

What's in a dedication? On being a Warlpiri DJ

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DJ: 'Yuwai, nat that one, Cold Chisel, "Forever Now", ngulaju. Umpuku Pukarac, Ingrid, Wakku, Nana, Minu, Jampijin, Derek, Warwick, Japangard and ... Yah, jinta kari, 'nother one, Spinifex Band and Rising Wind; double play nyampuju. Spinifex "Pina Yantarni", and Rising Wind "Karnta-kangku pantirli". Double play ngulaju. Tiffany, Olivia, Edith, W, Leanne, Sharmane, and kurdu kurdu-k. Nyampu now, double play, umpuj.'

Translation: 'Yes, that was Cold Chisel with "Forever Now", going out for Pukarac, Ingrid, Wakku, Nana, Minu, Jampijin, Derek, Warwick, Japangard... And now here's another one, two songs from Spinifex Band and Rising Wind. Spinifex's "Come Back" and Rising Wind's "The Woman is Waiting". This one's a double play for Olivia, Edith, W, Leanne, Sharmane and the kids. Here it is now.'

As P.S.¹ finishes her announcement she flicks a switch on her control desk and the sounds of the Spinifex Band's song are heard in the Yuendumu radio room and simultaneously on hundreds of radios in houses, cars and the offices of community organisations, across the region that receives the Pintupi Anmatyerre Warlpiri (PAW) Radio Network. The phone in the radio room rings immediately.

P.S. answers the phone: 'Hello, radio room'.

'It's for Wariyi Wariyi again', she tells me as she hangs up. Wariyi Wariyi, or Mt Allan, is a town with a mobile population of some 2-300 people situated on Anmatyerre land, about 40 kms south-east of Yuendumu in central Australia. The caller has requested a song by Teenage Band, a Warlpiri band from Lajamanu, a town located about 600 kms to the north of Yuendumu. After P.S. has back-announced the previous song, along

¹ The issue of names is a complex one in contemporary Warlpiri society. One may be called by one's bush name, subsection name, European/Christian name, nickname, or kumunjayi—no name—under prohibitions on speaking the name or words soundly similar to recently deceased. The choice of name in addressing a person is contingent on the relationship of the speaker to the person named and others present. A variety of different ways of referring to people are used in this article. 'P.S.' is the name that radio worker Pauline Nampijinpa Singleton most commonly goes by.

with the names of people for whom it was played, she introduces the Teenage Band's song and the people at Wariyi Wariyi for whom it is to be played. She announces not just the name of the caller who made the request, but some half dozen people. The phone rings again, and indeed it continues to ring constantly over the next three hours that P.S. and her co-worker Anna-Rita Napurrurla Wilson are broadcasting from Warlpiri Media's radio room at Yuendumu. They go through the same procedure for every song they play: the announcer introduces the song and the list of people to whom it is dedicated, the song is played, and then on its completion the same announcement is made. The list of names for whom the song is being played, and the place with which they are associated, is repeated by the announcer twice, precisely. Rarely is a song played without an accompanying dedication. Rarely is a song announced as having been requested by a single individual.

Welcome to PAW Radio. The launch of this radio network in October 2001 was an historic event for Aboriginal people living in the north-west region of Central Australia. For while radio in has been a part of life in this area for decades, PAW is the first radio network linking so many Aboriginal towns—eleven at last count,² spread across an area reported to be 480,000 sq kms—to operate independently of a major regional centre and regional broadcasting association.

From another perspective, PAW Radio can be viewed as but the latest in a long line of initiatives by people associated with the Warlpiri Media Association (WMA) of Yuendumu, and in fact marks that organisation's transformation from local to regional broadcasting body. In this paper I shall explore certain features of PAW's operations, most particularly the on-air practices of a group of young Warlpiri women who have come to work for WMA and the radio network in recent years. While PAW operates across a large area and three language groups, my focus here will be restricted almost entirely to activity occurring at Yuendumu. In exploring what these young women do on PAW radio, I shall argue that the media association has become an important site in the production of contemporary forms of Warlpiri sociality.

² These are Yuendumu, Ali Curang, Nturiya, Pmara Jutunta, Laramba, Willowra, Yuelamu (Mt Allan), Nyirripi, Papunya, Mt Liebig, and Kintore.

In saying something about this arena of Warlpiri practice I shall also problematise what I take to have been the dominant discourse within which indigenous people's utilisation of new media³ has been conceptualised over the past two decades, most particularly the suggestion that such interactions be conceptualised in the terms of 'cultural maintenance' and 'resistance' to dominant national and global cultural forms (see Michaels 1986, 1989, 1994; Meadows 1994; Molnar 1990) or as a form of 'cultural activism' (Ginsburg 2002). In this respect the paper seeks to contribute to current debates within anthropology and cultural studies about the nature of indigenous peoples' engagements with and responses to technologically accelerated globalisation, and to grapple with the complex double-edged process in which indigenous social forms produce distinctive meanings in their articulation with new things, while themselves simultaneously undergoing some kind of transformation (cf. Austin-Broos 2003a, 2003b; Merlan 1998).

The paper starts with a brief overview of the history from which the PAW radio network has emerged and considers the place of music in daily life at Yuendumu. It then explores the distinctive approach the women broadcasters take to the job of radio work, in particular, their on-air invocation and production of particular forms of Warlpiri social relations. This discussion will lead us to consider questions about how these women regard their work and how in turn their performance is regarded by those who listen. In exploring the politics of contemporary relationship making I will argue that Warlpiri sociality is being produced across an ever-expanding social field, and in so doing is straining against certain older structures of Warlpiri sociality. I will suggest that radio is facilitating this process in distinctive ways. Along the way I will allude to aspects of the wider context in which young Warlpiri men and women are re-rendering what it means to be Warlpiri at the beginning of the twenty-first century. I borrow this concept of re-rendering from Austin-Broos (2003), who has used it to elucidate the general cultural form of marginalised peoples'

³ I use the concept of 'new media' in this article to refer collectively to the diverse communications technologies that have evolved since the printing press and 'mass' forms of distribution such as the newspaper. However, the main focus of the article is on radio and, to a lesser extent, those audiovisual technologies that have been invented in its wake—video, TV, video conferencing, and the internet.

responses to globalising processes.⁴ Implicit in the concept of re-rendering is the idea that a community of people cannot stand outside of the social processes to which they are subject. As applied to Warlpiri media practice, my reading of the notion of re-rendering is that it demands that we place the complex tensions between cultural continuity and change at the centre of analysis.

