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# Excluded Spaces: The Figure in the Australian Aboriginal Landscape

Nancy D. Munn

Commenting on Pausanias's description of his travels through Greece, James Frazer wrote: "without [Pausanias] the ruins of Greece would . . . be a labyrinth without a clue, a riddle without an answer."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Frazer imagined the sanctuary at Nemi as a picturesque landscape riddle and he himself as the travelling Pausanias in the guise of anthropological detective—purveying both clues and answers as he unrolled that ever-expanding labyrinth *The Golden Bough*. Needless to say, I offer here nothing so mysterious or endless as this quest of Frazer's to explain the King of the Wood—the key "figure in his landscape" (to adapt John Dixon Hunt's book title),<sup>2</sup> and the dangerous and endangered, excluding agent of Frazer's "place." Nevertheless, my aim is to explore some ancient places of power and certain interactions between persons and space entailed in modern Australian Aboriginal spatial taboos. In doing so I examine the question of spatial prohibition less as an issue in itself than as a way of posing certain more general problems in the analysis of social space and time.

Frazer's own interest in places and in the spatiality of actors and

This essay is a slightly revised form of the Frazer Lecture presented at Oxford University in May 1995. The analysis is part of a larger work in progress on the cultural anthropology of space and time. Grateful acknowledgement is made to the Guggenheim Foundation for a fellowship supporting part of the basic research for this work and the present essay.

1. James G. Frazer, *Pausanias and Other Greek Sketches* (London, 1900), p. 159.

2. The phrase is Thomas Hardy's. See J. Hillis Miller, *Topographies* (Stanford, Calif., 1995), p. 4. See also John Dixon Hunt, *The Figure in the Landscape: Poetry, Painting, and Gardening during the Eighteenth Century* (1976; Baltimore, 1989).

events was mostly stylistic and mood setting rather than theoretical.<sup>3</sup> Unlike his friend Robertson Smith or Arnold Van Gennep, a social theorist whose concept of spatial separations and passages across them drew in part on a geopolitical discourse of frontiers and boundaries, Frazer's ideas about taboo are not focussed on the exclusionary powers of "sacred places" (although they take account of them). Indeed, given his theoretical and methodological biases, it is not surprising that, as Jonathan Smith has noted, Frazer finally sheds the King of the Wood as "merely a puppet" of his own rationalist search for the "evolution of human thought."<sup>4</sup>

The present essay goes in another direction: it assumes that in comparative anthropological studies, the spatiotemporal dimensions of a theoretical problem not only are intrinsic to it but require analytic foregrounding. In this respect, I intend to speak to some current preoccupations in the humanities and social theory with space, time, and bodily action; with "places" and their "powers"; and with what David Parkin has recently described as a discourse "of positions, stances, moves . . . close and distant gazes . . . of spatial orientation and separation."<sup>5</sup>

My topic is certain Australian Aboriginal spatial interdictions that are pervasive wherever Aborigines still treat the land in everyday life as the ancestrally derived locus of Aboriginal law.<sup>6</sup> For heuristic reasons, I focus

3. For a commentary on Frazer's aesthetic interest in setting scenes, see Stanley Edgar Hyman, *The Tangled Bank: Darwin, Marx, Frazer, and Freud as Imaginative Writers* (New York, 1966), pp. 254–55. One possible exception to Frazer's primarily mood-setting approach to space is his theory of the "origins" of totemism in Aboriginal notions of a person's conception at particular totemic places; see Frazer, "The Beginnings of Religion and Totemism among the Australian Aborigines (II)," *Fortnightly Review* 78 (Sept. 1905): 452–66. But the local aspect of this totemism is secondary to Frazer, who argues that totemic localities enter into Aboriginal conception notions only through accidents of association with some feature of the place "where [one's] . . . mother happened to be" (p. 457). In any case, the significance of place as such is never drawn into theoretical focus.

4. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 3d ed., 10 vols. (London, 1911–13), 10:vi; quoted in Jonathan Smith, "When the Bough Breaks," *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Chicago, 1978), p. 211.

5. David Parkin, *Sacred Void: Spatial Images of Work and Ritual among the Giriama of Kenya* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 1.

6. Numerous studies draw attention to these interdictions. Mention should be made of Kenneth Maddock, "Dangerous Proximities and Their Analogues," *Mankind* 9 (June 1974): 206–17, and David Biernoff, "Safe and Dangerous Places," in *Australian Aboriginal Concepts*, ed. Leslie Hiatt (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1978). I discuss only a small portion of the range of interdictions here.

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(with one exception) on central and western desert and some desert fringe, riverine peoples of the Australian interior.<sup>7</sup> When I use the term *Aborigines* without further qualification, I mean essentially peoples of these regions, although the interdictions involved may have wider applicability. These interdictions create a partially shifting range of excluded or restricted regions for each person throughout his or her life. A specific kind of spatial form is being produced: a space of deletions or of delimitations constraining one's presence at particular locales.

This negative space is well conveyed by the widely used Aboriginal English expression "no room," meaning a person's lack of sociomoral or legal space at a given locale.<sup>8</sup> At any given moment, a person's space is a patchwork of regions where he or she has "no room": these regions overlap only in part with those of others in the community. A familiar example is the barring of adult women and men from each other's secret power places, although children may be barred, in some cases, from both. Par-

7. The names and locations of key peoples and places discussed in the essay are as follows: the Aranda (now also written Arrernte) of central Australia (the Northern Territory) who own Emily Gap (Anthwerke) and its environs southeast of the desert town of Alice Springs; the Warlpiri (also Walbiri) who have towns and communities north and northwest of Alice Springs (I mention Yuendumu, some 175 miles northwest, and Lajamanu across the Tanami desert northwest of Yuendumu); western desert Kukatja peoples living around Balgo, near the West Australian border; and the peoples of Yarralin, in Victoria River country of the northwest Northern Territory. I also refer to the huge monolith, Ayers Rock (Uluru), of the southwest Northern Territory, which belongs to speakers of several western desert dialects, including Pitjantjatjara. The only coastal community discussed is Belyuen (home of speakers of a number of languages), which is near the north central coast of the Northern Territory, west of the northern coastal center of Darwin.

