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Narrating Across Cultural Boundaries – or "Where Were Rocky's Father's Brothers?"

Danièle Klapproth

This paper explores the question to what extent narrative communication is guided by culture-specific conventions of discursive organisation, and narrating *across cultural boundaries* may therefore pose problems for mutual understanding. The paper adopts a discourse-analytical, comparative approach and is based on the author's linguistic-anthropological fieldwork in a Central Australian Aboriginal community. It is shown that – contrary to Anglo-Western story conventions – Australian Aboriginal narratives are not conceptualised as protagonist-centred problem-solving episodes, but rather use narrative schemata that are centred around character nexuses and focus on cause-and-effect chains. It is argued that the narrative schemata acquired through language socialisation serve as frameworks for interpretation and are intrinsically related to culture-specific ways of viewing and making sense of the world.

1. Introduction

This paper is about the challenges and pleasures of narrating across cultural boundaries. It draws on my cross-cultural study of oral storytelling traditions in Anglo-Western and Australian Aboriginal contexts (Klapproth, *Narrative as Social Practice*) and makes use of some of the data and findings of the anthropological-linguistic research that I carried out in Central Australia with an Aboriginal group called (after the dialects they speak) Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara. The two dialects Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara belong to the Western Desert Language group, which constitutes one of the largest traditional Australian Aboriginal languages spoken today. The various dialects of the Western Desert Language group are spoken by about 5,000 speakers in an area of some 500,000 square miles in the central and western interior of Australia (Pitjantjatjara has about 1,600, Yankunytjatjara between 200-300

speakers). In spite of having been subject to the relentless pressures of colonisation and to massive intervention in their homeland areas, the Western Desert people of Central Australia have in many ways retained a tradition-oriented culture, centering on the all-comprising worldview of the Dreaming, or *Tjukurpa*, as it is called in Pitjantjatjara. A vital aspect of this culture is the oral storytelling tradition, highly valued and seen by the Aboriginal people of the Western Desert as central to their cultural survival.

My study of oral storytelling traditions among the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara was motivated largely by my wish to explore the interrelatedness of narrative and culture, addressing such questions as the following: To what extent are the forms and functions of the narratives that people tell culture-specific rather than universal? In what ways are they related to cultural conceptions and conventions? How important in the process of creating a narrative text are the culturally conditioned ways of perceiving, evaluating and representing the world and the human being's place and function within it? And if, indeed, narrating is a highly culture-specific activity, how easy (or how difficult) is it then to narrate across cultural boundaries?

My approach is a contrastive one. Believing that contrast greatly facilitates human perception and understanding, I have chosen to explore narrative practice from a cross-cultural perspective, comparing oral storytelling traditions in Australian Aboriginal and in Anglo-Western culture (for a justification of the term Anglo-Western, see Klapproth 15-16). In this paper the focus will be on one small area within this fascinating field of inquiry, namely on the question of what difficulties might arise when we try to narrate cross-culturally, and on exploring some of the reasons that may lie at the root of such difficulties.

2. Narrating across cultural boundaries in Central Australia

To set the scene, I will start off with some anecdotal reflections made by Erich Michaels in his study *The Aboriginal Invention of Television: Central Australia 1982-86*. Michaels, a white Anglo film maker and video instructor, writes about his experiences when working with a group of Aborigines developing indigenous video productions in Central Australia in the 1980s. Among the many interesting observations that he makes, he also writes about the communicative difficulties he at times

experienced when these Aboriginal video workers provided him with glosses of Anglo-Western movies they had seen. Commenting on these Aboriginal retellings of movie plots, Michaels writes, "Many interesting notions emerged from these retellings, but generally, I could not guess from their accounts what they had seen, even when it was a movie I knew well" (48).

Interestingly, not only did the *plot summaries* that Michaels' Australian Aboriginal co-workers provided differ from Anglo-Western expectations, but also the *questions* that they brought to the movies were – from an Anglo-Western point of view – quite unusual and unexpected. Thus Michaels reports that after having seen the Hollywood movie *Rocky* the Aboriginal viewers were concerned about such questions as, "Where were Rocky's father's brothers?" or "Who was taking care of his old mother?" Michaels' observations regarding the difficulties – or discrepancies – in understanding stories cross-culturally tie in well with some of my own observations and findings in the field of cross-cultural communication. On some level, I found Michaels' reflections echoed by my own difficulties that I at times experienced when trying to understand – that is, to make proper sense of – some of the Aboriginal narratives that I encountered. In a more general sense, Michaels' observations are relevant here as they bring home so clearly the fact that even if two people have seen or heard the supposedly same story, they will not necessarily agree on what they have seen, on what *kind* of story it is, and – most importantly – on how to make sense of it all.