Background: A brief history of the WMA

Aboriginal towns in central Australia have only had access to telephones, national radio and television since the late 1980s. But their interactions with audio-visual media go back much further. Since as early as the 1950s public film nights were regularly held at Yuendumu, and radio, in a variety of different guises, has been a part of life for a similar timeframe. Up until the late 1980s communications between Yuendumu and its nearest regional centre, Alice Springs, were restricted to a bi-weekly mail service, an unreliable radio-telephone, and a number of CB radio sets. It was in this decade that two key developments occurred which were to transform this situation. Firstly, the shift in federal government policy approach from assimilation to self-determination began to be comprehensively implemented. In conjunction with the passing of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* and associated legislation, this shift in approach laid the ground for a proliferation of new Aboriginal community organisations,⁵ many focussed on fostering what might be broadly characterised as contemporary cultural expression, with local Aboriginal people sitting on their governing councils and boards of management. The second development was the federal government's decision to launch AUSSAT, the first Australian-owned satellite, which for the first time would enable much of remote Australia to access radio and television services, and subsequently a whole raft of technologies including fax machines, email, the internet, and, in the case of Yuendumu and three neighbouring towns, even their own video conferencing network (see Hinkson 1999, 2002).

The Warlpiri Media Association (or WMA) was formally incorporated in 1984. The organisation emerged out of a video training program run by

⁴ Austin-Broos in turn borrows the concept from Veena Das (1997), who observes that 'as social beings we cannot live beyond sociality and thereby must re-render it' (Austin-Broos 2003a: 14).

⁵ Most set up and incorporated under the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976*.

Yuendumu's Adult Education Centre in the early 1980s. The birth of WMA was also inextricably linked with a research project being undertaken at Yuendumu by American researcher Eric Michaels. Funded by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Michaels set out to document the likely 'impact' of introducing mainstream television into remote Aboriginal Australia (see Michaels 1986). He brought considerable technical skills and resources with him to Yuendumu and wrote prolifically over a four year period about Warlpiri people's engagements with these new media (see Michaels 1986, 1989, 1994). Elsewhere (Hinkson 2002, forthcoming) I have taken issue with the major interpretive thrust of Michaels' work, which saw Warlpiri people as having made video and television 'fit' within what he referred to as 'traditional forms'. The possibility of local Warlpiri control of 'mass' media lay at the core of Michaels' suggestion that Warlpiri media practice might contribute to the 'maintenance' of Warlpiri 'culture' as well as constituting a form of 'resistance' to the cultural hegemony of mainstream media (Michaels 1989). Later in the paper I will critically engage with these issues as they pertain to the activity occurring around the PAW radio network.

In its early years of operation WMA was focussed solely on video production and local television broadcasting. From 1985 the organisation operated an unlicensed television station, which broadcast a local news service and locally produced videos made on diverse topics—community meetings, school excursions, 'old people's stories', visits to country, sporting events, and so on (see Michaels 1986: 56-8, 67-9). The organisation underwent significant transformation in the late 1980s. After the completion of Michaels' research and the launch of AUSSAT, most 'remote' Aboriginal towns received equipment provided by the federal government under the Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS), that enabled them to receive the satellite signals of two television and two radio stations simultaneously and rebroadcast these locally. Built into this equipment was something called an interruptibility switch, which allowed local residents to turn off the incoming signal if they so desired and insert their own programs. This feature of the BRACS equipment was the government's response to concerns voiced by some remote living Aboriginal people and their advisers about the need to have control over what kind of televisual content was broadcast locally. However, the financial support and training provided to skill local residents to operate this equipment was extremely

limited, and only a small number of Aboriginal towns actually established media associations that undertook their own local broadcasting activity.⁶

Constrained by the new funding program that was implemented as part of the federal government's response to the concerns and interests of remote living Aboriginal people, WMA continued to produce local news and other programs with varying regularity, as well as to collaborate with mainstream film makers in the production of a number of commercial quality documentary films and television programs (among them Manyu-Wana, a ten-part Sesame Street-style program with a particularly Warlpiri twist).⁷ Over time the organisation attracted increasingly well-skilled and entrepreneurial non-Aboriginal staff. The scope of its activities as well as its staff base expanded in the late 1990s, with a range of local and commercial video production to being undertaken (most recently the *Bush Mechanics* series), as well as radio broadcasting, a large video archiving project (to log and master copy the more than 1,000 hours of video that have been produced locally over the past twenty years), an audio project to record the songs of local bands, as well as a range of language translation work. Along the way changing government policies and programs have variously constrained and facilitated new areas of activity. Of most recent significance the CDEP scheme⁸ has enabled a growing body of trainees to become associated with WMA. Since 1995 WMA has also become a regional training provider, with its non-Aboriginal staff delivering training to Aboriginal media workers across a similar geographic area to that which the PAW radio network now covers. By 2002 these relationships had been further consolidated with WMA actively representing all 11 towns that are members of the radio network.

While continuing to be involved in video-based projects, the Aboriginal people working for WMA have increasingly turned their attention to radio broadcasting. Reasons for this shift are multiple. In general it can be said that radio work is a lot more straightforward than video production and television broadcasting. The equipment involved is not complicated and requires less skill to operate, as well as less money, and less involvement

⁶ Over the past two decades a number of reasonably robust regional Aboriginal media associations have been established. For overviews of this history see Michaels 1986; ATSIC & Department of Transport and Communications 1991; Turner 1998).

⁷ For a more detailed account of this history see Hinkson 2002.

⁸ CDEP is the federal government's Community Development Employment Program or 'work for the dole' scheme.

of whitefellas. Radio work also has an instantaneous effect. A radio worker can simply walk into the radio studio, flick a switch to override the incoming signal and start broadcasting their own material, which will be immediately heard by those listening. When they have finished their session they simply flick the same switch again to receive the incoming signal and walk out of the studio. This was the informal and low-key approach to radio broadcasting at WMA through much of the 1990s, with Warlpiri broadcasters averaging about 6 hours on-air a week.

