Aboriginal communities of the East Kimberley.
del: J. Goodrum ANU 1990, after H.C. Coombs, H. McCann, H. Ross and N.M. Williams eds, *Land of promises*, CRES, Australian National University, and Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1989: Map 3.

'SHE WAS THE FIRST ONE ...'

PHYLLIS KABERRY IN THE EAST KIMBERLEY

Nancy M. Williams

Remembering is not the re-excitation of innumerable fixed, lifeless and fragmentary traces. It is an imaginative reconstruction, or construction, built out of the relation of our attitude towards a whole active mass of organized past reactions or experience, and to a little outstanding detail which commonly appears in image or in language form. It is thus hardly ever exact, even in the most rudimentary cases of rote recapitulation, and it is not at all important that it should be so.¹

Introduction

Remembering anthropologists - people's recollections of anthropologists with whom they have worked - has in general been glossed over. That in itself may be worthy of examination in view of the now established prescriptions for reflexivity in ethnographic reporting. Yet I think that most anthropologists are aware that they, their personal lives and habits, their family relationships, are a matter of interest and discussion among the people whose guests they are for any length of time. Galarrwuy Yunupingu, Chairman of the Northern Land Council, grew up at Yirrkala, a Yolngu community in northeast Arnhem Land in which a number of anthropologists have been guests since the 1930s. In his address opening the Fifth International Hunter-Gatherer Conference in Darwin in September 1988, Mr Yunupingu made this interest in anthropologists and their habits very clear to his audience, most of whom were anthropologists.

Among the most detailed recollections I have located is that contained in Meehan's biographical narrative of Bandieyama, an Anbarra woman. Meehan's account of Bandieyama's collaboration and friendship during the time Meehan worked in the Maningrida area in Arnhem Land also includes an account of Anbarra people's response to and explanation of her changed marital status. When Meehan was first at Maningrida (1958-60) she was married to Les Hiatt. When she returned to Maningrida in 1970 the marriage had ended and she had become an anthropologist.

Early on in my stay, Bandieyama asked about my husband. I told her that he was well but that we were no longer married, that he had a new wife, and I a new husband, Rhys Jones. She appeared to take this news with disapproval and for some time I thought that she might reject me because of my changed status. I assured her that I was still 'good friends' with my ex-husband - that

Nancy Williams teaches anthropology at the University of Queensland. She has worked with Aboriginal people in northern communities of the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland during the past twenty years. Her publications deal chiefly with Aborigines and law (Two laws, 1987), land tenure (The Yolngu and their land, 1986), resource management and policy.

¹ Bartlett 1932:213.

there was 'no trouble'. She grudgingly accepted my reassurances, but the matter was to be raised again when I came back to Maningrida in 1972 to work with Rhys.

There seems to be a belief amongst the Anbarra community that if a marriage breaks up, it is usually the fault of the woman, who has a boyfriend somewhere with whom she wishes to live. This view may be related to the fact that many Anbarra men have wives who are much younger than themselves and these husbands are constantly fearful that their wives are seeking young lovers. My own interpretation at that time of Bandeiya's behaviour was that she assumed that I had left my husband for a younger man. The reverse situation did not seem to have occurred to her nor had the possibility that both parties in a marriage might have welcomed separation.²

Meehan returned again to Maningrida in 1972.

I was accompanied on this trip by Rhys and, as it transpired, Les Hiatt was also visiting the community for a few days just after we arrived. More discussion about my marital status ensued and much to my amusement (and a little to my chagrin) Gurrmanamana announced to the community that my first husband had given me to his 'younger brother', my second husband, and that he himself had acquired a younger wife; I had not caused any trouble. This story was totally acceptable to the Anbarra, who interpreted the supposed behaviour of my first husband as extremely generous and therefore commendable. After that the matter rested. I was exonerated; my second husband was accepted.³

Marcus has written about Olive Pink. In assessing Pink's style as an anthropologist, Marcus relates comments that Aboriginal people in Alice Springs made to her in 1986 about Pink's life in Alice Springs during the 1930s:

One respected town elder [Wenten Rabunja] recalls Miss Pink camped out at Wigley's Waterhole and the way in which he and his young friends used to sneak into her camp to steal her flour and fruit. At that time she is thought to have been working on the Two Women Dreaming that is still of great importance in Alice Springs, for the Two Women is a significant women's dreaming and one which is connected with the initiation of boys. Another informant [Mort Conway] recalls the sharpness of her tongue and eye, the way in which she would report young Aboriginal men working for the Council or Fire Brigade for lazing in the shade. Yet she fought against the exploitation of Aboriginal labour, demanded that award wages be paid and, at a time when she was homeless, refused to allow the Northern Territory Administration to build a hut for her if they were going to use unpaid and untrained Aboriginal 'trainees'.⁴

Chase wrote in 1979 that people at Lockhart River remembered Donald Thomson and the time Thomson spent in the eastern area of Cape York Peninsula between 1928 and 1933 as 'Thomson time'.

Dr Thomson is well remembered by older Lockart people. 'Thomson time' ... refers to a critical period in the history of the Umpila and Kuuku Ya'u

² Meehan 1985:203.

³ Meehan 1985:205.

⁴ Marcus 1987:186.

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people who are today part of the Lockart community ... Thomson is ... remembered today as having worked with the last of the 'bush people' - those whose knowledge and expertise was fully traditional and little affected by the contact process.⁵

Remembering Phyllis Kaberry in the East Kimberley

The construction of recollections about Phyllis Kaberry by people in the East Kimberley of Western Australia some fifty-five years after the events to which their attention was directed, was focused in each case presented here not only by the questions they were asked about Phyllis Kaberry but also by the questioners and the context of the conversations in which the questions were put. To ignore these features of the situation would be to assume that remembering may be context-free. To reassemble the conversations in a form dictated by the conventions of European narrative would be to lose something of the style of story-telling; more important for my purpose here, it could mask the affect that triggers and accompanies story-telling among people whose history is related in oral accounts.