In this paper, I want to focus on the role that *culture* plays in all of this. It is my contention that people bring to a narrative text certain expectations, expectations that to a significant extent are culturally acquired and that will decisively influence their understanding and interpretation of the narrative text. By contrasting two such sets of culture-specific expectations, namely on the one hand Anglo-Western expectations of what makes a good story, and on the other hand Central Australian Aboriginal expectations of what makes a good story, I will attempt to show in what way our making sense of narrative – and maybe in a more general sense, our making sense of the world – is related to the stories we have grown up with and which surround us.

3. Questions of narrative structure

3.1 Prototypical stories, story schemata, and interpretive frames

In this section, I will briefly sketch out some of the theoretical underpinnings of my study. In view of the space limitations given, I will restrict myself to positing some of the main assumptions underlying my reasoning (for a fuller discussion, see Klapproth 135–172).

One important concept underlying this paper is the notion of *story prototypicality*. Drawing on the findings of prototype theory as developed by Eleanor Rosch and her colleagues (see, for instance, Rosch; Mervis and Rosch), proponents of a prototype-theoretical approach to narrative maintain that members of a culture share an understanding of what a prototypical story looks like (see, for instance, Stein and Kilgore). This culture-specific understanding of what makes a prototypical story is acquired in the socialisation process within the cultural group. It is important to point out here that the argument made is *not* that it is impossible within a given culture to produce non-typical, alternative stories. The point made is that members of a culture judge and comprehend stories on the basis of their internalised culture-specific knowledge of the story prototype, and, conversely, that the prototypical story is the pattern most commonly found within that cultural group.[1]

The notion of a culture-specific story prototype links in with the notion of the *story schema*. Generally speaking, mental schemata are to be understood as sets of expectations that enable us to structure, process and thus make sense of our everyday human experiences. A *story schema*, in particular, is a set of expectations about the structure and internal coherence of stories (Mandler 279). It is assumed that people acquire culture-specific story schemata in the process of language acquisition and language socialisation as they develop narrative competence (see Peterson and McCabe; Wimmer). These culturally acquired and internalised patterns of expectations are vital to both the production and the comprehension of narrative texts. Thus, they can be seen as part of the

[1] Note that the approach adopted here does not exclude more than one story prototype being available within a given culture. The focus in this paper is on the story prototype that has proved to be most prominent in Anglo-Western and in Pitjantjatjara – Yankunytjatjara cultures, respectively.

interpretive frames that we bring to a narrative text and that guide us in processing that text and making sense of it.[2]

3.2 Revisiting Anglo-Western story research

It has been recognised repeatedly within Anglo-Western story structure research that the prototypical Anglo-Western narrative is built around the concept of problem-solving. A protagonist is faced with a problem (usually in the form of an obstacle or plan-disruption) and consequently has to engage in goal-oriented action that aims at resolving this problem. Interestingly, this understanding of the story as a problem-solving episode can be found across various narratological research traditions. To illustrate I want to quote Bamberg and Marchman, who in their description of the story *Frog, where are you?* – a picture story that has been used in an international research project to elicit narratives in over 50 languages – identify the existence of a problem-solving episode as the cornerstone of what makes this visual text a "real story":

> The 24 pictures in their sequential order present a "real" story to the degree that in the beginning, the two main protagonists – a little boy and his dog – are confronted with a problem. This problem motivates the plans and activities of the protagonists as they attempt to find a solution to the problem. At the end of the story a solution is offered. (280)

Similarly, Dasinger and Toupin (working within a Labovian high-point framework) use the notion of problem resolution in their conceptualisation of what makes a proper story when they write, "typically, a story [. . .] resolves around 'complicating actions' or problems (Labov 1972) which need to be resolved" (in Berman and Slobin 467). The validity of the proposition that for a text to be recognised in Anglo-Western culture as a proper story it needs to be built around a protagonist's goal-oriented problem-solving attempt, has been corroborated by empirical studies involving adult story listeners' ratings of story quality and story prototypicality (e.g. Quasthoff and Nikolaus; Stein and Policastro). In the Stein and Policastro study, (Anglo-Western) adults had to rate a range of texts in terms of how representative – i.e. prototypical – they

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[2] For a study exploring how culture-specific story schemata influence story comprehension, see Kintsch and Greene.

were as stories. Commenting on the results of the study, Stein writes, "[w]hen asked to judge how 'good' or 'prototypic' each narrative was, goal-based texts were always judged to be better examples of stories than were non-goal-based texts" (Stein 290). Furthermore, goal-based sequences with obstacles were always judged better examples of stories than those without an obstacle. And Stein concludes, "[f]or the moment, then, let us assume that a goal-based story with the inclusion of an obstacle and an ending is the ideal form of a good story for an adult" (290).