In the years prior to the establishment of the PAW Network, Aboriginal towns in the region with BRACS equipment were able to receive and retransmit two radio stations simultaneously. In Yuendumu's case these stations were ABC Regional Radio, alternating with ABC Radio National, and 8KINFM, the radio station operated by the regional broadcaster the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, CAAMA.⁹ Since its establishment in the early 1980s, CAAMA saw a particular role for itself in fostering the musical and broadcasting activities of remote living Aboriginal people, and for some time had been encouraging bush-based radio broadcasters such as WMA to produce programs for it to put to air through its network. In 1999 WMA took up this offer, with Warlpiri and Pintupi radio workers at Yuendumu and Kintore eager to participate. However, the format was challenging for them in some basic respects. CAAMA allocated a set block of time in its weekly schedule to take feeds from WMA. Yet already Warlpiri Media faced a challenge: Aboriginal people in this region are intensely mobile and this meant that finding a dedicated radio worker who could commit themselves to be in the designated radio room at the designated time to present the show each week was an ongoing battle. As I shall discuss below, it is a reflection of Warlpiri sociality that a wide range of activities commonly referred to in English as 'looking after family' and 'Aboriginal business' are more highly prioritised than the responsibilities of paid work. WMA got around this challenge of scheduling by pre-recording some radio programs and sharing its allocated time between broadcasters in Kintore, Nyirripi and Yuendumu. But the window of opportunity extended to the bush broadcasters was always slim and it was no surprise when CAAMA and the WMA fell out over CAAMA's unilateral decision to reduce WMA's scheduled on-air time.

⁹ This Alice Springs-based and Aboriginal owned media association holds licences to broadcast radio as well as Imparja Television across a satellite footprint that extends from the north of South Australia into western Queensland and across the entirety of the Northern Territory.

Relations between the two organisations reached an all-time low after one Warlpiri radio worker discussed his dissatisfaction with the arrangement on-air during the final designated slot. He encouraged all listeners to ring up CAAMA and complain.¹⁰

It was with an eye to potential multiple benefits that staff of WMA worked towards the establishment of the PAW radio network. Its coverage of the 11 towns in question is not arbitrary. Residents of these towns share close familial and ceremonial ties and there is constant movement of people between them. The relative autonomy of the radio network from mainstream broadcasting bodies was important for WMA. Most particularly this autonomy allows PAW a great deal of flexibility in its operations, much more so than was possible under the arrangement with CAAMA, for example. This flexibility is critical if WMA is to produce a working environment that can accommodate the highly mobile nature of its Aboriginal staff and trainees.

Anthropologists working in this region have long recognised mobility as a central dynamic of Aboriginal sociality (see Musharbash 2001a, 2003; Peterson 2000; Young & Doohan 1989). Warlpiri people move continually between the various places where relations reside—locally, between numerous camps and houses within the town, and regionally, between different towns. They move most frequently in motor vehicles, many of which have radios. Such mobility may be compatible with listening to the radio,¹¹ but it also underscores the importance of a flexible approach to broadcasting schedules. For having a job does not tend to curtail a Warlpiri person's mobility, much to the frustration of many non-Aboriginal managers.

A significant aspect of the flexibility in PAW's current operations is that broadcasters can essentially come and go from the radio room as they please. In fact it is not unusual for there to be more than one radio worker interested in broadcasting on PAW at any particular time, and the coordinator of the radio program engages in some relatively informal, short-term scheduling when need be, to ensure that each town and each

¹⁰ He was in fact voicing a tension between the regional broadcaster and remote communities that has been apparent and indeed articulated in similar ways at various times since CAAMA's inception.

¹¹ Although radio reception is restricted to within a few kilometres of the radio station's transmitter.

interested presenter, or 'team' of presenters, has their fair share of air time. One particularly mobile PAW broadcaster, Randall Jupurrurla Wilson, moves frequently between the towns of Yuendumu and Nyirripi, a distance of approximately 150 kilometres, maintaining regular contact with relations and broadcasting from both locations.

In the course of PAW's establishment WMA has become a thriving centre of social activity, particularly for young people. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of hours of local radio broadcasting in the region since it commenced operations. In the case of Yuendumu radio broadcasting was infrequent and sporadic throughout much of the 1990s. Since the launch of PAW, radio workers from at least two locations have regularly broadcast six to eight hours a day, five days a week.¹² Why the massive increase in interest in radio work? This is a question I'll attempt to tease out in the course of this paper, but at the outset it can be noted that the potential listener base has expanded exponentially. Prior to PAW being established radio workers at Yuendumu had a maximum potential audience of 1,000. The establishment of the network has multiplied this potential listening base by at least six, taking in the expanded social universe in which most Warlpiri would find most of the people they refer to as 'family'. As I discuss below, networked radio is being utilised by young Warlpiri people to help sustain social relationships across distance.

Who are the PAW DJs?

Since its inception as a video production training program twenty years ago, there have been many people involved in the operations of the WMA. Eric Michaels, the researcher whose writings put WMA on the map, had a close collaborator in Francis Jupurrurla Kelly, whose approach to video recording and television broadcasting provided then basis for many of Michaels' discussions (see especially Michaels 1989).¹³ Throughout the 1990s one Warlpiri woman, Valerie Napaljarri Martin, was the stable point of reference in a workplace that turned over both Warlpiri and non-Aboriginal staff with great frequency. There are close genealogical and social ties between Valerie, who now lives in Alice Springs, and the young women broadcasting on PAW Radio today. Valerie was responsible for

¹² At time of writing Yuendumu, Kintore and Nyirripi are the most regular sites from which broadcasts occur.

¹³ Kelly has maintained involvement with the organisation over time, largely through its committee of management as well as working on various film projects from time to time, most recently, as co-writer and co-editor of the highly successful *Bush Mechanics* series.

recruiting her close classificatory brother's daughter, Judith Nungarrayi Martin. The following year 'P.S.', who is Judith's sister's daughter, commenced work as a radio trainee. She was followed by Valerie's own daughter, Anna-Rita Napurrurla Wilson, and Anna-Rita's close classificatory sister, Lizzie Napurrurla Ross. Two of these women are also related to Judith Napangardi Dixon, a radio trainee at nearby Mt Allan. And Randall Wilson, one of PAW's male DJs, is Anna-Rita's close classificatory brother. The relevance of all this social mapping will become clear below, although it should be noted in passing that there are other Warlpiri people who work for the media association who are not related to these women.

Musical dimensions of everyday life

It is not difficult to understand the appeal to young Aboriginal men and women of being of PAW radio worker, combining as it does the playing of music, with on-air broadcasting, with ready access to a telephone. Music is a major dimension of life in the Central/Western desert. A love of music is an observable intergenerational phenomenon at Yuendumu. Young children and teenagers have a passion for the dance music that is played throbblingly loud at community discos. Their gyrating 'sexy dancing' at these events is renowned. The region is home to dozens of Aboriginal bands, many of whom have had their material recorded and distributed on CD.¹⁴ These bands play regularly at concerts and 'battle of the bands' competitions that are held whenever sports weekends are staged. A number of gospel bands and choirs have also sprung up around the various denominations of church that are to be found across central Australia.