Looking at the records of conversations about a person known some five and a half decades earlier while attending to features of the context of the conversation in parallel with records of the conversations may allow us to expand our inferences about how perceptions of an anthropologist's role are formed, and about the interactions between anthropologists and the people with whom they have worked. We may thereby increase our understanding of the ontological status of what we label data and of the uses to which we may put them.

The Accounts and their Contexts

Four recollections about Phyllis Kaberry are presented here. All were recorded in the East Kimberley (see Map 1), each varied from the other in context and in recording mode. They are:

1. Two tape-recorded conversations with three men, which I initiated specifically with the aim of recording what, if anything, they recalled of or about Kaberry's presence in or travel through the country in which we were then working - an area at the time we were there regarded as remote but the subject of recent tourist interest (14-15 May 1985).
2. A tape-recorded conversation, part of an interview with an elderly woman who had worked with Kaberry, conducted by a social psychologist engaged in a social impact assessment project at Turkey Creek.⁶ The woman's granddaughter, herself a mature woman, was assisting with the interview (16 February 1987), which I transcribed.
3. A written series of recollections about Kaberry. The woman who had assisted me in interviewing one of the women who had spent most time with Kaberry dictated the recollections to me at Turkey Creek. The taped record I made of the interview was faulty, and in the presence of the older woman, I asked the younger woman questions about Kaberry to which she then dictated the responses, based on the (initially tape-recorded) interview (17 April 1987).
4. A brief series of comments a man made to me in response to my asking whether he had known Kaberry, during the course of a census interview at Halls Creek. These comments I recorded in fieldnote form (4 June 1987).

⁵ Chase 1979:109.

⁶ I would like to thank Helen Ross for making the tape recording of her interview with Dottie Watpi available to me.

'She was the first one,' was Raymond Wallaby's comment during a conversation which began when I asked him if he had known or remembered Phyllis Kaberry. The occasion was a field trip in 1985 into the Purnululu (Bungle Bungle) region of the Ord River basin, undertaken to record the history of the relationship of Aboriginal people to that area. Ian Kirkby, another anthropologist, and I had accompanied a group of the traditional owners on a trip into the Purnululu area to map and record their families' links to it and their use of its resources. I initiated the topic of Phyllis Kaberry, which was not directly related to preceding topics, by asking a direct question. Raymond and George Mungmung (Makany) then began to relate their recollections of Phyllis Kaberry when she was doing ethnographic research in the Kimberley during 1935-36 under the direction of A.P. Elkin.⁷ Raymond Wallaby was about sixty-seven years old in 1987, and George Mungmung sixty-six. They would thus have been in their mid-teens during Kaberry's travels through the east and central Kimberley, when she was in her mid-twenties. Both referred to her as 'Mrs Kaberry' during our conversation on 14 May 1985. The following transcript of recorded conversation between myself (NW), Raymond Wallaby (RW), and George Mungmung/Makany (GM) has been substantially edited in order to assure comprehension by readers unfamiliar with the languages and discourse styles of East Kimberley Aboriginal people as well as those of others who work with them. In editing, I have, however, tried not to alter the story-telling form.

- NW Raymond is just recalling the story about Phyllis Kaberry when she was in the East Kimberley.
- RW Well, Georgie should know.
- NW Did Georgie know her?
- RW Yeh. She was all round Bedford Downs, all round that bush swag. She had her own tommyhawk - to cut her own sugarbag. She wasn't fussy, she was with the blackfella, to eat all the bush tucker. She talked language, learned to talk languages, oh gee, just like us, just like Aboriginal talkin. And she came to Violet Valley. From Violet Valley she went back to Perth. She came along with all the Aborigines, you know, when they had a holiday, they came to Violet Valley, which used to be a native settlement.
- NW Was she at Moola Bulla?
- RW Oh, she was at Moola Bulla, and she went down west, learning, learning everything - like what you're doin now.
- NW Yeh?
- RW Well, she was the first one. They came right up to Violet Valley. Then I don't know where she went from there.
- NW Yeh.
- RW She mighta went back to Perth.
- NW Did you know her yourself?
- RW Yeh, I seen her when I was a kid.
- NW How big were you then?
- RW Ah well, seven or eight.

On 15 May 1985 I recorded a conversation which Raymond Wallaby initiated while he and George Mungmung were demonstrating how women used a grinding stone and a hand stone for processing seed and also for grinding the ochres used for painting up for ceremony. Hector Chandaloo/Janta (HC) was present and joined the conversation toward its end.

⁷ Kaberry 1939:xiii; Elkin 1978:301; Chilver 1978:11.

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- RW ... you knew Mrs Kaberry, you [George Mungmung] can tellim bout story.
 NW Yeh.
 RW He was only young, you know.
 NW [to George Mungmung] Did you know Phyllis Kaberry?
 GM Yeh.
 NW Where did you meet her?
 GM She bin round here.
 NW Right around here now?
 GM Yeh.
 NW She bin here at this place?
 GM Me?
 RW No, no.
 NW Phyllis Kaberry, Mrs Kaberry.
 GM Ah -- *kartiya* [white person] --
 NW Yeh.
 RW That Mrs ... you know [speaks in Kija language].
 GM Ah, yeh, yeh, yeh, yeh. Proper really early days.
 NW Yeh.
 GM She bin come out footwalk from over there - *kelirrangku* [from the west; additional comment in Kija].
 RW She bin start from Moola Bulla -
 NW Yeh?
 GM Violet Valley, [speaks in Kija], govment ... *Waringarrim-pirri*.
 That means, 'She belonged [to] *Waringarri*, big mob.' [Speaks in Kija]; that means, 'She been proper young.' And we bin young men, too --⁸
 RW Well, she's right back in Perth, someway. She's still there. Might be bit old now.
 GM And [in Kija] -- That means, 'She's the first one, *wilangku* [in the lead; ahead; first one] bin come there.' She went all over.
 RW She bin talk language.
 GM She bin talk language.
 NW Which language?
 RW Kija.
 GM She bin talk Kija, and she bin hearim Wula, too. And Ungarinyin - that's from Mowanjum [in the West Kimberley], right over to Wula country, this way a little bit.
 RW Jaru [language] and all. She bin talk.
 GW She bin talk Jaru and all. [Speaks in Kija]; that means, 'She must be ginnin old now, like mefella.'
 RW She had her pencil, papers --
 GM Everything, she bin havim. She bin carryin that kind, too.
 NW Backpack, just like I got?

