you can't see.
There's a wall there too, but if you use your Mungun,
you can talk to this person behind this wall, this glass.
Others, other people of today just, see only the glass,
they don't see what's behind.

But, I noticed that the more spirits you talk to,
the more you understand them.

There is a lot of, like I was saying glass,
there's a lot of those glasses,
they layer them, upon layer.

The more you look into it, the more you see.
That's how I see the world today.
Like if I wanted to, I could tell you

who was here before you.
I could ask the walls,
I could look beyond this time now,
you can look back and see what it was before,
by looking with your M....,
and not seeing this glass,
but the others below it, inside.
It's a bit hard to explain it.
Best way I can say,
is a line of glass, glass walls.””^{iv}

ⁱ Excerpt from a text read at seminar “Grafting the Open” (Greffer de l’ouvert, Plateau des Millevaches, France, August 2017).

ⁱⁱ See discussion by B. Glowczewski and the astrophysicist Michel Cassé, at the Conference “The Chaos, Myths and Reality” (Le chaos, mythes et réalité, Lille, 2017), forthcoming book edited by Thierry Delcourt.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Desert Dreamers: With the Warlpiri People of Australia (Univocal/University of Minnesota Press, 2016), Totemic Becomings: Cosmopolitics of the Dreaming (Helsinki/São Paulo, bilingual Edition English–Portuguese, n-1 Publications), and Rêves en colère (Paris, Plon/Terre Humaine, 2004).

^{iv} Interview of Lance Sullivan, Yalarrnga, by B. Glowczewski, in her home (Paris, April 2017), after the international festival of shamanism in Genac, France, where he was invited as a member of the Australian delegation. See <https://vimeo.com/233652286>.