3.3 The Anglo-Western story schema

Based on my analysis of the most prominent story structure models proposed in (Anglo-)Western research, as well as my own textual story analyses, I have formulated a description of the prototypical Anglo-Western story schema. Its main proposal is that the prototypical Anglo-Western narrative is focused on a *protagonist* and centred around a *problem-solving process*. I suggest that the internalised story schema acquired by members of Anglo-Western culture can be described in the following way:

Anglo-Western Story Schema

Stories as protagonist-centred PROBLEM-SOLVING EPISODES

This type of story focuses on a main protagonist involved in a problem-solving activity.

Something (i.e. an initiating event) happens to the protagonist, which creates a problem for him/her by either putting him/her in an undesired situation, or else by blocking his/her attainment of a desired situation. The protagonist responds to this initiating event by developing the goal to solve this problem, and consequently engages in a (series of) attempt(s) to reach this goal. In his/her attempt(s) to solve his/her problem the protagonist may ultimately be either successful or unsuccessful, and the story will result consequently in either a happy or an unhappy outcome.

What is interesting about this story schema is that it provides a structure of organisation that serves as a template across a wide range of narrative genres in Anglo-Western culture, i.e. from folk stories of the oral tradition, to personal narratives exchanged in conversation, to news stories found in the media, etc.[3]

[3] Again it must be stressed that it is not argued here that it is impossible to use alternative patterns of narrative organisation within Anglo-Western culture. The argument is that within this culture the story schema presented above constitutes the prototypical organisational structure for a wide range of (oral and written) narrative texts.

4. Narrating in Pitjantjatjara–Yankunytjatjara

Let us now turn to Australian Aboriginal contexts and to the question of what makes a good, prototypical story in Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara culture. Working towards the formulation of the story schemata underlying Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara narratives was one of the aims of my cross-cultural study carried out in Central Australia. My description of the culture-specific story schemata underlying Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara narratives was developed on the basis of the textual analysis of 62 traditional stories told in the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara dialects by Western Desert Aborigines. Working with the stories in their original language was, of course, essential to the whole investigative enterprise. However, for practical reasons, the story that I want to use in this paper to illustrate Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara storytelling is not a text in the Western Desert Language, but an English translation of a Pitjantjatjara story, written by the Pitjantjatjara storyteller herself.[4] The narrator of the story presented below, Carolyn Windy, is a Pitja-ntjatjara speaker who has learnt English as a second language, and at the time of my fieldwork in Central Australia was working as a literacy assistant in Areyonga, an Aboriginal community some 250 kilometres west of Alice Springs.

4.1 Discussion of a sample narrative: "Tjitji Katjangku Ngunti Wangkanytja" – "The Son Who Told a Lie"

The story – written in Pitjantjatjara and translated into English by the storyteller Carolyn Windy – is a traditional Western Desert narrative that in its content and form is very typical of the stories told in the Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara oral tradition. In my collection of over 60 traditional Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara narratives, there are four versions of this story, an indication that it is well-known and popular. In the version quoted below the story is entitled "Tjitji Katjangku Ngunti Wangkanytja" ("The Son Who Told a Lie") and was produced in the form of a small booklet (photocopied for the literacy centre at Areyonga school) containing both the Pitjantjatjara text and an English translation,

[4] For an in-depth discussion of narratives told in the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara dialects, see Klapproth.

as well as hand-drawn illustrations by the storyteller herself. The English translation (which follows the Pitjantjatjara text very closely) is reprinted here as it appeared in the original text:

The Son Who Told a Lie

There once lived a man, a woman and a child. The father went out hunting, while the mother and the boy stayed home. All day long the woman and the boy went around from tree to tree looking for birds nests. When they found some birds eggs the woman cooked the eggs and gave it to her son. They ate it together, and they waited for the man to return. At sun down the father came home with a kangaroo, he cooked the kangaroo. And the boy told him a story, he said 'Mama ngunytjulu ngali kalaya ngampu katapungkula ngalkuningi.' He was saying 'father, my mother and I were eating some emu eggs.' The woman said 'no he's telling lies I gave him birds eggs from the nest.' The father said to the woman 'don't ask me for some meat I'm not gonna give it to you.' The man gave some meat to the boy. And the woman went to sleep. She didn't eat at all she was hungry. The next day the man went out again it was a hot day. The woman did the same thing. She went on collecting some birds eggs from the nest. She fed the boy with some eggs. All day they ate birds eggs. In the evening the man returned home. He cooked the kangaroo in the fire. While the kangaroo was cooking, the boy told him the same story about eating emu eggs. And the same thing happened to the woman, she didn't eat at all she went to sleep hungry. In the morning the man went out again. That day the woman went to get some water, she filled the dish with water. Then she said to the boy, 'I'm going away to my people.' The boy said 'what about dad?' The mother said 'he'll come behind.' They set out for the journey. It was a hot day. The boy walked behind his mother. And the woman said, 'hurry up', the boy said 'I'm tired, I want some water.' The woman put down the dish on the ground and said 'come and drink it.' The boy came running to her. As he knelt down to drink, the woman quickly got the dish, and put it on her head and started off. The boy didn't drink some of her water. He slowly got up and started following her. The woman looked back and said, 'that will teach you a lesson, for you and your father didn't give me anything to eat. It's my turn now I'm not gonna give you water to drink.'

The boy followed slowly. They crossed one sandhill and came to another sandhill. The boy said 'I'm thirsty.' The mother said 'Come on my poor little boy.' Then she put the dish on the ground and waited for the child to come. The boy came running up, he knelt down, as he put his head over the dish to drink, the mother quickly pulled the dish from under his face and put it on her head and walked off. Back at the place where they lived, the father arrived and saw that the woman and the boy had left. He followed their tracks. Soon the mother and the child came to another sandhill, it was a big sandhill. The woman ran quickly up the sandhill, and was on top of the sandhill. The boy looked very tired. He hardly walked up the

> hill. Poor little boy's mouth and throat were dry. The woman said 'Hurry up.'
>
> When the boy reached the top of the sandhill, he fell down backwards and rolled down to the bottom of the sandhill. The woman looked down and went off, she didn't want to help him. The father kept following their tracks until he passed the first two sandhills. And at last he came to the big sandhill. In the distance he saw some eagles circling around. As he came closer he saw his son lying dead. He cried and cried. Then he buried his son. And he went after the woman. The woman arrived at a place, where her people were. The people asked her about her husband and the boy. She said 'The boy's dead.' She told the whole story of what happened. She was living with her family. Two days later in the afternoon the man arrived. The people saw him coming, some of them said to the woman 'Your husband's coming.' The woman saw him coming. As he came closer, he got his spears ready. He came and speared the woman straight through her heart. And the woman died. And the man went to live with his people in another place.

To a reader unfamiliar with Central Australian Aboriginal storytelling practices this text might appear somewhat puzzling and/or unsatisfactory as a "good story." Not only does a reader, in order to make proper sense of this story, need to have a certain amount of cultural knowledge relating to Western Desert life, fauna and flora etc., but also – and maybe more importantly – he or she needs to be familiar with some of the genre expectations pertaining to such texts. As to the necessary cultural knowledge, in order to understand the story properly it is important to know that food in Western Desert culture is categorised into two kinds, namely *mai* (plant food, as well as the small edible animals, eggs, etc. collected by the women on their foraging trips) and *kuka* (mainly meat, such as is traditionally provided by the men returning from their hunt, i.e. kangaroo, wallaby, etc.). Furthermore, food distribution is very strictly regulated in traditional Western Desert culture, with distinct rules holding for the distribution and sharing of the various kinds of food. In the story quoted above, the son's lie – maintaining that his mother has fed him emu eggs – is crucial since, according to Western Desert traditional law, the large emu eggs are categorised as *kuka* and should therefore be brought back to camp and shared with the man when he returns from the hunt, whereas it would have been perfectly in order for the mother and her child to eat the smaller finch eggs during the day without sharing them back at camp. Thus, in the story above, the son actually accuses the mother of violating an important rule of food sharing, and it is for this reason that her husband punishes her by withholding all food from her.