⁸ George Mungmung has developed a distinctive style in his conversation with anthropologists and linguists: he begins (or intersperses) comment or response with a sentence or phrase in Kija, followed by 'That mean(s)' and a translation and/or explanation in English.

- GM [Speaks in Kija] Well, she bin carryim her gear in *mernta*, paperbark.
 NW True?
 GM She bin mix with all the lubra, olden time one ... We bin fixem up billycan, and *kartak* [cup] too.
 RW And coolamon ...
- RW Well, they were murderin people, too, about.
 GM [Speaks in Kija] Well, she saw all the fighters, you know, just like a war ... We came to Violet Valley when they had a go - they cut spears; she was amongst 'em too.
 NW Yeh?
 GM Yeh, true! An she was sitting up on that ridge you know, amongst all the lubra, to keep away from the spears. Some of the old women were willing for her to go in there too, to the fightplace.
 NW Yeh.
 GM All the old women just go hittem with *karlumpu* [spears]. Like that: when he run straight, *karlumpu* go thataway --
 RW Here's another story, *nyaman* [form of respectful reference and address used to old women, here to address NW].
 NW Yeh?
 RW It's about that *kuwarin* [cypress pine; may be burned to make charcoal for several uses, in this context for body decoration].
 NW Yeh -
 RW Well, they women always paint themselves, and they paintem missus [Kaberry], too. Yeh, well paintem this *Kuwarin* ; well, she look black.
 NW Yeh -
 RW An they can see her eye part, you know -
 NW Yeh.
 RW Ah, this is missus, they reckon!
 NW (Laughs).
 RW This is *kartiya* [white person] -
 NW Yeh?
 RW Yet, got paintem, you know, make just like a blackfella -
 NW With the coal from the *kuwar* --
 RW Yeh.
 GM [Speaks in Kija]; that mena, '*ngantipawurrel*, she was thin one properly, that girl.' [Speaks in Kija]; she fillem up sugarbag, and she *kungkun* [cook in an earth oven] beef. [Speaks in Kija]; that mean '*ngara* [sugarbag], he fillem up sugarbag ...' She was a young girl and we were young boys, too.
 NW Bout the same age as you, youfella?
 GM Yeh, look like.
 NW She died just about three years ago.⁹
 GM [Singing in Kija]; an ... them people from ... dancing you know, all gotta dress, every one.
 NW Yeh.
 GM She went like-a-that, now. An that missus there too, she bin dance-im.
 NW She learnim?

⁹ Phyllis Kaberry died in 1977; that is, in fact, eight years before this conversation.

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GM Learnim!
 NW Did she ever come into this area? Was she ever in Purnululu?
 GM I think she bin come through like-a-that --
 NW Which way?
 GM Straight down, follow the Osmond.
 RW Follow the Osmond.
 GM Right down to Ord River.
 NW Yeh.
 GM She's gone away now, might be.
 NW Thank you very much, Makany. That was a really good story. Lotta people, lotta old friends of this *wolguman* would be really happy to hear that. And me, too.

[Short interval]

NW Here's more story about Phyllis Kaberry: something Janta's [Hector Chandaloo] remembering.
 HC Yeh. When I bin little one.
 NW Yeh, when you were a little one --
 HC [She] gotta one blackfella.
 NW What's his name?
 HC His name Mantiyan, blackfella name. [Speaks in Kija]; they bin, all the blackfella bin give-it-im him to live with her.
 NW He helped her?
 HC Yeh, he bin helpin-im her, right through -
 NW Yeh -
 HC He bin taken-im her water, ... putten-im things [?] on the aeroplane. Right, keepim there good place. He just bin look after her ...

Some two years after the recollections above were recorded, Helen Ross, a social psychologist, was recording stories of Aboriginal people then living at Turkey Creek about 'early days' in the East Kimberley. The topic was interaction with whites as pastoralism became the dominant sector in the East Kimberley economy. Ross was interviewing Dottie Watpi, who was then about seventy-one years old. Eileen Bray, Dottie's granddaughter (*kangkai* - daughter's daughter), then about thirty-seven years old, was assisting Ross with the interview. Dottie had been recalling the places she went on holiday with her family and the foods they collected and ate. They were going on foot, Dottie reminds her listeners; Dottie's discourse is mostly in Kija, and she is focused on 'olden days' activities, providing names of plants and animals in English as she continues her account.

Dottie's narrative becomes more directed to her granddaughter Eileen as she refers to events involving family members. She recounts the liaisons ('marry with') of Aboriginal women and white pastoralists, the anger of Aboriginal men who received nothing in return, and the whites' response - to kill the Aboriginal men - then the 'proper hiding' the girls got (when they returned to Violet Valley from Bedford Downs Station). Ross says she would love to hear about Violet Valley. After Dottie names people born there, and tells about Violet Valley and the surrounding area, Ross asks Dottie about 'ration days' at Violet Valley and where Dottie was born. Dottie says her mother told her she was born at Violet Valley because her mother was working there and getting blankets, tomahawk, tucker. Ross asks was Violet Valley still a ration camp when she was working at Bedford? Dottie replies that people came from stations around Violet Valley area to Violet Valley during

holiday time, and when the bosses of the stations sent a letter to Violet Valley, they went back. Ross asks how they went back to the station. Dottie says, 'Footwalk - no motuka [motor car]. ' Ross asks how many days did that take, and Dottie says two nights camp along the way back to the station. 'Because mefella been all day walkin foot, that's why,' says Dottie chuckling; 'We can't go quick!' Ross says, 'I'm interested in that.' Dottie acknowledges Ross's comment, 'Umm', and continues, 'And that missus, you know, missus Kaberry, from somewhere here.' Ross asks, 'Did you know her?' and Dottie says, 'Yeah, I know.' Ross then says, 'I wanted to hear about her', and that establishes the topic of conversation for the ensuing several minutes. In the following transcription I have not altered 'he' and 'him', the pronouns Dottie uses to refer to Kaberry, to 'she' and 'her'. (DW = Dottie Watpi, HR = Helen Ross, EB = Eileen Bray.)