8. There appears to be no indigenous equivalent for this expression (according to Francesca Merlan, written communication with author, Feb. 1995), although there are, of course, terms for avoidance. The full extent of its use among Aborigines is not documented, but it appears to be widespread in the desert region and at least to some extent beyond. See Diane Bell, *Daughters of the Dreaming* (North Sydney, 1983), p. 15 and personal communication with author, 1995; Michael Jackson, *At Home in the World* (Durham, N.C., 1995), p. 53; David Nash, written communication with author, Jan. 1995; and Elizabeth Povinelli, conversation with author, Sept. 1994. In my own experience it was operative among Yuendumu Warlpiri in the mid-1950s. However, according to Merlan (telephonic and written communication with author, Feb. 1995), Aborigines in Katherine township (north-central Northern Territory) do not employ this usage, but may use *room* in the expected English sense of a spatial unit or of insufficient physical space irrespective of moral-legal constraints. See also Cliff Goddard, *I.A.D. Basic Pitjantjatjara/Yankuntjatjara-English Dictionary* (Alice Springs, 1987), p. 122; reference courtesy of Janet Simpson. In some cases, the expression may be used in both ways; see Nash, written communication with author, Jan. 1995. Bell gives an excellent illustration of the difference between the expected English usage and "no room" in the more complex moral-legal sense discussed here. When attempting to drive Aboriginal women along a road that looked clear to her ahead, Bell was stopped by one of the women who said she couldn't "go down there, too much . . . son-in-law, no room" (Bell, *Daughters of the Dreaming*, p. 15). Although this road offered physically clear travel space, they would have been moving too close to the camp of the woman's tabooed son-in-law. In this sense, there was not enough physical space because of the distances required by the moral law.

ticular excluded regions thus vary for different people and shift through a person's lifetime.

The time span of a locale's participation in this kind of excluded space also varies. Many of the ancient, named, and owned places are permanently barred to *someone*—certainly to anyone defined as an outsider or a stranger. Other regions may be closed contingent on transient events such as deaths, ritual performances and travel, or the presence there of a person's tabooed in-law.<sup>9</sup> We have here a complex kind of relative spacetime, not simply a set of determinate locales or "places." Mervyn Meggitt once implied something like this when he suggested that the Warlpiri construction of "their socio-geographical environment into regions of greater or less space or personal mobility . . . [resembles] the Lewinian notion of the life-space."<sup>10</sup>

Although my own approach bears no similarity to Kurt Lewin's, I share his interest in relational models. Thus I address the "synoptic" anthropological notions of taboo and sacred places in two related ways: by dissolving them into a more general spatiotemporal analytics of (culturally significant) location, distancing, movement, relative duration, and boundaries; and by considering spacetime as a symbolic nexus of relations produced out of interactions between bodily actors and terrestrial spaces. We shall see that once we make these theoretical moves, questions involving the locus of powers of exclusion, or how boundaries emerge and are signified in cultural practices, can be articulated in the same paradigm.

My focus will be on spatial prohibitions as a mode of boundary making. In Aboriginal societies, the existence of topographical boundaries demarcating owned places is highly problematic. This feature has recently been highlighted by political contention over boundaries in the process of establishing another kind of "excluded" space, namely, the Aboriginal ancient place protected from Western industry and trespass by

9. Still other exclusions depend on the presence in a given region of gender-related camps or residences, which are avoided by people of the opposite sex; for example, men avoid the women's group residence and gathering place. In this essay, I do not discuss in-law avoidances and only briefly note avoidances connected with deaths. However, I take all these exclusions to entail, at any given moment, avoidance of a specific region, even though, as in the case of in-law avoidances, the particular region involved may be entirely dependent on the presence of certain persons, changing with their location. We shall see that the framework I propose precludes treating persons apart from their spatial situatedness and space apart from persons. Thus, among other things, one cannot abstract "social space" from "concrete space."

10. Mervyn J. Meggitt, *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* (Sydney, 1963), p. 54. In making this analogy, Meggitt remarks that regions can be "distinguished" by varying intensities of emotions such as fear or shame "attendant on entering them" (ibid.). In the present essay, I concentrate on contexts where fear or apprehension is a prominent attitude, and danger of varying degrees is involved. Meggitt also speaks of the Walbiri sense that they might "lack space" in a given region, apparently using the term *space* for the Walbiri English *room*.

“sacred site” legislation and typically marked as a transcultural enclave by surrounding fences and written signs. These markers fix the visible signs of the power of what Aborigines call “whitefella’s law” on a demarcated limit that conjoins the “two laws” (a stereotypic Aboriginal expression referring to the different Aboriginal and Euro-Australian laws). I cannot discuss this mode of excluded space here, but it remains as an implicit contrast in the background of the present argument.<sup>11</sup>

Since spatial prohibitions limit a person’s presence at a particular place, we can initially view these practices as a problem in *location* in its dual sense of “a locale” and “locatedness”; for our purposes, *locatedness* refers primarily to mobile actors rather than things. Lefebvre calls this “the basic duality” of social space as a “*field of action*” and a “*basis of action*.” By the latter he means “places whence energies derive and whither energies are directed.”<sup>12</sup> I take up this dualism as a dynamic interrelation between two modalities of space that are operative in constructing an exclusionary spacetime.

11. The *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act* (1978; emended 1989) was established as a complement to the general *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* (1976). Since the 1970s, anthropological discussions of Aboriginal place-boundaries (or their absence) have to be understood as occurring in a litigious milieu of contestations involving Aborigines, the government, and other parties interested in the spatial definitions of areas to be protected and the location of their limits. Apart from conflicting politico-economic and cultural concerns, these issues are fuelled by the fundamentally different means of constructing space characteristic of Aboriginal and Western industrial/postindustrial cultures. For analytic purposes, one should not, therefore, conflate Aboriginal-named place constructs with these new places (“sacred sites” in the legal sense), which are important “enclaved” forms of Aboriginal places. Different kinds of enclaves are created in this process, with variable exclusions, but a common type sets up fences around an area finally legalized as the extent of the “sacred site,” with verbal signs that specify the monetary penalties for violation—penalties deriving, of course, from Euro-Australian law. Consideration of this hybrid type of space is a problem of its own, which I cannot deal with here. The pervasive use of the label *sacred site* for Aboriginal ancient places (a label now used popularly by Aborigines as well as others to denote Aboriginal ancestral places in general) arose in connection with the Aboriginal land claims. For a brief history of this usage see Maddock, “Metamorphosing the Sacred in Australia,” *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (1991): 213–33.

12. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. N. Smith (Oxford, 1991), p. 191. Lefebvre’s formulation articulates the dualities of an old problem entailing the relations between relative, or subject-centered, and nonrelative, “absolute” or “objective,” human space, which others have articulated in different terms and from variable perspectives. See, for example, Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington, Ind., 1993); Michel de Certeau, “Spatial Stories,” *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, 1984), pp. 91–130; Gareth Evans, *The Varieties of Reference*, ed. John McDowell (Oxford, 1982), chap. 6; Alfred Gell, “How to Read a Map: Remarks on the Practical Logic of Navigation,” *Man* 20 (June 1985): 271–86; William Hanks, *Referential Practice: Language and Lived Space among the Maya* (Chicago, 1990); and Erwin Straus, *The Primary World of the Senses: A Vindication of Sensory Experience*, trans. Jacob Needleman (New York, 1963).

