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Aspects of the semantics of emotions and feelings in Dalabon (South-Western Arnhem Land, Australia)

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This article describes two of the principal roots allowing the expression of emotions and feelings in Dalabon, an endangered language of South-Western Arnhem Land. The first root, *kangu*, ‘belly’, is depicted linguistically as the location of emotions induced by interpersonal relationships. The belly is thus presented as the locus of good and bad moods generally and of conflict more specifically. Furthermore, the material properties of the belly—its fluidity in particular—impact on one’s temper and ability to deal with others in an ideologically prescribed manner. Speakers describe ritual manipulations undertaken on the belly of young infants in order to shape their temper. *Kangu-no* may thus be described as a malleable interface between the person and the outside world, principally other people. The second root, *yolh*, may at first sight translate as ‘feelings’, either good or bad, but also means ‘appetite’, ‘drive’, ‘pep’. *Yolh-no* is associated with the most intimate part of the person, one’s own aspirations that are independent of interactions with others. Although *yolh-no* connotes the core self and *kangu-no*, the belly, connotes relatedness to others, they are conceived as physiologically connected, so that material properties of the belly impact on the self. Thus, the semantic analysis of Dalabon, along with related anthropological observations, unveils an explicit conceptual and cultural attention to the distinction between emotions and feelings (as respectively defined in the article) and to the autonomy of the person within a constraining social framework. The article shows how this concern echoes and challenges both anthropological and philosophical considerations.

INTRODUCTION

Emotions and feelings attract several well-differentiated trends of interpretation within the social sciences. Within philosophy, emotions have been explored by a number of prominent philosophers from Aristotle to Russell, including Descartes, Hume and many more. Early psychology produced its own distinctive theories, as did neuroscience later on (Damasio 1999, 2003). Anthropology and linguistic anthropology have also explored emotions and have continuously reflected on the notion of the person (see Marriott 1968; Strathern 1988) neighbouring research on emotions proper (see Myers 1979, 1986, 1988; Lutz 1987; Wierzbicka 1999).

For the Australian region, Myers’s (1979) and (1986) studies of Pintupi are among the best anthropological descriptions of emotions. Myers (1986) in particular

depicts the ‘emotional landscape’¹ of the Pintupi group from the Western Desert, providing fine interconnected definitions of the major emotions. He thoroughly describes their conceptual, cultural and social properties and the moral order they shape. As an ethnolinguist, my interests concentrate on the *language* of emotions. Within the Dalabon group,² such analysis requires examination of Kriol as well as Dalabon, as Kriol is effectively the everyday language. I have observed several emotional behaviours and concepts that do resemble the ones depicted by Myers (1979), and there are reasons to anticipate that such a study would uncover a comparable (albeit not identical) ‘emotional landscape’. Hence, a complete study of emotional patterns within their social context should consider Kriol patterns. However, the semantics of emotions in Dalabon remains relevant, as it reveals specific features that are either absent or obscured in Kriol. In fact, analysing the semantics of emotions in Dalabon opens up new insights into the conceptions of emotions and feelings that underlie the speech of Dalabon speakers, and we shall find that such observations echo Myers’s interpretations. Indeed, Myers (1979) states that such discussions are often a source of confusion. He refers to a dichotomy between feelings defined as personal, non-observable private states vs. emotions as articulated, observable, public concepts framed within a cultural system. The following paragraphs spell out various aspects of this complex distinction.

Emotions and feelings have received different treatments in various disciplines. Neuroscientists conceive of emotions as bodily electro-chemical reactions, resulting from environmental stimuli or from representations triggered by memory. Damasio (1999) argues that emotions are not cognitive: they can take place without the person being physiologically aware of them. Feelings are the knowledge of these emotions: they are the private, cognitive counterparts of emotions.³ Neuroscientists focus on the biological nature of emotions, thus stressing their universality. This physicalist view pays little attention to the sociocultural dimension of emotions. As a result, social scientists, anthropologists in particular, have developed a different conception whereby emotions should be understood in their social context. An emotion is thus defined as a type of reaction adapted to a particular situation. Both the situation and the reaction may be defined and described in terms of social configurations, varying across cultures. In this conception, emotions are publicly defined and displayed; feelings are, again, the private counterpart of observable emotions. As an anthropologist, Myers adopts this second stance.