DW (Laughs) That's the one now, that's the missus now bin come la mefella, la Bedford Downs.

HR Yeh?

DW Old Paddy Rhadigan, bin after im: I'll gitim missus bla youfella. I'll go after im now, Springvale, I'll gitim one missus there, you Aboriginal gotta be talkin la him. Him bin tellim mefella now, "ahh, one missus comin from somewhere ... We bin wait, blonga him. We bin go cartim water now, fillem up drum bla him. That way, longa house, la Bedford ... 'This mefella boss, I don't know what time he gonna bringem that missus.' That the way mefella bin talkin. We bin workin an hear car, and 'Ah! twofella comin.' Twofella comin. Twofella bin come now -- eh -- get in la house, him [Kaberry] bin go there, have a shower, and washim-im. Him bin havem tucker, anyway, little bit; him smoke ... We bin watch out for him la road, this missus bin come out from that house now, big house, inside. Now we all have to sit down wait la him, sit down. We bin sit down, all the girl bin sit down, all the workin girl sit down one place, wait for that missus now, old Mrs Kaberry. Ah -- she bin come up an say, 'What you fellas sit down here?' 'Yeah, we sit down here. An we gotta work direc'ly. You wanta sit down longa mefella?', mefella bin tellim. 'Yeh, I welcome you and you can sit down.' Yeh. An, 'Good-day, all you girls,' she bin tellim mefella, 'good-day. I'm talk to youfella.' Now me twofella, allabout bin putim head down, listen la him, that missus, like that ... That's the girl, that's the missus bin come there to tellim mefella any kind bla skin,¹⁰ 'What's you skin?' him bin tellim me. 'Me? Me *nyajerri*,' I bin tellim. 'Ah. Right.' And from there, 'What boy you gottim, what skin?' [Laughs; speaks in Kija] 'Yuway [yes], I bin tellim him, straight after. 'Ah --- all right, all right; me, too, I callim my husband that one, that straight one boy he bla me-n-you,' he bin tellim me.

EB Yeh?

DW 'I callim my husband, that one.' 'Ah, yeh.' Every one, he bin askim bout they skin, ... 'What you skin?' 'Me *namanjil*.' 'And blonga you husband, what he skin?' Now. 'He *jawalji*.' 'No, no, no! You not straight la that boy. You wrong,' [laughing] him bin tellim. [Laughs]. 'Hefella bin callim you auntie ... He oughta bin callim you auntie, too. Nifty you father, that one. *Jawalji*; you father, you *namanjili*.' And this mother, 'Me *namanjil*.' 'And what skin husband

¹⁰ 'Skin' is the local term for subsection name. Dottie is recalling Kaberry's elicitation of subsection membership, and, related to that, of people's marriages in terms of their subsection membership and relationship as kin.

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bla you?' Now [speaks in Kija] 'Ah, no good, no good. That - you oughta callim *kangkai*, that one.'

[EB and DW laugh]

DW [Speaks in Kija] ... [Kaberry asks], 'What him bin git your dreamin?'¹¹ 'Yeh, git me dreamin.' 'What?' 'My mother bin vomiting now, where that father him bin findem me; he bin vomit bla me, my father. Ah, my mother, him bin git me dreamin' ... [speaks in Kija]. Me bin tellim, 'Any kind. You can askem bout any kind. Proper any kind.' Him bin talkin la mefella, any kind bout. [Says in Kija: She was talking to us until we had finished]. We bin knock off. Finish. We bin go back working. Waterim garden. Finish. Some fella be garden work, be go after garden, la big garden ...

[Speaks in Kija]; him bin tellim mefella, that old Mrs Kaberry bin tellim mefella, 'When I go back to my father, I gotta tellim they reckon they ... tellim that way, longa him place.' 'Well, no, no, no, they don't likem, white people the every station there, when you go, you gotta git killed.' [Speaks in Kija to her daughter], I tellim like that now.

EB ... you go to Derby and, well, you git killed there. Unh.

DW They [Aborigines in that country] don't likem white man, white girl ... Him bin through that country. Him bin through la this Wulanku people. All right. Those people say, 'Ah, ah you, youfella, youfella don't likem white people and all. You allabout gotta killem.' 'Who tell you?' we tellim, 'no, we can't do that. We la *kartiya* now. We can't do that. Only olden day bin do that.'

EB Uh.

DW 'Not mefella,' we bin tellim that missus, now. 'And you can make a camp there la mefella, one side. You can sleep there middle, and mefella right around la you. So who can kill you.'

EB Unh.

DW Well him bin, him bin camp la mefella. But nothing. All we bin do make a fire bla him, and make a tea bla him, and leavem bla him there. We never do that la him. We bin stop gotim that *olgaman* ... That's the trouble now [we warned her that if she went to a boys' initiation site in the bush she could get killed by other people]. [Laughs] We bin tellim; poor bugger, bin frighten im this missus. That missus never frighten while him be keep comin la mefella right through. 'Nobody killem you here!' we bin tellim. 'We only later mob, mefella. We bin born later. Only them olden time people bin ... do that. Not mefella, later mob. Can't killem anything. We [like] you, you white man, white girl, 'we bin tellim. Him bin all day puttem longa book.

EB Hmm.

HR Yeh, the book.

DW We bin all day tellim bout, 'No we can't do that. We later mob. Only them olden day people been do that, killem white man. Not mefella. We bin workin to [white] woman; and white man, we gottim. We workin for him. But we can't do that.' Him bin all day puttin la line -- la book, see? He all the way like that now. ... Well we bin [having] all that boy *kukpu* [restricted, forbidden, ritual] bla all the boy.¹²

¹¹ Dottie now recalls Kaberry's elicitation of 'conception dreamings'.

¹² Dottie recalls here that the men allowed Kaberry to observe a boy's initiation rite and to make notes, but forbade her to reveal to the women any of what she saw or was told.