Lefebvre's "field of action" can also be viewed as the "mobile *spatial* field" of the actor in contrast to a determinate region or locale;<sup>13</sup> the latter is the concrete "basis of action," which lends itself at any given moment to the actor's moving field. Linguists and other scholars frequently describe what I call the spatial field by labels such as *indexical* or *ego-centered*. It is space defined by reference to an actor, its organizing center. Since a spatial field extends from the actor, it can also be understood as a culturally defined, corporeal-sensual field of significant distances stretching out from the body in a particular stance or action at a given locale or as it moves through locales. This field can be plotted along a hypothetical trajectory centered in the situated body with its expansive movements and immediate tactile reach, and extendable beyond this center in vision, vocal reach, and hearing (and further where relevant). The body is thus understood as a spatial field (and the spatial field as a bodily field).<sup>14</sup>

The particular locale that a spatial field embraces changes with the mobile actor from one "moment" to the next. The field is literally a "shifter" that, as Erwin Straus puts it, "constantly goes with us" as we move around.<sup>15</sup> Of course, in going with us as an aspect of ourselves, it leaves particular locales behind and reaches others up ahead; equally, its deterrence from some spaces is part of its interaction with them, in a negative mode.

A simple but important example of this negative interaction is the detour, a pervasive type of Aboriginal act, generally made either to avoid the temporary location of certain persons or certain *contemporary* events, or the enduring agentive powers left in the country's named places by ancestors during *ancient* events.<sup>16</sup> For instance, at a 1980s gathering of mourners on the Yuendumu–Alice Springs road, Aborigines approaching in their cars "would stop and turn around to find another

13. In this essay I use the labels *locale* or *region* as general cover terms for any kind of location or space. When discussing Aboriginal space, I use *place* in a narrower sense, confining it to contexts where Aborigines would make use of the relevant indigenous term it can gloss (for instance, Warlpiri *ngurra*, camp, residential location, place). In practice, I apply *place* primarily to ancestral locales (which I call "ancient named places"). Terms with a similar semantic range to the Warlpiri *ngurra* are pan-Aboriginal and crucial to Aboriginal spatial practices.

14. This framing resonates with a variety of approaches to the spatiality of the body, such as those of Casey, *Getting Back into Place*; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (1972; Cambridge, 1977); Hanks, *Referential Practice*; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London, 1962); and Abraham A. Moles and Elisabeth Rohmer, *Psychologie de l'espace* (Paris, 1978).

15. Straus, *The Primary World of the Senses*, p. 319.

16. An illustrative term for this type of act is the Warlpiri *warri-ngirtiri*, bypass, the long way around, which explicitly carries the sense of circling around. See Mary Laughren and Kenneth Hale, *Warlpiri-English Encyclopaedic Dictionary*, electronic files, at Department of English, University of Queensland, Brisbane. I am indebted to the authors for their generosity in making this dictionary available to me.

track to their destination.”<sup>17</sup> In this example, detours are made only for the duration of the event. But Aborigines make detours of other locales for reasons inhering in the land itself. For example, a Warlpiri woman from Lajamanu, speaking to Barbara Glowczewski, remembered: “‘When I was small, my mother required me to always make a large detour to look for water on the other side of this hill [where certain ancestors had travelled]. All the women repeatedly told the children not to go there because it was dangerous: there were spirits . . . who kidnapped children. We didn’t go there because we were very frightened.’”<sup>18</sup>

In detouring, vision and, secondarily, hearing (for instance, of ritual singing temporarily going on at a given place) are the key measures Aborigines use to delimit a person’s spatial field. On the whole, a detour of an ancient place must be far enough away to avoid seeing it.<sup>19</sup> But a finer calibration of vision operates in ritual performances of ancestral events (not necessarily held at a power place). For instance, Warlpiri women with special rights in certain men’s rituals may be allowed to stand closer to some performances than other women; and some senior Warlpiri men may be permitted to briefly enter women’s ceremonial grounds, while others may observe these rituals at a distance.<sup>20</sup> A person’s sensual-spatial field is controlled here by distancing, but we will see other means later.

In the act of detouring, actors also carve out a negative space—a locale—where they do not go, part of which extends beyond their own spatial field of vision. This act projects a signifier of limitation upon the land or place by forming *transient but repeatable boundaries out of the moving body*. Excluding acts thus give concrete if transient (and, spatially, somewhat shifting) form to boundaries of a quasi-perimetric kind: people “go around” a place, as expressed in a basic Warlpiri term for *detour*.<sup>21</sup> Boundaries are here “given their practical senses as movements of the body.”<sup>22</sup>

17. Susan Kesteven, “A Sketch of Yuendumu and Its Outstations” (master’s thesis, Australian National University, 1978), p. 21. Locales linked with the remembered or recent dead are detoured or avoided.

18. Barbara Glowczewski, *Les Rêveurs du désert: Aborigènes d’Australie, les Warlpiri* (Paris, 1989), p. 188; my translation.

19. As the ethnomusicologist Richard Moyle puts it, “if you can see it, then you’re too close” (Richard Moyle, “Songs, Ceremonies, and Sites: The Agharringa Case,” in *Aborigines, Land, and Land Rights*, ed. Nicolas Peterson and Marcia Langton [Canberra, 1983], p. 72). In Warlpiri, the term *seeing-without* may be used in connection with detouring. See Laurie Reece, *Dictionary of the Wailbri (Walpiri) Language of Central Australia*, 2 vols. (Sydney, 1975/1979), 2:44.

20. See Françoise Dussart, “Warlpiri Women’s Yawalyu Ceremonies: A Forum for Socialization and Innovation” (Ph.D. diss., Australian National University, 1988), p. 52, and Nancy D. Munn, *Walbiri Iconography: Graphic Representation and Cultural Symbolism in a Central Australian Society* (1973; Chicago, 1986), pp. 49, 52.

21. See above, n. 16.

22. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, p. 117; emphasis removed. We tend to conceive of boundaries as relatively permanent, fixed aspects of space detached from human movement. But all such boundary markers are the result of some boundary-making



People-in-action not only produce boundaries and boundary experiences but, to paraphrase an idea of Simmel's, are themselves boundaries.<sup>23</sup>

In the instance noted above, the agentive power of the Law enforcing the detour is embedded in the detoured area as "child kidnappers"; in other places it might be other personae or forces springing from the enduring presence of ancestors. Places "take notice of who is there."<sup>24</sup> For the moment, we must turn then from the moving spatial field of the excluded actor to the spatiotemporal organization and potencies of this kind of place.