In terms of the text building conventions used by the narrator of this story, a number of interesting observations can be made. There is a good chance that the story presented here did not match the expectations brought to the text by an Anglo-Western (or other non-Central Australian Aboriginal) reader. I maintain that the mismatch between an Anglo-Western reader's understanding of what makes a good story and a Pitjantjatjara or Yankunytjatjara person's understanding is due to the fact that the two have access to very different story schemata. In my formulation of a Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara story schema I recognise two main dimensions in which Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara stories differ fundamentally from the canonical Anglo-Western story schema. Firstly, Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara stories are *not protagonist-oriented.* Rather, they focus on a collectivity of people in their mutual interrelationships. I have called this conceptual orientation of the narrative *nexus-orientation.* Since Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara stories are typically nexus-oriented rather than protagonist-oriented, it is often hard for Anglo-Western readers/listeners to identify with one particular character in the story. The story's focus shifts from one character to the next, without really positing one of them as the central or main protagonist for the narrative as a whole.[5]

Secondly, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara stories are *not* built around problem-solving episodes. Rather they are concerned with *cause and effect chains.* The rationale underlying these stories is not so much one of problem-solving, but – if we want to use the term "problem" at all – one of *problem-avoidance.* Problem-avoidance is achieved through the maintenance of appropriate behaviour, whereas inappropriate behaviour will inevitably lead to negative, if not catastrophic, consequences. In this rationale, problem-solving does not enter the game, as once the balance of the system has been upset and the negative chain of causes and effects has been set in motion, there is no fixing it. Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara stories very often show people who fail in preserving the precious social balance that guarantees well-being and a harmonious life in the group. By violating some law of appropriate human behaviour they set off a whole chain of negative consequences and reactions that will affect not only themselves, but also their family members and asso-

[5] For a detailed analysis of how such shifts of character focus are achieved linguistically in Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara texts, see Klapproth 245–251.

ciates.[6] By demonstrating how inappropriate social behaviour leads to inevitable negative consequences, these stories thus bring home the vital importance of maintaining the social balance in the first place, i.e. they express a strategy of problem-avoidance.

This rationale is illustrated nicely by the story "The Son Who Told a Lie" ("Tjitji Katjangku Ngunti Wangkanytja"). The story presents a series of people engaging in wrong behaviour and shows the inevitable catastrophic consequences. The son's lying about the kind of food his mother has given him starts off the chain of actions and reactions. Next follows the father's wrong judgement of the situation and (consequently) his unjustified punishment of his wife, and the cause and effect chain culminates finally in the mother's revengeful negligence of her son and her final death at the hands of her husband. The chain of actions that has been set in motion results in a situation in which everybody loses. The equilibrium has been upset and negative consequences have to be suffered by all the participants of the relational nexus.

There is an additional dimension that comes into play in this story. At the same time as the chain of actions and reactions unfolds, another story is being told. It is the father's story of coming to understand what has been taking place whilst he was away hunting. Very typical for Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara narratives, this process of retrospective reconstruction is carried out by one of the story characters reading the tracks and traces left in the ground by other characters. I call this process of active reconstruction of a series of previous events by a story character *retracing* and recognise it as a conventional and frequently used Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara text building device. Crucial to the notion of retracing is the fact that this gradual discovery process is achieved through the reading of tracks and traces left in the physical environment, and therefore results not only in a story character's mental reconstruction and understanding of some relevant previous action, but also in locating this action in geographical space. This dimension becomes highly relevant when we recognise that these Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara stories of the oral tradition are part of the large corpus of Australian Aboriginal Dreaming stories, and as such in important ways tell of the relationship between people and the land.

There is not space enough here to go into a discussion of this dimension. However, for the purpose at hand, what we may note is the

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[6] Note, too, that showing that the negative consequences have to be suffered by *all* the characters involved is in keeping with the stories' nexus-orientation mentioned above.

fact that, as a text-building device, the concept of *retracing* offers an alternative to the classic Anglo-Western story resolution. Whereas in the classic Anglo-Western resolution section the emphasis is on the outcome of the protagonist's final problem-solving attempt, a narrative that uses retracing as a structuring principle is not primarily concerned with portraying a character involved in the task of problem-solving. Rather, it shows characters that (retrospectively) have to discover and to understand what happened, and have to face the consequences of some previous action that was performed either by themselves or by their family members. In the most general terms, this process of retrospective understanding is thus about coming to see "how the world coheres," how every action is intrinsically bound into an interfunctioning world of human beings, animals and plants, landscape and (to include the dimension of the Aboriginal Dreaming) spiritual potency. Showing characters engaged in this task of "coming to see" – in which they may succeed or fail – is one of the main concerns of traditional Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara stories.