Warlpiri people's taste in music tends to be diverse; beyond their own ceremonial songs, people enjoy gospel and blues, country, reggae, folk, rock and roll, pop, and dance music, as well as more recent genres such as gangsta rap, and so called R & B. All styles are represented at town concerts, which some older people as well as children and teenagers regularly attend. In response to this widespread passion for music, towns such as Yuendumu have been incorporated into the touring itineraries of a diverse array of bands, from the Christian and Country and Western bands that have made a profession out of touring remote Aboriginal towns, to

¹⁴ See Corn 1999 for discussion of the similar recent proliferation of rock bands across Arnhem Land.

various Aboriginal bands, to the big names such as Country and Western legend Slim Dusty and Australian rock band Midnight Oil. Audio and video tapes, CDs and more recently DVDs¹⁵ are purchased on trips to town and interstate and circulate widely and at great pace among relatives and friends. Newly acquired material finds its way onto local radio.¹⁶

All styles of music are represented on the PAW computerised database from which the broadcasters select and play material. In late 2002 this database held in excess of 2,000 songs. Most broadcasts by the women are likely to include an even sprinkling of most if not all styles mentioned. The songs of Warlpiri and other desert bands are interspersed with latest top 40 hits, '70s American classics, Australian pop, reggae, dance, as well as songs by Aboriginal bands from other parts of the country. Latest favourite songs are repeated often. Choice of material may be influenced by many factors, but the most important in the case of the young women broadcasters are the request and the dedication.

Requests, dedications and the on-air production of relatedness

It would be misleading to interpret the PAW play lists as simply representing the taste of individual broadcasters or a pre-planned program. In the course of a radio program something much more interesting and complex occurs in the relationship between a radio worker, her audience and the songs she plays. The mediating points between the broadcaster and the material she plays are telephone

¹⁵ I noticed on my most recent trip to Yuendumu in November 2002 that DVD technology had been embraced by Warlpiri people. I did not have time to conduct a household survey but it was clear in informal conversations that quite a number of households now had DVD players.

¹⁶ But of course not all Warlpiri people like all genres of music. There are purists among older Warlpiri men and women—individuals who describe themselves as having ears only for country music or gospel, or for their own ceremonial songs for that matter. Many younger people, and those who have not grown up immersed in a particular identifiable style, tend to identify particular songs they like rather than a genre of music as such. They associate these songs with good times, with particular situations and people. In this sense music functions as a mechanism of social bonding. But as is surely a universal cross-cultural fact, music also serves to mark and highlight generation gaps. Some of the music that has found its way on to local radio in recent times has drawn strong condemnation from older Warlpiri men and women. In particular, the broadcast of the highly sexually explicit lyrics of gangsta rap groups and R & B artists such as Eminem, sparked an outcry from older listeners and led to the development of a set of rules to govern radio broadcasting. The first of these is that there will be no swearing on radio (although exactly what constitutes swearing is another question altogether).

requests and dedications. As I suggested in the opening section of this paper, it is not unusual for the phone in the radio room to ring constantly while the women are broadcasting. Such a level of listening interest is unheard of in the world of mainstream community radio and certainly did not exist prior to the establishment of PAW, when WMA radio was only accessible to the residents of Yuendumu. Who is ringing the PAW radio room? What do they want?

The women broadcasters estimate that about half the calls they receive in the radio room are from people they classify as 'family'. The other half are from those they refer to as 'any body', that is, non-family. In the course of a program, phone calls are likely to be received from across many of the networked towns. But it is also common for broadcasters to receive several calls from the same destination, as it is for the same song to be played many times during a broadcasting session. Interestingly enough, not all calls to the radio room are from listeners. During the two sessions I spent in the radio room, one of the broadcaster's young paternal aunts called from Balgo twice to catch up on gossip. In the course of their discussion she also made a request, while knowing fully well she would not be able to hear the song herself, as she was calling from a town outside the networked area. What then was the purpose of the request? In making this request the caller clearly knew she would be named on air. And this is significant. It seems to me that what she was doing in making the request was consciously projecting herself into the social universe pervaded by PAW radio, reminding people that while she may not have been physically present at Yuendumu for some months, since having moved to Balgo to be with her new husband, she was still an active participant in local social networks.

As suggested by the lists of names, callers' requests tend to be made on behalf of some kind of social grouping with whom the caller is associated. Marlette Napurrurla, a close classificatory sister of one of the women, has ready access to the telephone at the Yuendumu Childcare Centre where she works. She calls the radio room a number of times during P.S. and Anna-Rita's broadcasting session to request 'gospel songs'. The dedication announced by the broadcasters is for all the Warlpiri women working with Marlette at the Childcare Centre, as well as a number of children, including Marlette's grandson. The on-air announcement follows the pattern I described earlier; each person being named individually both

prior to and after the song has been played. This same announcement is repeated for each subsequent request that Marlette makes.

Another caller, this time from Lajamanu, is looking for ‘someone’—telephones, especially those that are accessible in offices of community organisations, are used extensively in Warlpiri courtship rituals. The ‘someone’ in question is not around, but the caller makes a request anyway, Spinifex Band’s ‘Pina Yantarni’ (‘Come back to me’).

The women broadcasters explained to me that requests take first preference over the playing of their own choice of song. But when one listens to PAW Radio things do not seem to be so clear cut. For there is a third approach to playing songs on air that these women regularly practice—they *dedicate* songs to relatives and friends who *do not* ring in. During the session to which I listened, one of the women sent a dedication to her sister and others, currently living in Alice Springs. The song was Marvin Gaye’s ‘Sexual Healing’. Alice Springs lies well outside the network’s range, as the broadcaster is fully aware, and so her sister will not hear the dedication being made. But a dedication can travel in ways other than via radio waves. The intensity of Warlpiri sociality and mobility between Yuendumu and neighbouring towns, especially Alice Springs, means that someone who knows the broadcaster’s sister and has heard the dedication is likely to meet the sister in coming days and tell her of it, and that she’d been named by her sister on radio.

In this way, I want to suggest that radio has become a mechanism for carrying aspects of Warlpiri sociality across an ever expanding social field. But does this equate with some notion of cultural maintenance as other commentators on indigenous media have been quick to suggest? In considering this issue it is important to stress that the message conveyed across distance from bush residents to relatives in other places such as Alice Springs is in some sense ambiguous. It is not necessarily or simply ‘come home’. As suggested, mobility is a framing dynamic of Warlpiri sociality. Travel and relocation are ever-present aspects of contemporary Warlpiri life. The ‘bright lights’ of Alice Springs attract many young people, but not all want to live there all the time. Sustaining relations with those ‘living in town’ is important for a range of reasons, not least of which is to ensure one will have ‘company’ and someone to camp with on one’s next visit.