I have noted that Aboriginal law is said to be in the ground, especially the rocks. "You see that hill over there? Blackfellow Law like that hill. It never changes. . . . [It] is in the ground," said a Yarralin man to Deborah Rose.<sup>25</sup> The "Law" is the hill, or is in the hill. The Law's *visible signs* are topographic "markings"—rocks, rock crevices and stains, soaks, trees, creek beds, clay pans, and so forth—remnants of the multiple, so-called totemic ancestors who made the land into distinguishable shapes. Indigenous terms for *Law*, like the Warlpiri *jukurrpa* (popularly glossed nowadays by Aborigines and others as "Dreaming"), are the same as for these ancestors.

However, these features, which are concentrated loci of a place's authoritative power, do not define its spatial boundaries. Rather, they are the identifying *centers* from which a space with uncertain or ambiguously defined limits stretches out. For instance, Warlpiri places have been compared to "a gravitational field weakening out from the [topographic] center."<sup>26</sup> There may be some qualifications to this sort of spatialization, but

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acts of definition and production, including verbal acts of "*spatial legislation*," as de Certeau has stressed (de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 122). It is helpful to think of boundary-making practices as ranging from the use or creation of a spatially fixed, detached marker (whether "natural" or "artificial") with long-term durability to boundary-making acts that do not construct any relatively enduring, fixed, concrete spatial marker detached from actors. Within this range one finds, for instance, people making boundaries by repetitive acts of renewal that set out detachable but temporary material markers (see, for example, Robert J. Thornton, *Space, Time, and Culture among the Iraqw of Tanzania* [New York, 1980], chap. 4), or boundary making by repeated acts of walking off and "looking" to define and redefine topographical bounds by travelling across or looking beyond previous limits. See Joanne Rappaort, "History, Myth, and the Dynamics of Territorial Maintenance in Tierradentro, Colombia," *American Ethnologist* 12 (Feb. 1985): 27–45.

23. See Georg Simmel, "The Transcendent Character of Social Life," *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, ed. Donald Levine (Chicago, 1971), p. 353; however, Simmel is talking about persons as boundaries in a sense quite different from my discussion here.

24. Deborah Bird Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human: Life and Land in an Aboriginal Australian Culture* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 109. Rose is referring to the peoples of Yarralin, but this is a characteristic feature of the Aboriginal sense of space throughout Australia; nor should it be read as simply metaphorical (see also below, on Belyuen).

25. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 56.

26. Peterson, Stephen Wild, and Patrick McConvell, *Claim to Areas of Traditional Land by the Warlpiri and Kartangarurru-Kurintji* (1976), p. 5.

Aboriginal-owned places are typically “not clearly bounded, discrete locations but . . . foci whose influence extends outward.”<sup>27</sup>

In the case of certain major places, the Law’s power may extend well beyond its center, spanning a region of other named places (or sub-places). This radius of power is also not clearly delimitable. Within this extended sphere, a place responds to violations (to forbidden presences or incorrect comportments) by causing physical danger such as potential illness or death to the violator. In short, the Aboriginal ancient place can be characterized as “center-oriented”—S. J. Tambiah’s term for a spatio-political domain that is formed “as a variable sphere of influence that diminishes as . . . power radiates from a [spatial] center.”<sup>28</sup>

It now seems evident that ancient places are organized like the mobile, centered fields of actors, as spaces stretching out from a reference point to vague peripheries. Indeed, these places are the topographic remnants of the centered fields of ancient actors. The transformations of ancestors’ bodies so extensively discussed in the Australian literature are not simply their bodies in some generalized sense but situated bodies in particular stances or states, such as lying down, sitting, dancing, standing and looking at something, or scattered into fragments from a fight—all forms conveying some momentary action or participation in events at a given location. The center, William Hanks says in a Mayan context, “is not merely the body, but the body as it normally engages in movement and action.”<sup>29</sup>

The center may also reflect the body’s tactile reach just beyond the bodily core of the actor’s spatial field. The standard notion of imprints

27. Ian Keen and Merlan, “The Significance of the Conservation Zone to Aboriginal People,” Resource Assessment Commission: Kakadu Conservation Zone Inquiry, consultancy no. 8 (Dec. 1990), p. 45. Concern with the question of Aboriginal delimitations of ancient places has long been a preoccupation in the anthropological literature; the complex details of the arguments are necessarily beyond my purview here. See, among many others, Bell, “Sacred Sites: The Politics of Protection,” in *Aborigines, Land, and Land Rights*, pp. 278–93; Ronald M. Berndt, “The Concept of ‘the Tribe’ in the Western Desert of Australia,” *Oceania* 30 (Dec. 1959): 81–107 and “Territoriality and the Problem of Demarcating Socio-cultural Space,” in *Tribes and Boundaries in Australia*, ed. Peterson (Canberra, 1976), pp. 133–61; Erich Kolig, *Dreamtime Politics: Religion, World View, and Utopian Thought in Australian Aboriginal Society* (Berlin, 1989), chap. 2; Maddock, “Australia a Sacred Site?” *Your Land Is Our Land: Aboriginal Land Rights* (Ringwood, Victoria, 1983), pp. 131–51, and Nancy Williams, “A Boundary Is to Cross: Observations on Yolngu Boundaries and Permission,” in *Resource Managers: North American and Australian Hunter-Gatherers*, ed. Williams and Eugene S. Hunn (Boulder, Colo., 1982), pp. 131–53.

28. S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 112. See also Benedict R. O’G. Anderson, “The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture,” in *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Claire Holt, Anderson, and James Siegel (Ithaca, N.Y., 1972), pp. 1–69. Anderson also points to the fundamental spatial distinction between a “frontier”-oriented polity and one “defined by its center, not by its perimeter” (p. 29).

29. Hanks, *Referential Practice*, p. 90.

(prototypically, the ordinary footprints or body prints of daily life) involves transformations on the edge of the body. Two ancestral sisters crawling along—pressing against the unmarked land—imprint a winding creek just beyond their own body surfaces.<sup>30</sup> At one place on Ayers Rock, where poisonous snakes threw spears at pythons, the rock is scarred by potholes marking the endpoints of the spears' trajectories.<sup>31</sup> The snakes' remnants reflect a more extended tactile reach of their spatiocorporeal fields. Multiple transformations turn centered mobile fields into the fixed topographic centers of locales, objectified as identifiable places to or towards which others can then travel (or from which they can be excluded). They become locales to which "Aboriginal people can point . . . saying [for example], here is the mark of the Carpet Snake, coming over the sand hills; . . . here is the spear wound in her body."<sup>32</sup> Thus the ancestors' spatiocorporeal or action fields turn into enduring "bases" for the future transient action fields of others.