(Whispers, in Kija; then in English, he bin all day go.) Well he bin all day gottem that book bla him, and all the boy bin tellim, 'Don't tellim girl. You look at mefella, mefella play for you. Only you, and not the black girl allabout, don't tellim-im! Well him bin come all back from the action, 'No, no; I can't tellim youfella. That *kukpu* la youfella. *Kukpu*.' And he [Kaberry said], 'That's only law bla me.' ...

That team bin stop la mefella la Violet Valley. Right, we bin wait. Him bin there. 'I sendem telegram for Quilty, Paddy Quilty gotta come pickem up me, takem back me la Halls Creek. I'll go back, straight back.' Poor bugger. Ah, ... we bin hafta cryin la him, poor bugger. Him bin tell he bin love mefella too much. Properly. And we bin look for that motaka bin come, that boss blong mefella, him bin come there, to pickem up. Ah two auntie sing out to allabout, 'All right, youfella, you twofella come here, to putem in the motaka. Here now'. My husband, him bin sing out now la about, 'Say goodbye la this *olgaman*; an me twofella, my husband me twofella, bin start to worryhin back, from that *olgaman*. Him bin there long time, too much he love mefella, *kangkai*, true God. And me an twofella bin say goodbye la him. Twofella bin go back, right back Halls Creek. From there, Halls Creek, I don't know, might even be nother side somewhere. Maybe right back to Moola Bulla. Right round Nyigina [country], right round Yulunapurna, she might go. Him bin go back Derby [in the West Kimberley]. Him bin gettin plane from there. That the girl bin livin la mefella, la bush, that white woman, we bin see im, take em la bush, bin takim holiday-time right up to Violet Valley, we bin puttem la motaka, him bin just go back to him place. Well, we bin go back now, go back work now.

HR She wrote a book about it.

DW Unh - She bin all day do havem book ...

HR Who else was working with her? I heard somebody called Topsy.

DW Topsy -- That one now! Old Topsy, you know ...

HR That's the one who was helping with her --

DW That one now helpers bla him. Well, mefella bin workin, he want that fella now, him twofella bin all together. Pickem bough shade place, and get em bout grass bla him. And wood, water, everything him bin all day bla him. And mefella bin come from holiday now, come through. ... Well, we bin mixem up. That Tartayal, him bin git away with a boyfriend. And this Mrs Kaberry bin bringem up, well, and mefella laugh, watchin la Bedford Downs. Him bin come back from Bedford country, there, him bin git away [speaks in Kija], Tartayal. He never bin wait la him [speaks in Kija]. Him bin lafta [have to] take it away boyfriend, bla him [?]boss.

(Laughs) And him [speaks in Kija] bla mefella this old Mrs Kaberry. Ah - Old Topsy bin git away, got a boyfriend now. I don't know which way him bin go, this way not that way now, long Tableland country. Him bin there, that Topsy. He bin [?]loved her, they was -- we bin hafta come up, holiday or we can [?]trickem, come up here now. That girl bin git away la him twofella. Two girl bin git away, gottem boyfriend. [Speaks in Kija] [Kaberry says.] 'I gotta go back to my place. I'll tellim my father. Father reckon you allabout murderer lot, white man and white woman.' 'No, no,' we bin tellim, 'no, no; we not murderin. We workin this one white woman too.' I don't know bout from long time him bin havem that, they bin chasem bout meself, white man and blackfella bin chasem. White man gotta rifle, blackfella spear.

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I had hoped for an opportunity to talk with Topsy Tartayal, one of the women who was most closely associated with Kaberry during the time she was in the East Kimberley, to ask her about her recollections of Kaberry. I asked Shirley Bray, a woman with whom I had worked on a number of research projects in the Turkey Creek area, if she would help me interview Tartayal. Shirley set a time that suited Tartayal, and we met in the community office during the afternoon of a holiday when the office was empty. I began by explaining that I would like to hear what Tartayal recalled about Kaberry and the time she had spent in the East Kimberley. I tape-recorded the interview: my questions, Shirley's translations into Kija, and Tartayal's responses. Tartayal's mood was quite different from Watpi's; in general she responded to the questions I asked, but did not adopt a 'story-telling' mode. The tape recorder was faulty, and the tape of such poor quality that I knew I could not transcribe it. At my request, Shirley then dictated a truncated version of Tartayal's recollections, and, as I asked additional questions, sought responses from Tartayal, which she then translated into English as I wrote them down. My record of this interview as recorded in my field notebook is as follows:

Tartayal first met Phyllis Kaberry at Bedford Downs Station. They went up to the house, they saw her [Kaberry] there. She wanted to know about Aboriginal living. They asked her where she wanted to stay, with white people in the house or on the reserve with the Aboriginal people, and she said she wanted to live with Aboriginal people in the ration camp. So she met these seven young girls, her age, and they picked out a spot where these young girls could camp, all in a row, and one fire. (The young girls were Dottie Watpi, Boomer Kuli, Topsy Tartayal, Maudie Wrendie, Daisy Bedford [Tartayal's sister], and Polly Wulaljlil [Daisy and Mary are now deceased].) She was like a sister to that lot, *naminjil*, because she was *naminjil*. That's why they kept in one camp and shared one bough shade.

When they had Saturday and Sunday off, they used to go out hunting. That old Phyllis used to go with them, took her little pannikin when they went out for sugarbag. They put some sugarbag in it. She ate some but she didn't like it much; she said it was too sweet. She liked ground sugarbag because it was cold. She went with them to get bush tucker. When she got used to it, got the hang of it, she used to find sugarbag and cut it out herself. She used to get her own *minjiwarrany* (bush fruit), learned how to fill up her billycan or pannikin. Also *taluny* (bush fruit): she knew how to crack them up with a stone. Also *panarriny* (bush potato). She caught fish; she liked fish. They used to go to rockhole la Bedford somewhere for fishing. She used to like having jokes with her friends all the same age.

She learned about tribal marriage, how Tartayal was promised to Kumji, and Dottie to old Echo, and Maudie married to that old man.