At first sight, these definitions of emotions sound different, if not contradictory.⁴ What is common to both theoretical dichotomies presented previously, however, is the observable nature of emotions, as opposed to the private, unobservable nature of feelings. Emotions are consistently conceived of as an interface between the person and the rest of the world, the observable part of a phenomenon that involves a private sequence (called ‘feelings’), happening strictly within the person. In his *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), Wittgenstein criticises this distinction. He opposes the ‘grammatical confusion’—a confusion about the way language works—that leads us to believe that when talking about feelings, we refer to actual *events* we

could treat as objects of reference. Wittgenstein (1953)'s famous parabola compares this would-be private object to a beetle that each one of us would keep enclosed in a secret box:

§293: Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a 'beetle'. No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle [...] The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a *something* [...].

That is to say: if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of 'object and designation', the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant.

Our inclination to refer to private states within our language games is the result of a grammatical misunderstanding, whereby we hold private states to be real objects of reference. The 'beetle' 'cancels out' because our world is entirely woven within what Wittgenstein calls language games: the idea of a private language is incoherent. This is Wittgenstein's way of discarding a culturally specific confusion, the pervasive Western mind/body dichotomy. While Wittgenstein is not a behaviourist, he holds that human phenomena take place entirely within language—language being altogether social, rational, natural, even biological and thus indifferent to the mind/body dichotomy. Hence, the idea of referring to private objects makes no sense. Wittgenstein's criticism encompasses both conceptions of the emotions/feelings pair, as both the physicalist and the 'culturalist' conception try to articulate something about the private counterpart of observable phenomena.

Myers's reluctance to discuss feelings, which he spelt out in his 1988 article, takes Wittgenstein's warnings into account. One of Myers's points is that, as opposed to classical/common sense Western views (Lutz 1986), emotions should not be classified as being opposed to reason and concepts. Instead, following a Wittgensteinian trend,⁵ Myers argues that emotions should be understood as culturally articulated, rational concepts, operating without reference to unarticulated, irrational, private feelings. Throughout his writings, Myers convincingly shows that Pintupi emotions can be described as discursive, rational concepts, relating to one another within a wider social context and world view. Myers's reluctance to discuss feelings also results from a concern expressed by Lutz (1987) in her study of the Ifaluk system, when she concludes that her article is not 'intended as a model of how the Ifaluk "think about their feelings"', because the 'concern with "true, underlying feeling(s)" is a local cultural preoccupation' specific to 'Euroamerican cultural constructions'. Tackling the issue of private feelings amounts to imposing Western values and concerns. Myers's attitude towards feelings both matches Wittgenstein's criticism of Western conceptions of language, especially his reference to private feelings, and is associated with the same (self-)criticism of Western culture as Lutz's.

But Myers's desire to avoid imposing Western values takes him one step further: Myers (1979) argues that the Pintupi moral ideal consists in minimising individuals' private inputs by assigning radical moral priority to the public sphere—that is, to

emotions against feelings: 'The ideology of emotions [in the Pintupi cultural system] can be read almost as a moral text against the wrongness of private wilfulness' (alluding to Stanner). On the other hand, in *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self* (Myers 1986), the author insists on the importance of individual autonomy—which connects with private feelings. This is not contradictory, as he explains that this tension between personal autonomy and relatedness to others is precisely the cornerstone of the Pintupi social order.

While I applaud Myers's description of the Pintupi 'emotional landscape', and his qualification of emotions as articulated, social concepts, I have reservations about his treatment of feelings. These reservations stem from my observations of the semantic structure of the domain of emotions and feelings in Dalabon, in connection with speakers' views and with culture-specific situations. I use the terms 'emotions' and 'feelings' here in the broad sense defined earlier in the text: emotions are an interface between the person and the world; feelings are conceived of as cognitive and thus private. These concepts may not necessarily be transferred to another cultural system in an identical way. However, we shall see that this terminology is not inappropriate in the case of Dalabon discourse and folk theories. Contrasting with Myers's descriptions of the Pintupi, the question of the partition between culturally framed emotional experiences and bare, strictly private experiences does seem to be an issue of concern for Dalabon speakers and therefore a topic worth studying. In addition, while Dalabon moral values do put a strong emphasis on sharing, they do not seem to discard the private sphere.

