

Preface

In early 2001, while working at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and having recently completed a doctoral thesis on Warlpiri people's engagements with visual media, I learned of the crayon drawings that comprise the Meggitt Collection. The drawings were filed as research materials when Meggitt deposited them with the Institute in 1965 before he relocated from Australia to the United States. During a survey to value the Institute's art and artefacts, consultants Jon Altman and Chris Fondum were given free reign to browse the Institute's diverse material culture holdings. They later recalled their surprise and delight on opening a filing cabinet drawer and laying eyes on the first of the drawings Meggitt had collected. The valuers proclaimed the Warlpiri drawings to be works of considerable significance, recommended their reclassification from 'research materials' to 'art', and suggested they be listed on the Institute's assets register with a conservative value of \$250,000.¹

Much beguiled by the drawings during my short time at the Institute, I pitched a research project dealing with them as part of a successful application for a postdoctoral fellowship at the then Centre for Cross-Cultural Research at the Australian National University (ANU). On taking up the fellowship in mid-2001 I had second thoughts and negotiated with the Centre's then director Howard Morphy to pursue a different project. I owe Howard a debt of thanks for inadvertently helping the potentiality of the drawings project stew for another decade while I pursued other interests and developed a teaching program in the School of Archaeology and Anthropology.

Research towards this book started in early 2011 as a collaborative effort between ethnomusicologist Stephen Wild, who first worked with Warlpiri people at Lajamanu in 1969, and me. Stephen undertook crucial early discussions with senior Warlpiri men to ensure they approved of the drawings being brought out of the archive to become subjects of new research.

He oversaw the introduction of copies of the drawings to people at Lajamanu and collected newly made drawings from them while I undertook similar work at Yuendumu. Stephen retired in 2012, at which time he decided to withdraw from research in favour of more leisurely interests. I am grateful for his sensitive diplomacy and important early contribution. This shift in the project after its commencement explains something of a skew in focus of this book. Yuendumu and Lajamanu are separated by 600 kilometres of unsealed track which is prone to flooding after heavy rain. Time and other logistical constraints meant I was only able to visit Lajamanu on two occasions so the vantage point adopted in the chapters that follow is more Yuendumu-centric than it might otherwise have been. The story of Warlpiri experience over the period under investigation is vast and diverse. As is the case in any ethnographic endeavour, the perspectives adopted in this book are the outcome of various contingencies, as circumstances have resulted in my interactions with particular people at particular places and particular times.

There has been a special poignancy in reintroducing the drawings made in the early 1950s to Warlpiri people in the 2010s. As recounted in the pages that follow, the post-war period was a turbulent time in Warlpiri history. The drawings have been re-introduced to Warlpiri communities during another period of upheaval. Across three years of visits to Central Australia I have been regularly struck by the fortitude, grace and resilience of Warlpiri friends, many living under circumstances of considerable stress. My aspiration in writing this book has been to take up the drawings as a prism through which to explore something of these circumstances, while maintaining a focus on the creative drive that is apparent in so many Warlpiri people's attitudes and ways of acting in the world. I have been most fortunate in the enthusiasm, generosity, guidance and support I have enjoyed along the way.

First and foremost I am grateful for the hospitality, friendship and wise counsel of Tess Napaljarri Ross, Otto Jungarrayi Sims, Alma Nungarrayi Granites, Ormay Nangala Gallagher, Thomas Jangala Rice, Maxine Nungarrayi Spencer, April Napaljarri Spencer, Valerie Napaljarri Martin, Alice Napurrurla Nelson, Jerry Jangala Patrick, Wanta Steven Jampijinpa Patrick, Bidy Napaljarri Timms, Jeannie Nungarrayi Herbert, Elizabeth Nungarrayi Herbert, and two late great men: Paddy Japaljarri Stewart and Neville Japangardi Poulson. As will become clear, Japangardi's thoughtful interventions before his death in July 2013 have shaped my enquiry in significant ways. In dedicating this book to Japangardi I record my gratitude for his generosity in sharing an incisive way of looking at the world as well as his passion for working towards a more productive relationship between Warlpiri and non-Aboriginal people.