They shared food; what this lot used to cook, she used to eat. Shirley said she taught them 'mothercraft', and she learned more from them [Shirley's first interpretation was that Kaberry taught the Aboriginal women. Then, after checking with Tartayal, said it was 'more the other way around'.] She learned about bush medicines. ... She used to like ceremonies, marriages, dancing. She was a good dancer: she used to paint up with charcoal (from *wilirriny*) and red ochre (*patil*), and pipeclay (*mawuntul*).

She saw a tribal fight at Teringiny.¹³ They used to fight - -must be grudge on -- one person hurt deep inside when they ran off with his wife. When they saw that one beaten by the other one, they joined in. They used to pick a bloke, called a *nyenirri*, an old man who used to walk up to the two men fighting. He went and humbled them. He touched them on the chest to cool them down. They got cooled down and forgot about the fight; they'd go back to their own camps.

I asked where Tartayal said Phyllis Kaberry had travelled. Shirley said from Bedford to Frog Hollow (the old station), to Mabel Downs, and Turkey Creek, and Violet Valley (Kurrakurra and Paluwa are the real names for Violet Valley). She went footwalking for ceremony to Teringiny for initiation ceremony (*Wangka*) for one month or a couple of weeks. There was a big celebration and dancing. That was when she joined in the dancing.

I asked what country she learned about. Shirley said (from Tartayal's response): Waringarri - la we side; and that side - *kilirraku* - Ungarinyin. She used to learn about different places, where to go, where not to go; she followed her mates. The old people told them to tell her where not to go. She used to obey them. She used to ask Mary Lou's father about *ngarrangkarni* [Dreamtime] things. He said she couldn't go near the men's things.

She fostered Ivy Thomas. She used to help that little girl; dress her up and feed her. When she was leaving, the little girl was fretting for her; but she had to go. That's when she came back to those different stations; then she came here.

Tartayal was sad when she left. But she had to go. She was fun, made lots of jokes. She was tall, pretty looking (*yamparrajil* - long hair); she was well built. She had paper (*milimili*), and she wrote down things. She helped with the work; she helped build the bough shades and also the tin humpies. When some *kartiya* used to give them a hard time, she stood up for them [the Aborigines]. She was *wariwul* (stern).

I met Sali Malay in June 1987 when Ian Kirkby and I were conducting a census of the Aboriginal population of Halls Creek, and we called on Mr Malay. A man then about seventy years old, he remembered Kaberry when she was at Bedford Downs, probably in 1935. Mr Malay's mother, Matangil, was a Kija woman. I asked him about his recollections of Kaberry. I did not record the questions I asked, but from his responses wrote the following in my field notebook:

Kaberry spent three months on Bedford Downs Station. She didn't talk much to him [Sali Malay] because she was only interested in full-blood Aborigines; but he used to listen. She asked things like, 'What's your *jarriny* [spirit origin/Dreaming]? Where did it come from? Everything was nice and calm when she was with Aboriginal people. The Station people didn't bash up Aborigines or mistreat them when she was around.

Kaberry's Account

It is not relevant to my purpose in this paper to record Kaberry's account of her associates and activities in the East Kimberley from the point of view of confirming or qualifying the recollections of the Aboriginal people there. It is, however, relevant to canons of scientific inquiry and validation in the style of European scholarship. And these canons are, I believe, related to procedures of memory,¹⁴ and I return to this topic in the concluding section of the paper.

¹³ See Kaberry 1939:145ff.

¹⁴ Rosenfield 1988:164-6; Edelman 1987:240-70.

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I have taken Kaberry's account of her study in the East Kimberley, including the contexts of her interaction with Aboriginal people there, from a 1938 article in *Oceania* and from her 1939 book.¹⁵ In the article published in *Oceania* Kaberry reports:

Altogether I spent a broken six months with the Lunga [Kija], three with the Wolmeri [Walmajarri? Wula?], and shorter periods with the [Jarui] and other tribes of that region. Apart from a few native phrases I used English as a medium of communication ... I was able to camp with them during the greater part of the summer from September to March, ... I was admitted to the secret ceremonies of both men and women ...¹⁶

In the Foreword to *Aboriginal woman sacred and profane*, Kaberry states:

In May, 1935 ... I returned to the Kimberleys, and spent six months altogether with the Lunga tribe, three months with Wolmeri, and shorter periods with the Djaru, Miriwun, Malngin, Wula, Kunian, Punaba, and Nyigina.

With the exception of those living on the missions, most of the natives in this region are concentrated about the station homesteads, and are employed in stockwork, gardening, and domestic duties. They wear European clothes and receive rations of flour, tea, beef, and tobacco. It is only during the 'wet' season, when work slackens off between September and March, that they go 'walkabout' in the bush to hold their inter-tribal meetings for initiation and mourning ceremonies. During the winter I had perforce to remain at the homesteads, collecting genealogies, accounts of local organization, totemism, and rites, observing life in the camp, and witnessing a few ceremonies.

However, from September to December I attended tribal meetings in the North Lunga [Kija] territory, where I had opportunities of seeing corroborees, and accompanying the men and women on their hunting and foraging expeditions. As a result of my movements from one tribe to another, I had no time to master the languages. But the natives have been in contact with the whites for over forty years; they are remarkably fluent in a pidgin-English which differs from that current in New Guinea, and approximates much more closely to spoken English. I, of course, learnt phrases, acquired large vocabularies, and used native terms wherever possible. I was also able to keep some check on native conversations and the answers to informants. I did not pay the natives, though from time to time I made gifts of food, axes, knives, and other articles. When I witnessed ceremonies, I distributed flour, tea, and a few presents to the chief participants and headman.

... I roughly estimated that there were from 600 to 800 Lunga (or Kidja), who are one of the largest tribes. They are living at Moola Bulla, Bedford, Alice Downs, Violet Valley, and Turkey Creek. The Djaru (or Nyinin) and

¹⁵ My concerns here are related to those of Jackson's discussion of 'ethnographic truth' (1987). In setting aside or bracketing the question of whether either Kaberry's - the anthropologist's - account of her interaction with 'the Other' is true, or truer than the Other's account of that interaction, or *vice versa*, I am, as Jackson advocates, adopting Bateson's position of epistemological openness (1973). I read Jackson's article as a very perceptive historical analysis of changing epistemologies in anthropology offering fresh insight into the process of change.