This perspective on topographic transformation helps to explain how it is that travelling ancestors can be transfixed in more than one place. What they leave behind in each instance is not simply their bodily selves in some general sense but the fixed, momentary *forms* taken by their action fields at that location. It is these located particulars that are, as Aborigines say, "still" or (in an alternative translation) "always" there.<sup>33</sup> Nor do they become "timeless," as the Westernized glossing of such Aboriginal notions often asserts; rather, the time index shifts from the relative transiency of actions to a duration indefinitely extended into the future beyond that of the original ancestral occurrence. That this shift has a mundane temporal (more specifically, spatiotemporal) sense is well shown by the scope of the Warlpiri notion *jukurrarnu* (a term for "long lasting"). As one Warlpiri's explanation goes, "*Jukurrarnu* is what we call a Dreaming [ancestor, *jukurrpa*] . . . [who] is always there and a lover . . .

30. The example comes from Berndt, "Territoriality and the Problem of Demarcating Sociocultural Space," p. 137, but the principle of imprinting is basic. See Munn, "The Transformation of Subjects into Objects in Walbiri and Pitjantjatjara Myth," in *Australian Aboriginal Anthropology: Modern Studies in the Social Anthropology of the Australian Aborigines*, ed. Berndt (Nedlands, 1970), pp. 141–63. Imprinting of this kind is in some respects an epitomizing instance of some aspects of Casey's philosophy of place and body. Casey takes the view that because everything, and most notably all human bodies, has a "place" (where they are "at"), place itself cannot be separated from the body that is its "inner boundary" (Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. 29). However, in the present context, bodies are also defining/creating the distinctive "places" where they are, for although the women go along on a pregiven ground, it is not a locale in Aboriginal terms until particularized by markings.

31. See Robert Layton, *Uluru: An Aboriginal History of Ayers Rock* (Canberra, 1986), pp. 7–8, and Charles P. Mountford, *Ayers Rock: Its People, Their Beliefs, and Their Art* (Sydney, 1965), p. 40 and plates 14a and b (p. 44).

32. Layton, *Uluru*, p. 15.

33. The Warlpiri and Pitjantjatjara terms, *tarnгна* and *titu*, respectively, may be glossed in either way.

still in love with the same person for a long time. Or a person who stays in one place all the time without going anywhere else.”<sup>34</sup> The term *jukurarnu* thus seems to connote “being still there”—a kind of intensification of one position through its temporal extension. In the context of ancient places, “being still there” asserts a legal claim. In this respect, it contrasts with “went right through”—an action leaving no known visible traces (which Aborigines often use in the land claims cases to indicate that no rights can currently be read out of the land from these travels).

The property significance of enduring visibility is not, of course, entirely foreign to Western understandings of property. The legal philosopher Carol Rose points out that in certain “common understandings . . . the very claim of property is that it is something lasting”; and this claim in turn may be meshed with ideas about the unchanging character of visible features like boundary markers.<sup>35</sup> If Aboriginal fixed markers of dominion are visible centers rather than place boundaries, we shall see nevertheless how they create certain kinds of boundaries by moving out from these centers and how at the immobile center they can also become boundaries.

Returning to the dynamics of exclusion, we now find that mobile spatial fields and the terrestrial space of locales are becoming transposable; in certain culturally specified ways, they seem to be shifting back and forth into each other. Here I want to explore this process as manifested in “dangerous encounters” between visitors and the Law of ancient places rather than in detours that avoid such dangers. Beginning with an ancestral encounter, I then take up some modern ones. My aim is to exemplify some permutations of these modes of Aboriginal boundary construction.

One of the key dangerous places in the Alice Springs region is a rocky gorge called Anthwerrke (Emily Gap).<sup>36</sup> Although the gorge is the center of this Aranda place, its influence extends well beyond it at least to the town’s edge. According to Spencer and Gillen’s classic study, a powerful Aranda witchetty grub ancestor guarded the gap’s northern entrance, sometimes sending his instructions beyond the gap in singing that controlled the passage of new witchetty grub immigrants and halted their passage on their way towards the gorge.<sup>37</sup> For instance, one immigrant

34. Laughren and Hale, *Warlpiri-English Encyclopaedic Dictionary*. In this passage, *always* translates the Warlpiri *tarnnga*; *a long time* and *all the time* both translate *jukurarnu*.

35. Carol M. Rose, *Property and Persuasion: Essays on the History, Theory, and Rhetoric of Ownership* (Boulder, Colo., 1994), p. 272.

36. See Bell, “Sacred Sites,” for a recent relevant discussion.

37. Witchetty grubs are edible larval forms of various tree-boring insects. The contemporary literature refers to the ancestral totemic beings dominating the Emily Gap–Alice Springs region as caterpillars; see, for example, Bell “Sacred Sites,” p. 286. But Baldwin Spencer and Francis James Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899; London, 1938), call them witchetty grubs (glossing a specific indigenous term). For convenience, I follow their gloss here.

party was first halted within about two miles of the autochthon, whose singing they heard at a distance. Leaving one man there (apparently at the song's behest), they travelled on, stopping occasionally "to listen for the singing." Approaching the gap "they could [now] plainly hear . . . [the owner] singing of . . . [their] coming" and thus permitting them to go to the entrance; but on their arrival, he refused them passage through the gap. So entering the ground, they came up just beyond it, leaving no marks within the gorge. Although they wanted to travel on from the place of their emergence, the owner told them to stay there. Groups of trees arose marking the last spot where they stood before entering the ground and where they remained ("sat down") afterwards.<sup>38</sup>

Although the gap is the owner's bodily location, the center of his control, his voice is part of his sensual reach—an extending movement of his spatiocorporeal field that impacts directly on the fields of others, affecting both their directional passage and its limits.<sup>39</sup> The owner's combined excluding and permissive action typifies Aboriginal notions about the entry of outsiders into these places and, in some respects, into residential communities as well. As one Victoria River man said:

In our law we are frightened to go . . . outside our own country because we don't want to give cheek to that other man who owns the country [that is not ours]. . . . If [someone] wants to see any important dreaming place he must ask the owner of that place to allow him to go in. . . . If the owner says no, . . . you can't do anything about it, you'll have to keep away.<sup>40</sup>

Within the sphere of the owner's sensual reach, the visitors leave persons and terrestrial markers with his permission or when they "halt" to listen for his song;<sup>41</sup> individuals left at a place proceed no further but

38. Spencer and Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 431–32. The estimate of the gap's distance from their first halt is mine, based on information in *ibid.*, p. 425. For other Aboriginal notions connecting singing and control over distance, see especially John von Sturmer, "Aboriginal Singing and Notions of Power," in *Songs of Aboriginal Australia*, ed. M. Clunies Ross, T. Donaldson, and S. Wild (Sydney, 1987).