In Dalabon, two roots seem to structure the expression of emotions and feelings. We will first explore the semantic values of *kangu*, the belly, which may be understood as the site and medium of interpersonal emotions, and further, as a malleable interface between the person and the outside world. The second morpheme, *yolh*, refers to personal, private feelings. Far from being ethically dismissed, it is explicitly regarded as the expression of the self and its autonomy. *Kangu* and *yolh* are not disconnected from each other. In fact, it seems that one's *yolh-no* may be reached and transformed via the materiality of the belly. And we shall see that this interaction between *kangu* and *yolh* also sheds some light on the 'beetle issue' mentioned previously.

CONTEXT AND METHOD

As I challenge the question of private feelings in an Australian Aboriginal culture, dismissed by Myers (1979) as a vexed topic, it is particularly important to hear his warnings about the difficulty of this subject. Emotions and feelings involve entangled affects and ideologies, and the risk of extrapolating on fragile bases, of distorting foreign conceptions and inadvertently adjusting them to our own, is particularly acute. My argument is essentially grounded on a concrete, easily analysable linguistic corpus. My thorough knowledge of the Dalabon social framework and daily lives, built upon my living among the Dalabon community for several years, helps interpretations.

The corpus consists of about 30 h of recorded and fully transcribed conversations between myself and Dalabon speakers or semi-speakers on the topic of laws, reason, the mind, the self, emotions, feelings and interpersonal relationships in Dalabon and Kriol. These recordings were collected between 2007 and 2008 in South-Western Arnhem Land (Weemol, Beswick).⁶

Kriol is a well-developed creole widely identified as Aboriginal by its speakers. Numbering at least 20,000 native speakers across Northern Australia, it is the predominant mother tongue of the communities of the South-Western Arnhem region. Dalabon, a non-Pama-Nyungan prefixing language of the same region, within the Gunwinyguan family,⁷ is a highly endangered language numbering fewer than ten speakers at the time of writing, making it difficult to document in context as an orthodox methodology would require. A good way to document Dalabon is therefore to conduct interviews with the best speakers, encouraging them to tell stories, anecdotes, opinions and to articulate metalinguistic statements—explanations of all sorts and translations in Kriol (or English). Most interviewees being at least bilingual, the corpus is a mix of Dalabon and Kriol, with some English. In the case of emotions and feelings, most of the materials, and all the quotes except two, are drawn from conversations with two female interlocutors, out of six main speakers involved in this project.

Such a corpus may be deemed imperfect when compared to the standards of non-endangered language documentation. But because such ‘imperfections’ cannot be avoided with endangered languages, I suggest that one should rely on the obstacles mentioned previously, instead of fancying a ‘perfect’ corpus. Rather than considering the interviews as ‘artificial’, I re-claim research-oriented conversations as a ‘genuine’ context where Dalabon is still spoken. Additionally, metalinguistic statements are useful considering my interests. What I seek to understand via the semantics of Dalabon is how speakers conceive of their own words, statements and concepts—that is, their conceptual ‘models’ (Quinn & Holland 1987).⁸ Metalinguistic statements teach us a lot about these models. Kriol translations convey important information about speakers’ understanding of Dalabon (Ponsonnet 2009). As a result of this methodology, the exact anthropological context of Dalabon expressions cannot be fully described, simply because it has not been fully recreated. The real context of the quotes is the research-oriented conversations, where they are included in an anecdote, for example. This cannot compare to the rich, real situations that anthropologists often use as examples, but my knowledge of the social context and of the speakers’ personal background helps my interpretation. The quotes presented later are representative of a number of occurrences in the corpus (two sound occurrences, at a minimum). In this framework, the glosses and translations presented later in the text result from my own accumulated and cross-checked knowledge of Dalabon language and social background. Whenever useful, I present both literal and free translations, in order to make the translation and glossing processes more transparent.