During her broadcast P.S. made two other unsolicited dedications, one to her mother's sister, her own classificatory mother, Andrea, and to other Warlpiri and non-Aboriginal staff with whom she works at Yuendumu's Warlukurlangu Artists Association. Interestingly enough not all non-Aboriginal staff were named, only a young woman who had recently commenced work and become a close 'friend' of P.S.' aunt, Andrea. This was followed by yet another unsolicited dedication to 'everyone in South Camp', among whom P.S.'s close classificatory brother, the son of Andrea who featured in the previous dedication, was named.

In listening to PAW requests and dedications it is clear that a complex sociality is being played out. In their on-air announcements the broadcasters are making public statements about the nature of social relationships in this region. But what *kind* of social relations are being produced or reproduced on air? What is the nature of the assemblages of people being named in these on-air dedications? Are they simply 'kin' groups? If not, then what kind of groups are they? Indeed, are they groups at all? Do these assemblages of people reflect a shift in the reckoning of Warlpiri social relatedness? In order to address these questions it is necessary to take a brief detour out of the radio room and into the ethnographic literature. This also brings us to the issue I have alluded to regarding the utility of the concepts of 'tradition' and 'cultural maintenance' for making sense of Warlpiri media practice.

Tracing the structures of Warlpiri sociality

In his writing on Warlpiri people's interactions with video and television, Eric Michaels took what he called 'traditional Warlpiri society' as his grounding point. Drawing on the classic ethnographic literature of the Warlpiri, particularly Mervyn Meggitt's *Desert People*, which was based on research Meggitt had carried out among Warlpiri people to the north of Yuendumu in the 1950s, Michaels constructed a model of the key structures of Warlpiri society which would effectively receive and engage these new media. This 'traditional' Warlpiri society, Michaels observed, was based on substantially oral face-to-face communication, with a rich visual tradition but little material culture (Michaels 1986: 3). It was a society in which knowledge was invested in Jukurrpa, variously translated as the Warlpiri Law or Dreaming, with access to this body of knowledge being carefully managed by senior men and women. Rights to know, hear and speak particular kinds of knowledge were regulated according to a series of overlapping categories, including descent, seniority, and gender.

Michaels made much of the importance of kinship, especially the eight sub-section system which bestows a 'skin' name on every individual at birth. A Warlpiri person, he told us, prefers to be called by this 'skin' name, not their European name. This eight section system is in turn organised into patri-moieties, the two 'sides' of Warlpiri society: kirda and kurdungurlu, the reciprocal classes of owners and managers who collaborate in all activities of ritual significance. Michaels argued that all Warlpiri practice occurred within the logic of this system, which worked to severely restrict the power or authority an individual, and particularly young people, could attain (see Michaels 1986, 1989).

It is this image of a reasonably static 'traditional society' that provides the cultural ground for Michaels' analysis of the introduction of new media into Yuendumu in the mid-1980s. It is an image he overlays with another concept, that of 'community'. In Michaels' accounts we witness Warlpiri men and women participating in a range of media projects within carefully mapped out kin groupings, these groups in turn being circumscribed within a larger whole, the community, which in Michaels' analysis at times refers to Yuendumu, at other times all Warlpiri. The construction of this model of 'traditional' society as the context into which new media were to be introduced was essential for the wider political argument Michaels wished to make, that media could in fact be made to work in support of 'cultural maintenance'.

In his classic study Meggitt also used the term community, but in a very different way to Michaels. In his attempt to map the parameters of the pre-colonial Warlpiri social universe Meggitt identified four distinct Warlpiri sub-groups which he referred to as communities—Yalpari, Waneiga, Walmalla and Ngalia. Members of each were said to share a country and refer to each other as walaldja, countrymen (Meggitt, 1962: 49; c.f. Niblett 1992). Meggitt noted that residential camps set up at Yuendumu after it was established in 1946 tended to reflect these four divisions. It is notable that whereas Meggitt's research was conducted in the decade immediately following the establishment of the first Warlpiri settlements, Michaels was writing more than thirty years later. Was 'tradition' and orientation to 'country' the only and most compelling lens through which to analyse Warlpiri social relations and practice by this time? Moreover, did it make sense to interpret kinship as an unchanging, all determining structure as Michaels seems to have?

Michaels' research at Yuendumu was undertaken at the same time as that of another researcher, Francoise Dussart. Dussart's (2002) study of the politics of women's ritual found that kinship was not the only determining frame of Warlpiri social practice. She argued that sedentary life had necessarily brought about profound change in Warlpiri ritual performance, and that a conjunction of kinship and residence lay at the heart of contemporary social organisation. Dussart noted that 'while actual agnation is still the main locus of camp identity, *classificatory* relationships are increasingly woven into the kinship patterns traditionally employed to negotiate ritual authority' (Dussart 2002: 42, my emphasis). In particular, Dussart argued that it was important not to conflate the ownership of rights in country and knowledge with political authority in the ceremonial domain, that is, in the public performance of that knowledge. In Dussart's observation, political leaders accumulated authority only with the support of the relatives with whom they lived. For Dussart, the residential group, not the kin group, constituted the basic unit of Warlpiri sociality.

By the mid-1990s this conjunction of kinship and residence was no longer of itself sufficient to explain the fluid ways in which Warlpiri people may form social relationships. In her recently completed PhD thesis Yasmine Musharbash has outlined varying ways in which mobility constitutes the framing dynamic of Warlpiri sociality. Focusing on residential camps, Musharbash notes that residence is a matter of constant flux for Warlpiri individuals. She notes 'life histories reveal that most Yuendumu residents have lived in different camps at different times ... with their residential choices motivated by a multiplicity of reasons, most of which do not have anything to do with country' (Musharbash 2003: 39). Likewise, in my observation sedentarisation has rendered Meggitt's four communities largely irrelevant. They are still referred to, but more often than not as a dimension of the past. Most Warlpiri, except for the very oldest generation of men and women, are today likely to refer to themselves as 'Yuendumu Warlpiri' rather than Ngalia, or Walmalla, and so on. Five decades of sedentary life have given rise to all manner of new local, town-focussed forms of identity-making: from football competitions, to art production for the market facilitated by the Yuendumu-based Warlukurlangu Aboriginal Artists cooperative. One's identification as a member of a town-based community is however highly contingent and cut across by myriad differently constituted overlapping social networks.

