

**ON BARBARA GLOWCZEWSKI'S
*INDIGENISING ANTHROPOLOGY WITH
GUATTARI AND DELEUZE***



BOUAZZA BENACHIR

“Guattari is often quoted – with Deleuze – by Anglophone anthropologists (particularly in Oceania) and ignored – even rejected – by a generation of French anthropologists.” (IAGD, p. 115)

From her initial reading of *Anti-Oedipus* in high school and her subsequent intellectual encounter with Felix Guattari (1983) to *Indigenising Anthropology with Guattari and Deleuze*, throughout the trajectory of her career and many other books such as *Desert Dreamers*,¹ Barbara Glowczewski has become one of the major vectors of the deconstruction and rhizomatic reconfiguration of the transmutation-transformation of the acentric mode of applying Anthropology.²

Anthropology, that fluctuating and oscillating Organon between reification and hypnotization by the Elsewhere and the Stranger –(because respectively neither of these concepts, within the Western anthropocentric worldview or Weltanschauung, inhabit “place” nor “man”), on the one hand, and because, on the other hand, such concepts or processes within the anthropological practice of Barbara

¹ Barbara Glowczewski, *Desert Dreamers*, Univocal/MUP, 2016, Minneapolis (updated translation 1989); *Les rêveurs du désert: aborigènes d'Australie, les Warlpiri* (Paris, Plon, 1989). Idem, *Du rêve à la loi chez les Aborigènes: mythes, rites et organisation sociale en Australie*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1991; *From Dreams to Law among Aboriginal people: Myths, Rites and Social Organization in Australia*. Idem, *Rêves en colère: alliances aborigènes dans le Nord-Ouest australien*, Paris, Plon, 2004, Pocket 2017; *Angry Dreams: Aboriginal Alliances in Northwest Australia* (2004, 2016).

² Translation adapted from *Chimères*, n°98, 2022, p. 229-233 (<https://www.editions-eres.com/ouvrage/4797/mauvais-reves>). I am very grateful to Drew S. Burk for his proofreading of the English translation of this article.

Glowczewski's anthropological work are understood to function through a "nonlinear or reticular thought" (Chapter 8). For Barbara Glowczewski, anthropology is a practice that unfolds, takes shape, and explores. A practice that disseminates through its very ongoing development and advances which are conceived, experienced, and lived, as a centrifugal and multi-polar entanglement of "existential territories" (Chapter 2, Chapter 3). And her project engaging in this, by way of cartographic process of mapping or tracing. Sketching within these "territories," both new "tracks" and new "lines of flight," including one of her earliest practices of creating "indigenous cognitive maps" (IAGD, p. 8) as well as other maps, or *Becomings*³ (totemic, dreamed, "schizoanalytic," ritual, artistic...) (IAGD, p. 116).

Barbara Glowczewski writes very concisely of her anthropological intentions: "My priority since the 1980s has been to side-step the 'victimization trap' in order to look at creative forms of resistance. These are also at the heart of Guattari's ecosophy which articulates four dimensions: (1) existential territories (real but virtual) that can be material or immaterial; (2) fluxes (real but actual) related with the body and the land as well as money and trade; (3) constellations of values (virtual and possible) which are incorporeal universes like the ritornellos; and (4) machinic phylums or machines (actual and possible) referring to cybernetic retroaction, or autopoesis." (IAGD, p. 47)

Based on transversalist or transcultural cosmopolitics involving both the "anthropocene" paradigm (Chapter 11) and indigenous cosmologies (notably those of the Warlpiri and other Australian aboriginal groups), this theoretical and paroxysmally involved, "engaged" or even "organic" "priority" of B. Glowczewski is

³ IAGD, p. 16: "(...) totemic becoming, i.e., the obligation to take care of the yams so they may continue to grow."

a crucial implementation of the decisive de-essentialization of the “Social and Historical Conflicts.” One of the aims and one of the matrices (if not the principle) of this de-essentialist critical theory is the cosmopolitan deconstruction of any “Myth of Superiority” (Chapter 10), the univocal universalism, and the globalized mono-knowledge, which continually anchor and re-anchor the “ethnologized” or even “indigenized” peoples (we do not know in the name of what Jupiterian nomenclature!) in the unspeakable traps of the margins of humanity. This explains, for example, the relationship, which is sometimes critical and sometimes solidary, of this author with the various and multiple heuristic universes of thinkers, women, and men, such as Katerina Teaiwa, Judith Brown, Zoe Todd, Vandana Shiva, Donna Haraway, Anna Tsing, Marilyn Strathern, Elizabeth Povinelli, Rosi Braidotti, Isabelle Stengers, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Paul Josef Crutzen, Eugene Filmore Stoermer, Eduardo Kohn, Félix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze...