Hannah Quinliven provided outstanding research assistance, was an incomparable travelling companion and a highly insightful interpreter of events and drawings. This book would have been a different beast without Hannah's involvement. Joan Meggitt, widow of Mervyn, has been remarkably open and trusting in sharing memories of life with her late husband and her time at Hooker Creek. David Tunley enthusiastically shared drawings, slides and memories of his time at Yuendumu.

At Yuendumu and Lajamanu Cecilia Alfonso and Louisa Erglis, as managers of Warlukurlangu Aboriginal Artists Association and Warnayaka Art and Cultural Aboriginal Corporation, provided warm hospitality and support. They facilitated various elements of the research, along with Gloria Morales, Frank Baarda, Wendy Baarda, Jeff Bruer at Pintupi Anmatyerre Warlpiri Media and Rachel O'Connell at Yuendumu's Bilingual Resources Development Unit.

The intellectual shape of this book has benefitted from interactions with many friends and colleagues. I am particularly grateful to Andrew Sayers and Jennifer Deger for substantial creative and critical

engagements of various kinds. Jane Lydon, Mandy Paul, Jeremy Beckett, Nicolas Peterson, Petronella Vaarzon-Morel and Diana Young provided thoughtful comments on draft chapters as well as more wide ranging stimulations. Paul Carter, David Brooks, David Nash, Ute Eickelkamp, Nina Fischer, Sarah Holcombe, Fiona Jenkins, Philip Jones, Desmond Manderson, Maria Nugent, Debjani Ganguly, Margaret Jolly, Martin Thomas, Yasmine Musharbash, Wally Caruna, Judith Ryan, Simone Dennis, Alison French and Åse Ottosson have lent further ideas, guidance and encouragement. Early drafts were written in two creatively inspiring environments, the Humanities Research Centre at ANU during a six-month internal fellowship in the second half of 2012, and in the home of good friends Tim Bonyhady and Nicole Moore during a period of house-minding in 2013. Core ideas and ethnographic writings have been tested in seminars and conference presentations in Canberra, Brisbane, Melbourne and San Francisco, and in one substantial article 'Back to the future: Warlpiri encounters with drawings, country and others in the digital age', *Culture, Theory and Critique*.

The project was initially funded by an AIATSIS grant, with supplementary funds granted by the Research School of Humanities and the Arts and the School of Archaeology and Anthropology. The School and the Humanities Research Centre supported two crucial semesters of teaching relief. At the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies I thank Luke Taylor for his keen interest in this project. David Jeffery oversaw complex arrangements for the reproduction of images with meticulous attention. Barry Cundy, Eleanor Galvin and staff of the library and access unit responded to my requests with great efficiency and good humour. Rhonda Black, Director of Aboriginal Studies Press, has been enthusiastic since our first discussions. I thank Rachel Ippoliti for overseeing the book's production, Christine Bruderlin for its handsome design and Margaret McDonnell for her careful subediting.

Remembering the Future has been written in tandem with the development of an exhibition I have curated for the National Museum of Australia, the idea for which first arose in 2011 in discussions with Andrew Sayers during his period as Director. I am grateful to the Museum for funding three trips to Central Australia and for allowing photographic work undertaken for the exhibition to be shared in the production of this book.

For permission to reproduce photographs, drawings and other images I thank Vanessa Bertagnole, Jol Fleming, Joan Meggitt, Hannah Quinliven, David Tunley, Jon Altman, Warlukurlangu Artists Association, Mitchell Library and Newspix. For his patience and meticulous map making skills I thank Francis Markham.

Finally, I thank Jon Altman, who read various drafts of this manuscript and was a constant source of support and encouragement throughout its development. Jon, Oskar and Tess Altman cheerfully endured my absences and prolonged periods of obsessive focus away from family life. For their energy, love and good humour I say thanks.

Melinda Hinkson
Canberra, January 2014