Over the same period that town-based identification has emerged and been strengthened, Warlpiri people have become mobile across ever expanding distance. Such increased mobility has not however been coupled with any kind of diminishment of intensity in Warlpiri social interaction. This means that as they have become more mobile, Warlpiri people have had to work even harder at sustaining relationships with each other. As Musharbash (2003: 235) observes (following Peterson 1993; cf Myers 1986; Austin-Broos 2003b), forms of relatedness are not given, they need to be ‘activated, validated and maintained through sharing’—the sharing of time, resources, domestic space. Relationships are not given in kinship but rather need to be made and continually remade. The reordering of the Warlpiri social universe which has followed sedentarisation and the introduction of new things—cars, money, telephones, and so on—has at once complicated and facilitated this process of relationship-making in new ways. And it seems to me that this is exactly what these young women are doing in their on-air announcements — making relationships.

The various examples of dedications discussed above suggest that the associations announced on air are not simply ‘kin’ relations. As discussed, a dedication group may be constituted along a number of different lines: it may be conceived of as some kind of ‘family’ group, consisting of various relatives who camp or move together at a particular moment. Dedications and requests may also be made on behalf of ‘friendship groups’ (which may also include real and classificatory kin, and non-Aboriginal members);¹⁷ they may be made on behalf of residential groups (recall P.S.’s dedication to ‘everyone in East camp’), which often include adopted kin and various categories of ‘visitor’; and dedications may be made to workplace groups (which may again include non-Aboriginal members). Clearly none of these ‘groups’ are permanent nor bounded. Membership of one does not preclude a person from simultaneously belonging to a number of other ‘groups’. From this perspective it seems that the notion of ‘group’ is altogether inappropriate in this context. Yet the names being publicly announced on air are not arbitrary assemblages

¹⁷ During my extended fieldwork at Yuendumu in 1995-6 I was not aware of Warlpiri people using the term ‘friend’ to refer to other Warlpiri, rather specific forms of relatedness were always stressed. During my most recent visit in 2002 I was interested to observe that the more Australianised version, ‘mate’, had slipped into usage in some young women’s graffiti: a series of names written on the wall of the radio room were united with the phrase ‘only four mates’.

of individuals. They are networks of individuals that reflect the cross-cutting layers of allegiance and association that constitute contemporary Warlpiri life. The articulation of these networks, the public naming of oneself in association with particular others, reflects a core moral principle of Warlpiri sociality: one should move with, camp with, and look after others, not simply oneself.

The politics of producing on-air relationships

It might be tempting to assume that broadcasters act as a neutral mediation point in the public statement of these relationships by those calling in to the radio room, but such an assumption would be wrong. Relationship of the broadcaster to the dedication group is an important factor to consider in grappling with the social politics of PAW radio broadcasts. This is reflected most clearly in some residents' criticisms of the broadcasters. 'They only play for their own family', one man complained to me, an accusation I also heard from a number of other Yuendumu residents whose views of the new radio program I sought. While broadcasters might describe themselves as broadcasting for 'anyone' who's listening, listeners give quite a different perspective on this. When I raised the criticism of family favour with one broadcaster she smiled and told me, 'sometimes we *forget* people's requests and get growled'. One Yuendumu resident told me she got frustrated with the Yuendumu radio workers because they never played her family's requests. She now waits until the broadcasts are coming from the neighbouring town of Nyirripi, where one of her relatives works as a radio broadcaster. She knows that he will always play her requests, whereas the women working at Yuendumu will not. This wider political context provides an important counterpoint to the view expressed by commentators including Michaels on indigenous media that see such projects as 'community owned' and driven, and indeed constituted in and of something called 'community' (see for example Michaels 1989; Meadows 1994; Molnar 1990; Langton 1993; Ginsburg 1995).

Desert music and the production of Warlpiri youth identity

I want to dig a little deeper now into the question of why young Warlpiri women might be interested in working in radio. What else can we learn about what it is to be a young Warlpiri person from listening to their broadcasts? Aside from dedications and the forward and back announcing of songs, the women broadcasters do not engage in any on-air discussion. At times, under pressure and instruction from the non-Aboriginal staff,

they conduct brief interviews with visitors to Yuendumu. But they are fairly shy and not very comfortable in this role. From time to time a caller might ask for a message to be sent via radio to relatives in another town, most often regarding travel plans, and the broadcasters oblige. But apart from the relay of such messages, the women are happy to let music dominate their on-air time. While the music played by P.S and her fellow broadcasters is diverse, the songs written and recorded by local Aboriginal bands are very popular and played regularly. What are these songs about?

Among those played most regularly in November 2002 were Rising Wind's 'Karnta kangku pardani', translated by its songwriter as 'The woman is waiting', a song about a man who leaves his wife and child, and a plea for him to return to them. Two songs with the same name 'Pina Yantarni' ('Come Back'), were both played regularly. Both songs have the same story line—they are about a man who has left his wife and home town (with the implication that he's gone off drinking) and a plea for him to return. The Lander River Band, from neighbouring Willowra, have a song called 'Pamalu yampiya' (Leave the Grog Alone). Another song by Thomas Saylor on the same theme, this time in English, 'Yapa,¹⁸ Can You Stop Your Drinking?' featured regularly, as did Gordon Jampijinpa Robertson's 'Wiyarrpa rdakunka', or 'Prison Song', a song about a man who has been in prison for a long time and misses his family. One of the most successful Warlpiri bands is Black Storm. Their song 'Desert Calling' is heard regularly on PAW radio. One of a small number of songs by Warlpiri musicians to have been composed and recorded in English, 'Desert Calling' articulates Warlpiri people's inextricable identification with place.

These Warlpiri songs conjure up diverse aspects of contemporary Warlpiri life: the problems posed by alcohol, the challenge to keep relatives and friends from being lured away from home to regional centres and drink, the premium on looking after family, love of home, love of desert country, love of women. These themes are distinctively local. But it is clear that in producing some songs in English Warlpiri musicians imagine a wider audience than one which is simply local and Warlpiri. Some songs have strong political themes, such as the ongoing battle of one customary group to win title to the important Warlpiri area Pikilyi, under pastoral lease since the 1920s (see Aboriginal Land Commissioner 1988). The

¹⁸ Yapa is the Warlpiri word for Warlpiri people.

production of such songs is part of the process by which Warlpiri people enter into dialogue with, and state their aspirations to, a wider Australia.