39. This kind of boundary-making power through sensual reach outward from a fixed position can be found, for instance, in parts of South Asia in connection with the images of deities fixed in temples or shrine houses whose eyesight can wield extended boundary-making force. David Scott discusses the narrative of one such Sinhala deity. Standing high in its shrine house, its vision "stretching out over the ocean, [it] formed a steadfast, transparent wall, a sort of beam of eye energy, preventing the trespass of the colonial invaders" who could not cross its line of sight (David Scott, *Formations of Ritual: Colonial and Anthropological Discourses on the Sinhala "Yaktovil"* [Minneapolis, 1994], p. 42).

40. Quoted in Darrell Lewis and Deborah Bird Rose, *The Shape of the Dreaming: The Cultural Significance of Victoria River Rock Art* (Canberra, 1988), p. 66. See also Spencer and Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 431 n. 1.

41. Spencer and Gillen's account in *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* does not make explicit the principle that leaving people behind implies leaving terrestrial marks, which are themselves the reembodiments of actors and their activities.

are allowed to take up residence at a certain distance from the gap, while, finally, at the gap and beyond, trees mark the imposed limits and residential instructions defined for the remaining group. Zones of closeness to the major center are thus mapped on terrestrial space, but obviously they are not simply differentiated regions of space. Rather, they objectify controls and limits on the visitors' spatial fields, which have been defined by the owner's vocal extension (that is, the extent of his own activated spatiosensual field). His power projects these limits directly on the body's mobility; only then can the body and its positional limits be topographically fixed.

The trees at the gap define points after which the group must travel underground until they emerge beyond where other trees visibly embody them. Underground passage signifies that travellers have no visible presence in a region (although their covert passage may leave open the possibility of some future discovery of such signs in the area). It is as if, warned by the owner that they had "no room" inside the gorge, the would-be visitors detoured underground, carving out an excluded locale in their spatial field. But unlike the detours discussed earlier, in which the boundary marker was the transient body itself in the act of detouring, this one transposes the corporeal boundary onto the land (at the points of the beginning and end of the detour) giving it fixed, relatively enduring markers.

I turn now to some modern encounters, beginning with a case from the northern coastal region.<sup>42</sup> The force of the autochthonous power extending from the center appears even more clearly in the recent account of a Belyuen woman: "A boatload of [non-Aboriginal] land claim researchers and . . . Aborigines from Belyuen and Darwin," out on a mapping trip, were attacked by a manifestation of the place's ancient owner, a Blanket Lizard; the Lizard's "'finger emerged that Dreaming's, she moved . . . toward . . . them . . . [wanting] to drown them, they were frightened. [But] that old [Belyuen] lady . . . talked to the Dreaming now, and it submerged.'" <sup>43</sup>

Since the Lizard recognizes the woman's speech, it "knows" her from previous casual visits; and she in turn knows how to behave towards the Lizard.<sup>44</sup> Otherwise it would "block" the visitors' passage. Belyuen people may say, "No room there, 'im blocked." The blockage must "shift," to "open up the road."<sup>45</sup> Two kinds of spatiotemporal priority and claim are shown to the land claim investigators: that of the autochthon "still there" in the place—who can effectively bar everybody's presence—and that of

42. See above, n. 7.

43. Povinelli, *Labor's Lot: The Power, History, and Culture of Aboriginal Action* (Chicago, 1993), pp. 44, 45.

44. See *ibid.*, p. 46.

45. Povinelli, conversation with author, 1994.

the Aboriginal visitor whose claim is based on her own past presence, resulting in the *place* recognizing her.

Whether the Aborigines felt that they were within the Lizard's ancestral place when attacked remains vague, but they were clearly within its power ambience. Indeed, the event is reminiscent of widespread Aboriginal notions about rainbow snakes who, ordinarily coiled unseen inside their water holes, angrily rise up to attack trespassers: "'When we take strangers or children to a water hole . . . for the first time,'" goes a story from Balgo,

"we tell them to throw in a rock so the snake can 'know' them. If the snake doesn't know someone, he might . . . make them ill. Or he might come up . . . and make a whirlpool to pull the stranger under. . . . When he's angry . . . a Dreamtime snake leaves his water hole [followed by a thunderstorm as he travels]. All this is still here today."<sup>46</sup>

Power is conveyed by an upward emergence from the center much as the power of the Emily Gap owner was conveyed by his verbal control of an extended distance.<sup>47</sup> Unlike a written sign carrying information about later fines for trespass, or a spatially fixed barrier such as a fence, the Belyuen Lizard or the ubiquitous rainbow snake is simultaneously a moving barrier, the dangerous force of the Law, and the place's autochthonous power manifesting itself as it moves out from the center.

This kind of boundary making suggests de Certeau's notion of "the mouthpiece of the limit," which emerges as a region's embodiment in an aggressive narrative agent: "'Stop,' says the forest the wolf comes out of. 'Stop!' says the river, revealing its crocodile." But the Aboriginal autochthon does not emerge beyond the "frontier" of its domain (the river or trees) and thus "establish a border . . . by saying what crosses it" (as does de Certeau's "mouthpiece");<sup>48</sup> rather, he or she comes up or out from a center without topographic frontiers.<sup>49</sup> Only a transient interaction momentarily gives visible experiential form to the place's enduring charac-

46. Gracie Greene, Joe Tramachi, and Lucille Gill, *Tjarany Roughtail: The Dreaming of the Roughtail Lizard and Other Stories Told by the Kukatja* (Broome, 1993), pp. 26, 29. Warlpiri accounts of the rainbow snake rising up in the storm, which were given to me in verbal and visual form in the 1950s, were both descriptions of the way rain emerges from the ground and storms across the country, and narratives of particular ancestral events.

47. "Coming out/up—going in/underneath" is a general pattern of movement entailing change into a visible form (emergence) and conversely into invisibility (submergence); compare the Aranda case above.

48. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 127.

49. The autochthon does move, however, from the domain of inside/underneath to the outside/above; this is the "crossing" that makes the difference in Aboriginal terms, since through it the autochthon becomes visible.

ter as a bounded, inhabited property *irrespective of any spatially fixed boundaries*. The property's boundedness can thus be apprehended wherever the particular location of the interaction occurs.

Some encounters also involve infringement on the topographic centers where power is *always* manifest. For instance, a Warlpiri man told Glowczewski that his son had once mistakenly touched the "petrified vertebrae" of an ancestor. The boy was unharmed only because his body contained the ancestor's markings and essence (that is, he belonged to the same patrilineal line).<sup>50</sup> In this encounter, antecedent bodily identifications between the place and the child abrogated the boundary just as the Belyuen woman's interiorized knowledge gained from her prior presence at the Blanket Lizard's place saved the land claim group.