In *Indigenising Anthropology*..., which is an ambitious Homeric Outlogos “chaosmosis,” and “Alienocenic,”⁴ Periplum which leads to the demand for the advent of a meta-epistemological justice that would try to repair and recover from (?) the alienating effects of the post-Columbus globalization of the Western model, B. Glowczewski studies the role played by Social Anthropology and Ecosophy (Félix Guattari’s version)⁵ in this process of De-essentialization of rhizomatic “thought-

⁴ We owe this notion to Frédéric Neyrat: *La part inconstructible de la Terre. Critique du géo-constructivisme*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2016. See the English translation: *The Unconstructable Earth: An Ecology of Separation*, trans. Drew S. Burk (New York, Fordham, 2018).

⁵ Referring to Arturo Escobar, *Feel-think the earth. An Ecology Beyond the West* (Paris, Seuil, 2018), Barbara Glowczewski writes: “The pluriversal in the shadow of the universal”, in *Terrestres*, November 15, 2018): “I’m also very inspired since the 1970s by the work of Deleuze and Guattari, particularly Guattari’s ecosophical cartography of the chaosmosis. Since my first fieldwork in 1979, I have put in parallel with the notion of space-times of astrophysicists, the totemic space-times known as the Australian Dreaming(s) (*Jukurrpa* in Warlpiri) which connect in a complex topology the terrestrial routes of their totemic ancestors with the interstellar cosmos, the Milky Way and the Two

world.” These (i.e. Social Anthropology and Ecosophy) provide the multi-referenced planetary discussion space with a set of representations which seal and unite the “community of the world” (Édouard Glissant). Indeed, the works of B. Glowczewski safeguard and affirm the processes of a “pluriverse”⁶ (versus monoverse, universal) empowerment of the polyarchic figures of “desert surveyors” and “Becoming-Land,” and that by freeing them from the shameful impostures of “Inherited thought” which wanted them to be subservient to its orders and ghosts.

By prolonging her humanist gesture announced in *Desert Dreamers* and by exposing the different constellations of the links which unite rhizomatic thought and worlds (“human” and “non-human”), B. Glowczewski puts into perspective and arranges a vast matter, “fields,” “active inter-active retroactive” (Patrick Chamoiseau), or interconnected. This matter and these “terrains” give rise to both a pluriverse proliferation of the critical amplification of all kinds of “multiplicities” as well as processes of individuation, which Glowczewski’s topological approach of Australian cosmology implements in its “hypercubic” relationship to autochthonous kinship and to transcultural comparative methodology.

Through opening up diversalist lineaments of her modular and flexible intellectual autobiography (see “Becoming-Land,” in IAGD, p. 5 and what follows), the author gathers, on the one hand – in an approach made up of different epistemological pivotings – multitudes of living beings, and historical and transhistoric facts, “humans” and “non-humans.” On the other hand, due to the fact that such epistemological pivotings affirm a pluriverse and therefore break with the

Magellanic Cloud galaxies.” URL: <https://www.terrestres.org/2018/11/15/le-pluriversel-a-lombre-de-luniversel/novembre>.

⁶ See Arturo Escobar, *Designs for the pluriverse : Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds* (Duke University Press, 2018) and Jean-Clet Martin, *Plurivers - Essai sur la fin du Monde*, Paris, PUF, 2010).

myth of the monoverse anthropo-political identity – an identity which castrates the processes of individuation or negativity (Hegel's version)⁷ –, processes inherited from the 18th century and the temporalities preceding this century, or those which are resolutely post-Columbus and post-Darwinian moments of affirmation of the planetary hegemony of “White peace” (Robert Jaulin), or moments of a sovereign brutality of “criminality of the Whites” in the wake of the *Enlightenment* and the *anti-Enlightenment*. It is for this reason that the fourteen studies which can be read in *Indigenising Anthropology...*, translate, in order to grasp the meaning of the bewilderment of reason, how the hegemonic narrative of this Caesarean-Papism-Protestantism still continues in our current times.

In the following pages, B. Glowczewski not only retraces once again her intellectual itinerancy, but also the debates raised by the notions of “Micropolitics of Hope and De-Essentialization” (IAGD, Part IV, p. 297 and what follows) which are at work within a context of so-called “globalized” cultural exchanges characterized by the negative dialectic of which one of the harmful effects is the inquisitorial codification of the Boetian (La Boétie) peripherality where the indigenous peoples, including the Australian aboriginal peoples, are confined. Deconstructing and then reconfiguring this peripherality in another way is one of the rhizomatic themes of the articles and works of our anthropologist-philo-strategist.

In short, B. Glowczewski develops an innovative program of an unvarnished, vital, coruscating, and “radical anthropology.” A program she set in motion, in the early 80s in the late 20th century, largely thanks to an “ecosophical” moment and rupture, that is irrefutable, because it served as inchoative event whereby the

⁷ Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 2009.