Interspersed with these songs from time to time on PAW radio, are audio recordings produced recently by WMA in which young Warlpiri musicians explore their life histories. This recording of young people's biography constitutes a newly emergent genre of story telling in the Warlpiri public domain, one which reflects a significant shift from the usual articulated priority to record 'old people's stories' before they are 'lost'.¹⁹

In this sense, the activity occurring around WMA needs to be understood as part of a wider set of developments that have been unfolding at Yuendumu over recent years. In the wake of many years of struggle to control petrol sniffing by fluctuating but significant numbers of young boys and girls, a series of initiatives focussing on youth have been undertaken by Yuendumu's residents. The most recent of these, the *Jaru Pirrjirdi* (Strong Voices) program, supports sport and recreational activities at Yuendumu and sponsors regular bush trips. A core component of the program is the attempt to foster a sense of self-worth among Warlpiri youth, many of them ex-petrol sniffers, by providing them with a range of outlets for creative expression. Interestingly enough, for a town widely regarded as having appalling rates of literacy, story writing and song-writing are emerging as important dimensions of this process.²⁰ Perhaps less surprising is the emergence of painting as a popular form of creative expression among Warlpiri youth. A number of young ex-petrol sniffers recently participated in the renovation of Yuendumu's Youth Centre and adorned its walls with what may come to be seen as a new wave of central desert art—fluorescent coloured Jukurrpa (Dreamings) designs painted in classical 'dot' style, but morphed with Spiderman figures, as well as representations of desert landscapes, night sky, and dilapidated Yuendumu infrastructure (Karissa Preuss, pers comm.).

The anthropological literature is replete with descriptions of the ways in which young Aboriginal men and women were subordinate to their elders in pre-colonial authority structures (see, for example, Bell 1983; Meggitt

¹⁹ These audio autobiographies have been broadcast nationally via the National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS).

²⁰ One young Warlpiri woman recently won a prize for a story she wrote about her experiences as a petrol sniffer which entered in a competition run by national radio station Triple JJJ (Mt Theo YSMAC 2003).

1962; Myers 1991). The activities of *Jaru Pirrjirdi* and the WMA are providing new sites for young men and women to express themselves in new ways, relatively autonomous from older men and women. In this sense the question might be posed as to whether radio is in fact helping facilitate the emergence of a new kind of public sphere, a question I shall return to in the final section of the paper.

On being a male DJ

It is important to point out that Warlpiri women's approach to radio broadcasting differs in significant ways from their male counterparts. Some male musicians have moved into radio work as an extension of their wider interest in music. The cult of personality looms larger in their on-air appearances than it does with the women—a number of men have invented on-air identities for themselves. Thomas ('Tom Tom') Saylor is of Torres Strait Islander and Warlpiri descent and has only been resident at Yuendumu for the past two years. He is a musician, a dab hand at video production and has invented the performing name 'Big Bear'. Curtis Fry 'Spunky Monkey' has sung with a number of local bands, and is an equally flamboyant on-air personality. At Kintore, approximately 500 kms west of Yuendumu, Adam Japaljarri Gibbs broadcasts under a variety of nicknames, including 'T.J'. for Tjitjuwurru Tjapaltjarri, a Pintupi/Luritja word for one who has lost his sibling; Lucky Dube Japaljarri (after the famous South African reggae star); and, Reggae Man, to name a few. Japaljarri has operated the BRACS equipment and run discos at Kintore for more than a decade. Tom Tom and Japaljarri are the two broadcasters who have adopted the closest to what might be considered a mainstream western DJ style. For example, Japaljarri regularly announces the time—not a common concern of Aboriginal people in this region—and introduces his program yelling 'Good afternoon Yuendumu! Good Afternoon Lajamanu! Good afternoon Mt Liebig!....' He incorporates voice overs such as 'Everyone's listening to PAW Radio, we're gonna have a good time!'. Requests play a much lesser part in his programs, which tend to be well considered and thematically organised. He is perhaps the only PAW DJ to plan his programs before going to air. These tend to be organised around discrete styles of music, not always in terms of genres familiar to Anglo-Australian listeners, Japaljarri has produced such categories as 'kardiya radio': 'we're playing white fella music today'. The other men use requests to differing extents. One takes requests during his shows but tends to lose track of them, another invites requests but

does not receive many, and a third man tends to take the phone off the hook during his programs so people cannot call in.²¹

Youth, education and the meaning of work

The women broadcasters share more than kin and residential ties. They also share the distinction of having received an unusually high level of education through their enrolment in a special senior girls class at the Yuendumu school in the mid-1990s. The class utilised the community's video conferencing equipment—the Tanami Network (see Hinkson 2002)—in a NT government sponsored trial of the delivery to Yuendumu of secondary school level curriculum. Classes were taught via video conference by teachers based at the Northern Territory Correspondence School in Darwin, with tutors working with students in the classroom at Yuendumu. In the course of this trial a number of students graduated to work at year 10 and 11 levels, an unprecedented achievement in a town whose school was then only teaching to post-primary (year seven-eight) level. The trial meant that for the first time young women were able to gain a partial secondary education without leaving their home town. The outcomes were considered by local educators to be quite remarkable, and the influence of this training at a broader social relational level at Yuendumu was palpable²². The women received a new kind of affirmation in making their educational achievements. In the period following their completion of various stages of the course, members of the class secured most of the jobs on offer to Warlpiri people in Yuendumu's community organisations. Their higher levels of literacy and numeracy, computer proficiency, and all round confidence made them desirable employees. Their educational experience also encouraged these women to consider a wider horizon of possible futures than they might have otherwise. It is notable in this respect that while one of the young women broadcaster's mother and sister have relocated to Alice Springs in recent years, she has chosen to stay at Yuendumu.

In the digital era radio broadcasting requires the kinds of competencies that the students of the senior girls class developed during their schooling. Reasonably high levels of literacy are required to operate the

²¹ I am indebted to Tristan Ray for helping me grasp the subtle differences in men's approach to broadcasting.

²² It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the outcomes of this educational trial in any detail, but it is worth noting in passing that the same educational opportunities were not available to men of the same age group (see Hinkson 1999: 128–131).

digital broadcasting equipment, to select songs from the computerised database, and a certain degree of self-confidence is necessary to perform on-air. I have sketched the various ways in which this on-air activity differs from much mainstream radio broadcasting. But how do these women think about their radio work? Indeed, do they think of it as work at all? Moreover, what kind of 'service' are they delivering to their listening community?

Two of the female DJs are undertaking further study at Batchelor College as part of their training at WMA. They receive a 'top up' wage as well as their CDEP (work for the dole) fortnightly payments. Another DJ refuses to take a wage, and has told kardiya staff that she prefers to receive unemployment benefits and the family allowance payment she is eligible for as a single mother of two. Through this kind of arrangement she feels is 'not really working' and retains flexibility to come and go from broadcasting as she pleases. There is some reluctance on the part of all the women to undertake the on-air tasks that would give their radio programs a more formal structure and perhaps render their activity as more work-like: ie the playing of paid ads, conducting interviews, playing pre-recorded programs such as locally produced oral histories and autobiographies. At the moment they need active encouragement from kardiya staff to do all of these things.