4.2 *Pitjantjatjara–Yankunytjatjara story schema*

The narrative movement at work in the story "The Son Who Told a Lie" ("Tjitji Katjangku Ngunti Wangkanytja") is typical of the sixty-two Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara stories in my corpus. On the basis of the textual analysis of these stories, I have formulated the conceptual template underlying them – i.e. the culture-specific story schema at play – in the following terms:

Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara Story Schema

Stories as nexus-oriented CAUSE AND EFFECT CHAINS

This type of story focuses on a set of characters in their reciprocal relationships, whose actions affect each other.

A character (A) commits an action, which causes an effect for both himself/herself and for others, and which may also cause a response by another character (B) (i.e. another action). Character (B)'s action in turn causes an effect for both himself/herself and for others, and may cause a response by another character (C), and so on. If any of the actions carried out violate Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara Tjukurpa Law, this will have negative consequences. If the actions are in keeping with Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara Law, this will have positive effects.

Additionally, the process by which one or several of the characters come(s) to fully understand what has previously happened (i.e. come(s) to understand the workings of the cause and effect chain) may constitute an issue of central narrative importance.

To sum up, stories conceptualised on the basis of this Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara story schema focus on the interconnectedness of story characters' actions, reactions, and their consequences both for the individual and for the remaining members of the participant nexus. These stories are therefore concerned primarily with exploring questions of mutual responsibility and interdependence, and they recognise the transpersonal character of events and situations, as well as the systemic

nature of human collectivities. One of the main concerns of these stories is to show characters involved in a process of coming to understand these interdependencies, and to foster such an understanding in the readers/listeners of these stories.

5. Conclusions

In my concluding remarks, I want to return to the question why Rocky's father's brothers or the well-being of his old mother matter to Aboriginal viewers of the Hollywood movie *Rocky*. I believe that these questions matter to Central Australian Aboriginal viewers because – in contrast to Anglo-Western viewers – they bring to this story expectations of narrative organisation that are nexus-oriented rather than merely protagonist-oriented, and which focus on the chains of causes and effects affecting the whole family group. This culturally acquired story schema thus serves as a framework for the interpretation of the story and relates in important ways to a culture-specific way of viewing and making sense of the world.

If it is true that the stories we tell mirror our understanding of the world, and vice-versa, that the narratives we tell reiterate and reproduce such an understanding, then the critical analysis of our everyday stories takes on a larger significance. In this paper, two fundamentally different orientations to the world have been presented, such as they are reflected in the Anglo-Western and the Pitjantjatjara–Yankunytjatjara story schema. The first is an orientation in which the human being understands himself/herself as a problem-solver, an individual that has to prove his/her worth by facing the obstacles and problems the world presents. The second orientation is one that sees human beings as intrinsic parts of larger collectivities, their primary role being to maintain the equilibrium of the system that is their world by acting in co-operative and sustainable ways.

Let me conclude with a couple of reflections on the cross-cultural contrastive venture that I have undertaken here. It is important to point out that by establishing these contrasts I am not attempting to present Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara culture as particularly "exotic" or as a "special case," set against an (implicitly) Anglo-Western norm. Indeed, the cross-cultural study of narratives worldwide shows that Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara culture shares many of its cultural preoccupations,

values and emphases with a large number of other indigenous, small scale and/or traditional cultures. The problem is that at this stage in human history, a point in time when the world is being globalised economically, linguistically and, to a certain extent, also culturally, at ever increasing speed by the dictates of a market-oriented Western outlook on life, these unique ways of being, the worlds created by indigenous cultures and many small local communities all over the globe, are maybe threatened more acutely than ever before. In the loud and noisy cacophony of the mass-communicated stories crusading for cultural hegemony, these other and alternative voices are only heard by those who are willing to listen. But listen we must. On a most basic level my study is a plea for the recognition of and respect for the diversity of cultural expressions. I agree with Peter Mühlhäusler, who argues that "[t]he preservation of diversity is seen as essential because of the assumption that the only way to understand the complexities of this world is to approach them from as many perspectives as possible" (209). Sharing our stories across cultural boundaries may prove a fruitful contribution to our explorations of these complexities.

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