¹⁶ Kaberry 1938:269.

the Wolmeri have also about the same population; the former extend to the south-west of Halls Creek and east to Gordon Downs; the latter originally occupied a belt of territory south of the Fitzroy River ...¹⁷

Kaberry states that she arrived at Violet Valley on 20 October [1935], where people had been preparing for an initiation ceremony, which took place at the end of November.¹⁸ She refers to the ritualized 'fight' that took place on the fighting ground and which she describes in some detail at another place.¹⁹ She includes in her account the role that women played in the ritualized combat.

Discussion

Fabian has given his important book, *Time and the other*, the subtitle *How anthropology makes its objects*.²⁰ I want to show that the same procedures that make objects of Others are involved in how Others make objects of anthropologists - a point implied but not taken up by Fabian.

'Fact and past are not interchangeable,' Fabian argues, 'nor is their relationship primarily one that points from the [anthropologist's] present into the object's past.'²¹ Fabian provides examples of ethnographic statements that mask the anthropologist's presence in the same real time as the Other, and also reveal that at least two, one of whom is the anthropologist, 'subjects inhabit the semantic space of the statement... All statements about others are paired with the observer's experience.'²² Therefore, Fabian argues, one of the 'conditions of possibility of intersubjective knowledge is that *'Somehow we must be able to share each other's past in order to be knowingly in each other's present.'*²³ It is not happenstance, then, that anthropologists' fieldwork demands personal presence which involves several learning processes and has thereby a certain passage of time as a prerequisite.²⁴ 'The simple reason,' Fabian says, is that otherwise 'the Other would *never have the time* to become part of the ethnographer's past. Time is also needed for the ethnographer to become part of his interlocutor's past.'²⁵

I turn now to the matters raised at the beginning of the paper, and the quotation from Bartlett.²⁶ Rosenfield, a medical researcher and science writer, has recently reviewed research and theory about the neurological basis of brain function, in particular the implications for memory.²⁷ He surveys dominant nineteenth-century theories and clinical interpretations of brain function as well as current theories and the research upon which they rely, and argues that to date the most adequate approach is that of the

17 Kaberry 1939:ix-xi.

18 Kaberry 1939:79.

19 Kaberry 1939:144-8.

20 Fabian 1983.

21 Fabian 1983:89.

22 Fabian 1983:91.

23 Fabian 1983:92.

24 Fabian 1983:89.

25 Fabian 1983:90. It is a matter of regret that Fabian offers here what seem trivial examples of informants' attitudes to subsequent visits by ethnographers. If adequately explained, however, I believe they would serve as examples of the function of memory.

26 Bartlett 1932:213.

27 Rosenfield 1988.

neurophysiologist Edelman.²⁸ With respect to memory, Rosenfield says Edelman's research has provided 'a precision and a physiological justification' to the work of Bartlett some four decades earlier.²⁹

Memory is not a fixed record. As far as I am able to comprehend it, recent neurological research on brain function begins to demonstrate the means by which '[t]he past is reconstructed in terms of the present'.³⁰ Memory is essentially a procedure, and critical to the procedure are categorization and affect. Affect (which means the involvement of the limbic system of the brain) is critical in that, in Rosenfield's words, 'Emotions are essential for creating and categorizing memories. Indeed, the sensations of both perception and recollection apparently require limbic activity ... Moreover, the categories we use seem to depend on ... context'.³¹ On the basis of my own field research and my reading of others', I find convincing the view that 'perception, categorization, generalization, and memory are necessarily linked [and that] memory is a form of recategorization based upon current input; as such it is transformational rather than replicative'.³² Neurological research appears able to deal with perceptual categorization as a molecular process (relying on a simple definition of category as 'a group of nonidentical objects or events that an individual treats as equivalent'³³ but is not yet able to deal - at least in molecular terms and therefore only speculatively in the terms of neurophysiology - with conceptual categorization. Thus what is missing is an explanation of the neurological basis of conceptual categories, so far therefore only hypothesized in the most general evolutionary terms (in terms of selective advantage). Since Edelman's approach is based on Darwin's notion of selection, his concern is to explain neurological functions in evolutionary perspective. Thus he examines the results of neurological studies of various species from a phylogenetic perspective. From that perspective, and based on the assumption that his 'neuronal group selection theory' is correct, 'perceptual categorization is a precondition for all conventional learning of any nontrivial degree of richness'.³⁴

Edelman also suggests that 'although there are vast differences in their complexity, "simple" perceptual categorization and culture-bound "top-down" categorization based on advanced natural languages may themselves have much in common'.³⁵ I find Edelman's argument persuasive. In particular, as I have already mentioned, understanding the role of affect in recollection and the probabilistic nature of categorization in memory-as-process are important in the structuring of intersubjective knowledge, of dealing appropriately with the temporal aspect of the anthropologist/other as both subjects and objects in the past-in-the-present. It is, of course, the culture-bound 'top-down' categorisation that is the focus of anthropologists' concern; and in our analysis of that process we provide insights for further understanding of the molecular basis of human behaviour. Percept and concept are not separate entities in the brain.

Although exploring what seem to be increasingly more adequate theories of the function of the brain helps us 'make sense' of our interaction - at least gives us a basis for a

28 For example, Edelman 1987.

29 Rosenfield 1988:193.

30 Rosenfield 1988:9.

31 Rosenfield 1988:165, 166.

32 Edelman 1987:265.

33 Edelman 1987:244.

34 Edelman 1987:316.

35 Edelman 1987:259.

richer interpretation - we still must take as given the prior existence of categories (phylogenetically we can apparently do no other). We must assume that the same memory process effects the Others' recollections of anthropologists as anthropologists' recollections of the Others and we must therefore also assume the universal existence of categories. Whether the process of categorisation differs in people with developed systems of orality compared with those whose 'culture-bound' categorisation is influenced by dependency on written forms is something we probably cannot know - at least in terms of their molecular basis - until neuroscience can deal as adequately with conceptual process as it appears now to be able to do with perception.