The question of whether the women consider their activity to be work is raised implicitly by some of the criticisms that have been made of their broadcasting. 'They don't run the show smoothly. They just walk in and out as they like. There should be proper training for them', remarked one senior man. He continued, 'You've got to remember, we've listened to a lot of radio for a long time. We know what good radio is.' Some residents are critical of the seemingly anarchic approach the women DJs take to broadcasting. They want properly structured programs, with set segments in which a particular style of music is played, 'not all mixed up'. These kinds of criticisms reflect something of a relatively widespread intergenerational tension among Warlpiri people regarding the meaning of work. Many middle-aged men, for example, have very particular understandings of what work is that were fostered during the early years of settlement as well as their experience of labouring in the cattle industry.

The criticism that broadcasters only ‘play for their own family’ discussed above is redolent of a broader challenge to community development more generally at Yuendumu. People make work meaningful by grounding it in meaningful social networks wherever possible. But the process of reproducing robust social relations is not always compatible with the decisions that need to be taken in running a community business, where maintaining a clear demarcation between the personal and the professional is often a primary requirement. Such a demarcation runs directly counter to the Warlpiri imperative to ‘look after’ others, especially ‘family’ (cf. Myers 1989, 1991). This is a challenge that Yuendumu-based organisations come up against in a myriad of ways on a regular basis (see also Musharbash 2001b; Austin-Broos 2003b). The need to constitute a conception of *community* and to work not just for one’s own family but for ‘everyone’ is understood by a handful of senior Warlpiri men and women to be the fundamental hurdle to be cleared if a host of community development projects are to have any hope of being sustained over the longer term.

Warlpiri people are continually confronted with choices and challenges in their negotiation of social relationships in ‘work’ contexts. The women DJs have made radio work meaningful by choosing to carry their relatives and friends along with them. They do this in a variety of ways, through the stream of visitors that move through the radio room, through their constant interactions on the telephone, and through the medium of the dedication. This approach grounds their work primarily in the world of highly intensive Warlpiri sociality, not the world of whitefella work. That it is possible to broadcast in such a way—at least for a fair amount of the time without ‘humbug’ from ‘hard’ whitefellas—is a very large part of the attraction of radio work in the current period. However, this approach to work also necessarily creates tensions between Warlpiri and non-Aboriginal staff, and between staff and the management committee, comprised predominantly of senior men and women. Recently this committee called on radio workers to provide more structured programs, and to keep non-workers out of the radio room because of the background noise they produce (Tristan Ray pers comm.). This directive marks an interesting development, and transcends a common reluctance on the part of Warlpiri people to tell others what to do, a task often left to non-Aboriginal staff.

Conclusion: youth, media, and the emergence of a new public sphere?

2004 marks the twentieth anniversary of the incorporation of the Warlpiri Media Association. Over that time residents of Yuendumu have been exposed to a significant range of 'new' media—radio, video, television, telephones, facsimilies, video conferencing, the internet, CD-Roms, DVD technologies, and the list goes on. It is clearly beyond the scope of the current discussion to consider the subtle and complex similarities and differences in people's engagements with each of these media. However, in drawing the various threads of this paper together it would be remiss of me not to say something about what marks the intensive interactions around and through the radio network as distinctive. In casting my discussion of young Warlpiri women's radio work in such a wide frame, my intention has been to conjure up a sense of the expanded arena of contemporary Warlpiri sociality. Having some sense of this arena, however fragmentary, seems crucial if we are to comprehend the significance of what is going on on PAW radio. In concluding I will briefly ruminate on the question of why it is that young Warlpiri women feel confident enough to take on the highly public role of radio work.

I have suggested that the young women's involvement marks something of a demographic shift in the staff base of the media association. Certainly women have been actively engaged in media work since the first video recording gear was introduced to Yuendumu, but they have tended to be at least ten years older than the current employees. In observing the women do their work a degree of shyness and hesitancy is certainly apparent. Yet they self-actively choose to undertake this role and clearly regard it as important enough to overcome their inhibitions. It would also appear that in some sense the purely audio dimension of radio (and, for that matter, telephone) acts as kind of shield, separating and thus protecting the speakers from their potential audience. In the world of pure sound they are emboldened in a way they never could be in front of a video camera or in a face-to-face public arena. But I have suggested that they consolidate their position further by virtue of the approach they take to broadcasting. In framing their radio programs in terms of requests and dedications, the women work not for themselves, but for others. In this way, the lists of names they rehearse so carefully on air not only conjure up social networks on behalf of others, they also serve to authorise the women's own work as radio broadcasters. In this sense the mechanisms of requests and dedications might be construed in terms of

the wider structures of Warlpiri reciprocity. Songs become things to be both gifted and demanded (Peterson 1993; Austin-Broos 2003b), they become objects which facilitate the making and remaking of relationships. It is hard to think of another kind of 'work' at Yuendumu that is able to be manipulated or reinterpreted to such effect.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century delineating the boundaries of the Warlpiri community and public sphere is a highly problematic exercise. The presence of a range of communications technologies is only the most obvious sign that the process of Warlpiri identity-formation is today subject to a plethora of complex and contradictory social forces. The tensions inherent in this process are perhaps most clearly manifest in the differing outlooks of older and younger generations. They are also reflected clearly in the themes of contemporary Warlpiri rock music rehearsed here, the challenge of keeping relatives from moving into town, the challenge to stay off the grog, the realities of prison life, and so on. In an era of ready access to motor vehicles and cash many Warlpiri are extremely mobile, some moving as a matter of course between Yuendumu and such distant locations as Adelaide, where family and friends are permanently based. Today, Warlpiri people are confronted with a much greater range of choices as to how and where they might live. As more young people exercise the choice to leave Yuendumu (either through permanent migration or enhanced mobility) the premium on sustaining forms of relatedness increases, and new mechanisms are required to do this.

Prior to my last visit to Yuendumu I had been led to expect to find something of major exodus of young Warlpiri people to Alice Springs. Three of my close friends and their children had relocated to town since I had last been in central Australia, and Yuendumu school teachers warned that a steady flow was occurring as people were increasingly 'giving up on Yuendumu'. Warlpiri friends voiced similar opinions, albeit with the support of a variety of explanations. Others contradicted them. It did seem that something of an exodus was occurring, but perhaps not on the scale I had been led to expect. The radio room appeared to be providing one site of meaningful activity for Warlpiri youth, an anchorage point for those looking for motivation to stay at Yuendumu rather than head into town. In making these new semi-autonomous public spaces their own, young Warlpiri people have found an outlet to express who they are, their desires, and their vision of what it means to be Warlpiri.

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