"To face danger"—Franz Steiner said in his study of taboo—"is to face another power."<sup>51</sup> The lizard's emergence is a sign of this otherness affecting the group. In Charles S. Peirce's terms, it "addresses somebody," creating an "interpretant"—a responding sign in the minds of the visitors.<sup>52</sup> But it is also a medium of force having what Peirce calls the property of "secondness"—a striking event felt to be occurring out there in the Aborigines' surrounding world; as such, it creates the experience of "compulsion, [an] absolute constraint" requiring participants to modify their action to take account of this external agency.<sup>53</sup> This combination of communication and force characterizes the Aboriginal sense of country.

It is not very far from the Belyuen encounter with a mobile manifestation of place to encounters in which the excluded locale changes because the endangering local center of the Law is temporarily defined by reference to a *mobile* rather than a fixed topographic center. In the context I discuss here, the spaces where some people have "no room" are themselves *in transit*.

Consider Aboriginal regulations of motor travel along Northern Territory roads in Aboriginally held land west of Alice Springs. During journeys for men's or women's ceremonies—called "Business" in Aboriginal English—some of these roads may be restricted because of possible encounters with Business travellers.<sup>54</sup>

The truck carrying the key people in a ritual performance may be called the "'Law' truck."<sup>55</sup> It is, so to speak, the "Law-on-wheels," car-

50. Glowczewski, *Les Rêveurs du désert*, p. 43.

51. Franz Steiner, *Taboo* (London, 1956), p. 146.

52. Charles S. Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York, 1955), pp. 99, 100.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

54. See Elspeth Young, "Continuité et changement dans la mobilité des Aborigènes: Les Warlpiri du désert central australien," *L'Espace géographique* 12 (Jan.-Mar. 1983): 42, and Young and Kim Doohan, *Mobility for Survival: A Process Analysis of Aboriginal Population Movement in Central Australia* (Darwin, 1989), pp. 92-95. See also Christopher Anderson, conversation with author, 1992.

55. Young and Doohan, *Mobility for Survival*, p. 99.



rying the power center of authority between places. This truck must always go ahead of any other travellers to the ceremony. Other people have "no room" when it is on the road—the truck must "go first";<sup>56</sup> its entourage must travel behind or come later. The truck thus becomes the organizing center for the road space "up ahead" of and behind it. Travellers unconnected with the entourage are excluded from these selected roads and sometimes avoid them for many days in fear of encounters.<sup>57</sup>

In this way, the ancestral Law's power of spatial limitation on movement becomes directly embodied in a centered mobile field apart from any fixed, enduring center. As it travels along, the truck defines different excluded regions in its immediate vicinity at any given moment. These exclusions in turn enjoin spatial detours and temporal delays for peoples' own journeys that keep them off any roads in the entire trajectory during the expected time of the truck's travel. In this respect, the power ambience of the truck extends beyond its immediate moving field at a given moment, affecting the whole projected route, its wider ambience of power. Since travelling for varied reasons is a major part of contemporary Aboriginal life, and the availability of vehicles has increased the ability to journey long distances, major, collectively organized "Business journeys" can markedly affect widely separated Aboriginal communities.

In organizing routes of Business travel, the Aboriginal towns and settlements involved implicitly define the excluded spaces to which they all become temporarily subject. Although roads are relatively enduring, fixed, and bounded spaces with marked terrestrial limits, the route is a temporary mobile field organized by reference to this travelling power center. Since the truck's route puts common delimitations on travel for the period of its activation, it would seem that people in the affected regions, no matter how distant—where trips are delayed or detoured by these prohibitions—are temporarily brought into an "imagined community" (to use Benedict Anderson's phrase) of common, excluded travel space, a unitary spacetime.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the regulations, wrongful encounters may occur. If you encounter groups of Aboriginal men travelling to initiations you must get off the road, and "all women [in the vehicle must] hit the floor"; failure to conform can invoke quite severe penalties for both men and women.<sup>59</sup> In such an encounter, the Law truck both delimits the space that the

56. Laughren, conversation with author, 1992.

57. See Young and Doohan, *Mobility for Survival*, p. 94.

58. According to Young and Doohan, communities carry out "lengthy negotiations over the tracks which can be used . . . [taking into account] the dreaming tracks of the [relevant] ancestral beings, as well as . . . existing roads and . . . [road] usage" (Young and Doohan, *Mobility for Survival*, p. 93). The authors also give a specific case of the coordination of a number of desert Aboriginal communities involved in a long-distance Business trip of 1982–83.

59. Langton, conversation with author, 1992.

other vehicle and its travellers can occupy and constrains the body's verticality and extended sensual fields (specifically, the vision) of the women. Carrying the power of boundary making with it, the Law projects temporary mobile signifiers of its delimiting powers onto the spatiocorporeal fields of others. Instead of creating a distance, as in a detour, bodily comportment cuts off vision. The body becomes its own barrier, shaped into an icon of limitation, that is, of the limits of its own spatial field.

This form of boundary can operate in conjunction with zoned distancing when, for example, Warlpiri women are legitimately present on men's ritual grounds during performances of ancestral events. In one instance in my experience from the 1950s, women sat behind a low brush windbreak on the other side of which men sat singing. The brush shade marked differential zones of distancing from the power center of the performance. (This zoning is comparable to that created by the visitors' differential access to and exclusions from the power center of Emily Gap, which we saw earlier.) At certain moments, men told women to lie or crouch down under blankets so as to see nothing at all. The women's spatiocorporeal field was thus cut off at different zones of extension. Initially barred in part by the brush shade a little in front of them, it was wholly blocked at the immediate limits of their bodies when they were covered with blankets. In this moment, their constrained, covered, and terrestrially bounded spatial fields appear as definitive icons of "no room."

To summarize, Aboriginal "excluded spaces" can be understood as particular spatiotemporal formations produced out of the interaction of actors' moving spatial fields and the terrestrial spaces or bases of bodily action. From this perspective, the analytic problem of spatial boundaries cannot automatically refer to limits marked out on pieces of land (or in architectural forms); nor can bodily boundaries be dealt with as body surfaces apart from the body's spatiality, actions, and locatedness.

We have seen that within these interactions, different kinds of what might be called "transposabilities" emerge between Aboriginal locales of power and the mobile, spatial fields of actors.<sup>60</sup> In different ways, and for variable time spans, Aboriginal power places and the immobilized powers in the topography switch over or are transposed into actors and their mobile spatial fields. So, for instance, the Belyuen Lizard is roused into motion; or the power of Law fixed in the country becomes a moving space—a Law truck with its travellers. Conversely, actors are transposed into fixed locales and terrestrial forms (as when the spatial fields of ancient actors become named topographies).