There is a ‘gender bias’ in my corpus for this topic. Indeed, female Dalabon speakers talked more about emotions and interpersonal relationships than male

speakers did. This could reflect a gender partition of interests and activities. While emotions and feelings are by no means ‘secret’ topics,⁹ one of women’s major responsibilities is to look after children and family in general. This involves paying a lot of attention to emotions, as they result from interactions with others. Hence, this gender bias may be a consequence of a structural feature of the regional culture rather than an imperfection. There is little literature about emotions and feelings in languages of this region, apart from Evans (2007) and Ponsonnet (2009). Consequently, my analyses rely essentially on the corpus described earlier, on my observations of social behaviours and on my knowledge of the Dalabon group’s cultural scenarios, standards and values.

THE SEMANTICS OF EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS IN DALABON

Dalabon has a limited number of nouns to refer to emotions and feelings. Verbs and adjectives are more frequent. Dalabon is highly polysynthetic: lexemes are made of morphemes (sometimes many of them) that can be used in a number of different lexemes. Morphemes are often understood by speakers as conveying a fairly constant meaning, even when they are used within seemingly lexicalised, compound forms. A large number of lexemes expressing feelings and/or emotions use two focal roots, *kangu* and *yolh*, which can be approximated to ‘belly’ and ‘feelings’, respectively. *Kangu* and *yolh* are not strictly bound morphemes: they can also stand as nouns. However, they do not appear alone. Just like a number of Dalabon nouns—body parts in particular—they obligatorily bear a suffix, in this case, the possessive suffix.¹⁰ Hence, one cannot use *kangu* or *yolh* alone, but must say *kangu-no*, ‘his/her belly’, *kangu-ngu*, ‘your belly’, *yolh-ngan*, ‘my feelings’, etc. I will use the default third person singular forms *kangu-no* and *yolh-no* to designate the nouns. *Kangu* and *yolh* will designate the roots. I will start by describing the respective uses and semantic values of *kangu/kangu-no* on the one hand, *yolh/yolh-no* on the other hand, in order to understand their meaning, functions and status in comparison with each other.

KANGU

Kangu-no as a body part

Kangu-no refers to various body parts located in the abdominal region. The root *kangu* may thus be used to form lexemes that have nothing to do with emotions or temper. The verb *kangu-barmu*, for instance, means ‘to sleep on belly’, where *kangu* seems to refer to an external body part. But pregnant women may also be described as carrying a child ‘in their *kangu-no*’, showing that *kangu-no* may also be construed as a container, maybe akin to an internal organ. Five of the six speakers, when asked to point at *kangu-no* on the drawing of a male human body where organs were apparent (as in local ‘X-ray style’ painting), identified a central area just below the lungs, where the stomach is.¹¹ This may indicate that *kangu-no* is

consciously construed as an internal organ, probably the stomach. *Kangu-no* is thus polysemic, meaning (possibly among other things) the belly, the stomach, or ‘abdominal container’. Because *belly* in English conveys the ‘container’ connotation, I will translate *kangu-no* with the broader term ‘belly’ along the article.

Emotions and feelings for others

Kangu appears within a number of compound verbs expressing one’s emotional state, typically in relation to persons. The verb *kangu-darrmu*,¹² for instance, was used to describe the feelings of ‘missing someone’. We also find *kangu-kurduhmu* (*kangu* + ‘be stuck’), often more specifically ‘be stuck in an uncomfortable situation’, cf. Ponsonnet (forthcoming), and *kangu-run*, (*kangu* + ‘cry’). They are both used in example (1) to refer to an interpersonal emotional state, in this context as ‘worry about someone’, ‘feel sorrow about someone’.

- (1)¹³ *Bah malung wujbidul kaye-ninj nunh*
 But before hospital he:SUB-be:PI at.this.time

ngah-marne-kangu-kurduhminj,
 I>him-BENEF-*kangu*-be.stuck.in.an.uncomfortable.situation:PI

ngah-dja-marne-kangu-runinj munguyh.
 I>him-just-BENEF-*kangu*-cry:PI constantly

Lit. ‘But before, when she was in hospital, then I used to be **belly-uncomfortable** about her, I would be **belly-crying** about her all the time.’