In general terms, then, to return to the East Kimberly, it appears that Raymond Wallaby's and George Mungmung's recollections of Phyllis Kaberry were constructions influenced (if not determined) by their interaction with me, a member of the category 'anthropologist' (and perhaps additionally by the gender category 'female'). The category anthropologist was not apparently relevant to the conversation between Dottie Watpi, Eileen Bray, and Helen Ross (although Helen Ross was recording 'old-time stories' and had notebook and pen in hand), nor was it apparently relevant to my interview with Topsy Tartayal, although Tartayal's comments about paper and writing may have been influenced by the fact that I had notebook, pen and paper and was from time to time writing while recording the interview. I did not record enough information about the context of Sali Malay's recollections to infer whether the category anthropologist had any salience.³⁶ What is clear in each of the conversations is the role of affect: in the process of recall either the recollection itself is accompanied by positive expression of emotion (laughter is perhaps the most striking sign) or the recollection is one that has positive value (for example, being taught by Aborigines and protecting Aborigines from harsh treatment).³⁷ It seems reasonable to infer that whether or not in the conversations about Phyllis Kaberry the Aboriginal people who knew her were using a specific category 'anthropologist', their recollections were being constructed on the basis of the context of the conversation which included the presence of at least one person to whom they attributed features shared with Kaberry. In the case of Dottie Watpi's recollections, the presence of her granddaughter was also a significant feature of the context. Watpi was using the occasion of telling 'old-time stories' to inform (or remind) her granddaughter of people and events pertaining to their family history and she relied to a significant extent on Kija language as well as English in doing so.

It seems clear that understanding the characteristics of memory process as outlined above - and as revealed in the conversations about Phyllis Kaberry - has important implications for the ontological status of what we have been accustomed to label 'data'. It is as necessary to attend to and to record the details of the context of their recording as it is to record the text, and to acknowledge that context includes the perception of all relevant

³⁶ Patrick McConvell (personal communication) observes that when he first worked with people at Daguragu, from 1974 to 1977, it was in connection with the preparation and hearing of a land claim. At that time it had been people in a category labelled 'union man' - including Frank Hardy - who had assisted the Daguragu people with claims for land, and McConvell was referred to as a 'union man'. Subsequently, after linguists had worked with the people in the Daguragu area, he was a member of the category labelled 'language man'.

³⁷ It is an unremarked general characteristic of recollections, as far as I can determine, that the first element of recall is an evaluation - good, bad, pleasant, unpleasant - and that this first element is or evokes simultaneously an appropriate feeling or emotion.

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personae, whether present in the same real time-frame or temporally separate, and expressions of affect. That is not to beg the question of objectivity-subjectivity, or even of truth,³⁸ but to suggest that if our aim is to 'reconcile two views of what constitutes adequate explanation of people and events',³⁹ we can go some way toward achieving that goal by making explicit our epistemological pragmatism and understanding of the role of memory process in what we construe as the data of our discourse.⁴⁰

Memory, as Bartlett characterized it, is 'imaginative reconstruction',⁴¹ and into the recollections of Phyllis Kaberry are woven the experiences shared with others perceived as having common attributes. That the particular recollections are invested with pleasure is a function of memory; for anthropologists who have followed Kaberry in the East Kimberley that observation is not only instructive but a further pleasure shared.⁴²

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38 See notes 14, 40.

39 Barwick 1981:84.

40 I find Jackson's string figure metaphor elegantly apt to the enterprise: Can our discourse be likened to ... string figures - a game we play with words, the thread of an argument whose connection with reality is always oblique and tenuous - which crosses to and fro, interlacing description with interpretation, instruction with entertainment, but always ambiguously placed between practical and antinomian ends? If so, truth is not binding. It is in the interstices as much as the structure, in fiction as much as in fact (1987:25).

41 Bartlett 1932:213.

42 I am greatly indebted to the Kija people and their relatives at Turkey Creek with whom I have worked since 1980. Those who spent most time helping me with recollections of Phyllis Kaberry for this paper were Raymond Wallaby, George Mungmung, Hector Chundaloo, Topsy Tartayal, and Shirley Bray, and I thank them especially for that. I also thank Ian Kirkby for his careful reading and comment on an early draft of the paper. Other people who rendered crucial assistance at critical times include Barbara Rigsby, Janet Williams, and Judy Bieg. My gratitude for Judith Wilson's help is boundless.

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DIANE BARWICK AND GENEALOGICAL STUDIES

One of Diane's major achievements was her genealogical research on the Aboriginal people of Victoria. This gave her a deep insight into family and clan histories, which she generously made available to other researchers. The following note illustrates one of the many ways in which she shared this knowledge and experience. It comes from the Minutes of the thirty-third meeting of the Heraldry and Genealogy Society of Canberra held in the H.C. Coombs Building of the Australian National University on 4 February 1970.

Dr Diane E. Barwick gave an address entitled "Aboriginal Genealogies and the History of a Victorian Population" which was illustrated by photographs, maps and genealogical charts in abundance. It is incredible how much genealogical information was committed to memory by Aborigines - absolutely accurate information at that, and confirmed by official records. Indeed, where anomalies have appeared in some official records Aborigines have been able to supply rational corrections - and it must be remembered that Aborigines had no written records, all information was memorised. Genealogical information was of course very important to them owing to their marriage customs, and, since their kinship system did not follow the simple biological lines with which we are familiar, such information had to be more extensive than might be considered necessary from our point of view. For an Aborigine to know the exact relationships of c.200 persons was not unusual. This phenomenon has been of great use in demographic studies.

Aside from its genealogical interest, Dr Barwick's talk brought to light the utterly contemptible behaviour of European settlers in destroying all attempts by Aborigines to engage in profitable businesses on their own account. Should a group of Aborigines establish, for example, a branch of primary industry on unwanted waste-land, and should their efforts meet with success, nearby Europeans would promptly dispossess them. One of the last examples of this practice appears to be the successful establishment of a hop-growing industry in the Healesville district on land considered to be quite worthless, and the eventual destruction of that business venture by Europeans.

A. Ian MacKay
Secretary