Furthermore, although I have been unable to discuss it here, a well-

60. Technical use of this term is made by linguists. My own usage is somewhat different, but not unrelated. See John Haviland, "Projections, Transpositions, and Relativity," Cognitive Anthropology Research Group, working paper no. 3 (Nijmegen, Oct. 1991), and also Hanks, *Referential Practice*, for a discussion of transpositional processes in Mayan ritual.

known aspect of Aboriginal practices allows ancient topographic features to be detached from fixed locations and reproduced in iconographic designs, which can then be mobilized for varying time spans as aspects of persons, objects, or other spaces. Thus topographies (in their iconographic form) can be transposed onto actors' bodies (through painting) and onto different terrestrial spaces (as in ground paintings or drawings). Similarly, some people may be prohibited from seeing these painted forms; they must turn away from them or keep a distance from the locations of their temporary embodiments.<sup>61</sup> In other words, transposability opens up various spatiotemporal channels between persons and terrestrial space, and along these channels the power of the Aboriginal Law circulates, creating multiple spaces and time spans of exclusion.

Of course, transposabilities have very different bases and purposes and take multiple, varied forms in different societies and social contexts. Before concluding, I want to point beyond this essay to its implicit, comparative concerns by drawing attention to a familiar Western context where transposabilities of another kind are crucial. My example is Olmsted and Vaux's 1850s design for New York's Central Park, a mid-nineteenth-century American variant of those much written-about "landscape" practices to which John Dixon Hunt's "figure in the landscape" refers.<sup>62</sup>

In Olmsted and Vaux's construction of the park one can find transpositional "switch points" between persons and terrestrial space. For instance, working from the basic cultural assumptions of these landscape practices, the architects plotted "scenes" (which they also called views or pictures) into the land. Their scenes or views had variable (sometimes crosscutting, sometimes more or less coincident) relations to the park's more overt topographic organization into named places, but the scenes constituted a different kind and level of spatial organization. Unlike the named places, they were formulated in terms of the mobile spatiosensual fields of actors. The architects designed such views by considering how the topography looked (and how they wanted it to look) from the vantage point of a situated observer, that is, by assuming a viewer, a park visitor, from whom the scene stretched out as his or her spatiosensual field. For instance, land near one of the major gates was designed and materially constructed in a way that was to draw the "visitor's eye" to "an unbroken

61. For additional characteristic types of Aboriginal transpositions, see relevant commentaries on conception, birthmarks, and related notions in Munn, "The Transformation of Subjects into Objects in Walbiri and Pitjantjatjara Myth."

62. For Olmsted and Vaux's plan, see especially Frederick Law Olmsted, *Creating Central Park: 1857-1861*, vol. 3 of *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted*, ed. Charles E. Beveridge and David Schuyler (Baltimore, 1983). The comments are adapted from my own analysis in a working paper, part of a larger work in progress. See Munn, "Creating a Heterotopia: An Analysis of the Spacetime of Olmsted's and Vaux's Central Park," unpublished working paper prepared for a conference on "Place, Expression, and Experience," School of American Research, Mar. 1993.

meadow . . . [so that] the observer, resting for a moment to enjoy the scene . . . cannot but hope for still greater space than is obvious before him.”<sup>63</sup> In fact, the architects themselves are the prototypic creator-viewers—the first observers—who are embedding their own “views” or spatio-sensual fields in the landscape. By this design practice of viewing and materially reconstructing the land in accord with the desired views, they project themselves into the land in the form of objectifications of their own spatial fields.

Thus, through scenic construction, the parkland was invested with a category of actor (a visitor-viewer) to be repetitively actualized by future visitors. In this sense, the land itself was being transposed into present and future subject-centered fields. Moreover, visitors were to be drawn into the park and affected by the “poetic” influence of certain qualities of the scenes; these qualities had the power to act on peoples’ inner states of being or mind, and so make life “healthier and happier” in the city.<sup>64</sup> Spatial qualities, such as openness, or diffuse expressive qualities, such as tranquility (both standard components of the topographic aesthetics of the landscape tradition), were to be built into the scenic topography; for instance, open space is made available to experience in the “unbroken meadow” noted above. Tranquility can most easily illustrate the sorts of transpositions between persons and locales these qualities engendered. For if the parkland was to “present an aspect of . . . tranquility,” tranquility was also taken as a desired subjective state that could infuse persons present in these locales.<sup>65</sup> The potency of the landscape was thus concentrated in transposable qualities that could shift from its visible surfaces into the inner beings of actors.

It should then be evident that park scenes and their qualities are spatial fulcrums of transposabilities between the bodily persons of actors (or mobile spatio-sensual fields) and terrestrial space. In this respect, they can be compared with the ancestral, centered places of Aborigines, although they obviously operate in fundamentally different ways. Indeed, the differences between them are instructive in understanding the distinctive spatiotemporal forms involved; but these issues lie outside my argument here.

The present essay has argued against certain commonplace assump-

63. Quoted in Olmsted, *Creating Central Park*, pp. 183–84 n. 19, from Olmsted and Vaux’s comments about the Central Park design in their report on Prospect Park, 1866.

64. Olmsted, “Superintendent of Central Park to Gardeners,” *Frederick Law Olmsted: Landscape Architect, 1822–1903*, ed. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and Theodora Kimball, 2 vols. in 1 (1922; New York, 1970), 2:356. In this 1870s directive to park gardeners, Olmsted states: “The character of . . . [the park landscape’s] influence [on visitors] is a poetic one and it is to be produced by means of scenes” (*ibid.*).

65. Olmsted, “Description of the Central Park,” *Creating Central Park*, p. 212. See also Olmsted and Vaux’s remarks on the “tranquilizing” effects of pastoral landscapes from their report on Prospect Park cited in Beveridge, “Frederick Law Olmsted’s Theory on Landscape Design,” *Nineteenth Century* 3 (Summer 1977): 38.

tions about space, boundaries, and time. That space is static and to be contrasted with the dynamism of time; that spatial boundaries are always fixed, relatively enduring forms marked off on the ground may seem self-evident to some, but, as Jameson has put it, "the self-evident draws its force from hosts of buried presuppositions."<sup>66</sup> Thus, if we understand space simply as referring to culturally meaningful terrestrial places or regions, we disarticulate the dynamic relations between spatial regions and moving spatial fields. This sort of reification in turn dissolves the integrity of space and time, for it extracts from the analytic model the centering subject—the spatially and temporally situated actor—through whom and in whose experience the integrity of space and time emerges. What we need, then, is a paradigm that works against abstracting the problem of space from that of the body and action, and against the oppositional separation of space and time. To counteract these objectivist distinctions, I have considered Aboriginal practices of spatial exclusion in terms that coordinate elements of space, time, and bodily action within a single paradigm of changing relations. In short, I have attempted to keep intact what Bakhtin calls the "concrete architectonic" of the lived world.<sup>67</sup>

66. Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton, N.J., 1971), p. 308.

67. See Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, trans. Vadim Liapunov, ed. Michael Holquist and Liapunov (Austin, Tex., 1993).