

ABOUT THE NGARANGANI *

The *Ngarangani* is a place and a time – it is the past and it is also the present – there is no future.

As well, it is the milieu of the art of Eddie Burrup and the source of its unique ideography.

The *Ngarangani* is the creative epoch when anthropomorphised creatures shape the earth from a formless primordial slough while at the same time being transferred themselves through the act of creation into living landscape – the two as one – incarnate, interrelated, interchangeable and ever currently maintained through rite, decree and ceremony – the self-same creatures walk the earth today as of yore – time being elliptical.

The *Ngarangani* is everything – the entire world – nothing is left over so it also includes the subterranean and the aerial dimension beyond reach although the stars and the moon are accessible particularly the edible stars that the possum brothers catch between the old and the new moon . . . an attempt to eat the moon failed.

The *Ngarangani* is a twilight realm and yet shadows are cast as the sun crosses the sky from dawn to dark – to aim at a shadow in the morning or late afternoon ensures both success and anonymity – to that extent it is seen and felt.

In the *Ngarangani* anything is possible and the impossible is the norm. There is a plausible explanation for all things though some are hard to sustain – why, for instance, would a bird not fly when conforming in all other ways bird wise – a formidable rationale includes a performance lasting months . . .

In the *Ngarangani* men and animals are one and interchangeable – this is common knowledge – there is more and more obfuscate . . . Male and female are interchangeable – androgyny commonplace some creatures are both male and female, some neither, some seasonally one or the other, some more so than others – the rocks and the trees are not highly sexed but live active useful lives and are level as regards songs, simulation or evening a score . . .

In the *Ngarangani* different parts of the body can be lifted off or sent out and away on separate expeditions or on special missions – the eye and the penis are particularly peripatetic – the latter invariably comes in menacing guise and chases women who as a man can beat him to death or smother her under sand what a good joke and well deserved – a keen eye borrowed bartered or stolen is worth its weight in water – a dislocated toe is as good as an eye on a dark night all orifice are multi-functional – a vulva can vomit as easily as give birth.

By and large however life in the *Ngarangani* carries on in much the same way as life ever did or does some of it hum-drum day by day one day little different from the last and all very matter of fact even when extraordinary feats only possible with ultra-sensory or extra-terrestrial assistance are performed. Nothing changes – life carries on as ever – arguments take place, duels are fought, friendships made, promises fulfilled or broken brotherbonds reinforced, betrothals arranged at birth and honoured in due course but also feats of daring, deeds of cunning treachery and deceit, betrayal revenge and vendetta are the stuff of daily life and as ever old women live alone eating only when they can catch a man or a few children or lend a hand when it suits them to do so – a lot of laughing in the *Ngarangani* sardonic for the most part and mocking and jeering nothing like a loud derisive laugh to get a good fight going with seconds to call barley at the just moment . . . and through all the peregrinations all the shenanigans the trail of it defined but visible only to the pansophic eye and the initiated. See them there transfixed upon the escarpment . . . listen to the laughing lizard and the barking owl . . . drink the moon light – so much interchange and reciprocity such heterogeneity such entanglement of linguistic filaments – a map, yes, but one that was unrecognisable to new eyes the subtle cartography eluded to the point of refuting its existence altogether and so the whole continent if not uninhabited, as good as . . . and after fruitless effort finally defined for practical purposes – *Terra Nullius* . . .

The *Ngarangani* was once shared human orthodoxy yet it was overtaken by the march of history aeons ago everywhere on the globe with the single exception of one large island in the Southern hemisphere where it endured more or less intact right up to 26 January 1788.

Two hundred and four years later when only tatters of the old map remained, when the ancient rubric had long since collapsed, when all the old secrets and the old secret words and names were lost and forgotten and all who might have remembered them long since dead or demented, when hybridity was regnant as two gene streams became one river, the current legal wisdom of the day elected to ignore history and postulate the notion that an ancient form of land ownership still survived!

As a result of this verdict national schism, legal polemic and public bewilderment ensued while, deep from within the recesses of the *Ngarangani*, the art of Eddie Burrup erupted and became airborne . . .

* One of several hundred terms for the 'Dreaming'.