Guattarian and Garfinkelian “understanding” and perception operate “from the rhizome in the ethnographic context of the production of existential territories anchored in places, the space-time of myth and dream, the body and kinship, extended to all becoming, human and non-human.” (IAGD, p. 126)

Consequently, B. Glowczewski’s work examines, beforehand, this decisive moment of a cosmopolitan “rupture” which reconfigures the germination, or the planetary blossoming, of the “nationalitarian fifth world” as much as the active and offensive assertion on many levels, including juridical and cosmopolitan levels, of the “singular identities of the indigenous peoples.” Such assertion is reclaimed, both at the scale of the Western approach and at the scale of the knowledge produced by the “Fifth World,” in other words, precisely in the world of the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific and elsewhere.

This perspective allows the author to highlight the effects of resonance, circulation or “networks,” of several borrowings and permutations (see, for example, Chapters 9, 11, and 12) which are played out, while together, both within conceptual productivity and within the writing and narration of the various “micropolitical,” transversalist, or “creeping” struggles of peripheralized peoples: this is what B. Glowczewski calls “*Dreaming*” defined as the Aboriginal Law(s) – “*Yam Dreaming*, *Kangaroo Dreaming* or *Rain Dreaming*.”

If “radical” anthropology is mobilized by B. Glowczewski as a heuristic form capable of providing indigenous peoples with founding references, better still: a “cartographic conception (IAGD, p. 72), “an anti-hierarchical conception of things” (IAGD, p. 6), and a cathartic rejection of “ontological reductions” (IAGD, p. 54), it is also used to integrate popular, oral, artistic, political, culture into the great “(de-)nationalitarian” narratives of indigenous peoples.

Indigenising Anthropology... constitutes a fundamental epistemological event. By studying the reception of the fourteen texts that this book contains and the influence that, with F. Guattari's and G. Deleuze's writings, they exert on other indigenous narratives (for example, the influence of these texts on African-Brazilian thought), which will play a major role in the anthropo-political awakening of peripheralized human groupings, B. Glowczewski shows the rhizomatic entanglement of the issues, which are, at the same time, political, cultural and linguistic, that the aforementioned narratives represent for each Indigenous or “indigenized” peoples.

While *Indigenising Anthropology...* is largely focused on Australian aboriginal peoples and Australia, the work opens up in a very deterritorialized ways to countries whose cultural legitimacy is by no means saved from a monochromatic, even racialist political vision as shown by “*Cosmocolors: A Filmed Performance of Incorporation and a Conversation with the Preta Velha Vó Cirina*” and “*Te Ngangkarri Healing Power: Conversation With Lance Sullivan, Yalarrrnga Healer*.” Both of these aforementioned texts draw material from Glowczewski's interpretive transcultural methodology and are instruments for affirmation at the intersection of Indigenous imagination, ritual, and art as vehicles for “pluriverse” culture.

The book largely seeks to insist on how these Indigenous universes, if they want to express their arts of existing, appearing and expressing themselves, of affirming the expression of Indigenous people, must continuously be generated by drawing forth from the rich and vast depths of the regions of the Oceanic belts to those of the sub-equatorial or desert regions, etc., through massive and ongoing exchanges of motives and themes, all practices that eventually lead to “conflicting

interpretations,” as can be seen, for example, in Glowczewski’s criticism of Bruno Latour, Philippe Descola, Eduardo de Castro, and Tim Ingold.

“The male bias found in all anthropological literature that was being thoroughly criticized at that time, mostly notably by certain female anthropologists who systematically reinterpreted anthropological history, especially in the United States.” (IAGD, p. 7). It is the same perspective which is present both in the concern to replace the writing and the maps of real and virtual materials at work both in the indigenous narratives (“récits”) within the transcultural exchanges, and in the study of current cartography of international “balance of power,” which makes, among other things, the cosmopolitan singularity of Barbara Glowczewski’s work and a-teleological transdisciplinary thought, by inviting the English-speaking reader into an intellectual panorama of great and rich complexity, and marked by, at the same time, rapidly moving transmutations and “unattached” *Dreamings in a solastalgic drive for a symbiocene turn* (which makes me think of Karl Mannheim and Glenn Albrecht⁸).

⁸ Glenn Albrecht, “Solastalgia in the Anthropocene and the Gheideist in the Symbiocene” in *Psychoterratica*, July 22, 2017 (<https://glennaalbrecht.wordpress.com/2017/07/22/solastalgia-in-the-anthropocene-and-the-ghedeist-in-the-symbiocene/>): “Historically, Indigenous people are likely to experience both nostalgia and solastalgia as they live through the destruction of their cultural traditions and their lands. Where a collective memory of an ancient culture such as that of Indigenous Australians still exists, there is no idealisation of a golden past, but a genuine grieving for the ongoing loss of ‘country’ and all that entails. The strength of attachment to country is difficult for people in European cultures to fathom.”