Free ‘But before, when she was in hospital, then I used to **worry** about her I would keep **feeling sorrow** about her all the time.’

Kangu can also be used in verbs expressing positive (or improving) feelings, as in example (2).

- (2) *Ngah-Ing-kangu-mon-minj kah-marne-dudjminj wujbidul-walung*.
 I-then-*kangu*-good-become:PI him>me-BENEF-return:PP hospital-ELAT

Lit. ‘Then my **belly got better**, as she came back to me, from hospital.’

Free ‘Then I **felt better**, as she came back to me, from hospital.’

Many more verbs or adjectives can be formed on the same pattern, associating *kangu* with another morpheme in order to describe emotions. *Kangu-no*, the belly, is represented linguistically as the locus of these emotions, or their medium, the organ that gets affected in one way or another when one experiences emotional pain or relief. An inventory of these lexemes would lead us to identify and describe typical emotions, their nature and social context, just as Myers (1979) did in the

Pintupi context—but this is not the topic of this article. It is worth mentioning, however, that in my corpus, compounds including *kangu* were nearly always used to describe feelings/emotions triggered by interpersonal relationships. It thus seems that emotions related to other human beings—the kind of emotions emphasised by Myers—are associated with this root. While the number of occurrences is too low to be fully conclusive, we will find other reasons to think that *kangu* is primarily associated with interactions with the outer environment, including interpersonal situations—the latter being, in this cultural context, a major dimension of the former.

Moods

Kangu is also used to describe people's moods, such as their bellicose or peaceful attitudes towards others. Typically, *kangu-mon* (*kangu* + 'good') means 'to be in a good disposition towards someone', as opposed to being angry against this person, seeking conflict with him or her:

- (3) *Bukah-dja-marne-kangu-mon.*
 he>him.high-just-BENEF-*kangu*-good

Si, laik François im stil gud la yu, im don graul yu bobala.
 See, like François he still good with you he neg argue:PR you interj

Lit. 'He's now **good belly** for her. See, François for instance, he's still good with you, he doesn't argue with you, good man!'

Free 'He's now **well disposed** towards her. See, François for instance, he's still good with you, he doesn't argue with you, good man!'

Kangu-weh (*kangu* + 'bad') is the symmetrical counterpart of *kangu-mon*, as shown in example (4), where the speaker provides defining explanations of the difference between several expressions using *kangu*. Her definition shows how emotions described using *kangu* are closely associated with interpersonal relationships, here verbal communication.

- (4) *Yang bulah-marne-yenjdjung nunh mah wirrih kah-Ing-kangu-weh-mun.*
 speech.content they>him-BENEF-talk:PR this but or he-then-*kangu*-bad-become:PR

Nunh mah wirrih bulah-marne-yenjdjung nunh kah-kangu-burrama-mun.
 This thus or they>him-BENEF-talk:PR this he-*kangu*-good-become:PR

Lit. 'Either they speak out their views to each other, or if not then his **belly gets bad**. But in the case they talk to each other, then his **belly gets fine**.'

Free 'Either they speak out their views to each other, or if not then he **feels bad**, they are in a **bad mood**. But in the case they talk to each other, then he **feels good**.'

Structurally equivalent forms, *gudbinji* (literally ‘good belly’) and *nogudbinji*, exist in Kriol, showing that speakers do, to some extent, endorse the actual implication of body parts in the phenomena at stake (see below). All these senses also apply to *kangu-mon* and *kangu-weh*.

- (5) *Yinbala polodjais gija na.*
 you.two apologise:PR RECIP now

Yinbala gudbinji. Im gudbinji en yu gudbinji bla im.
 you.two **gudbinji** he **gudbinji** and you **gudbinji** DAT him

Lit. ‘You two apologise to each other. You two are **good belly**. He’s **good belly** and you are **good belly** towards him.’

Free ‘You two apologise to each other. You two are in a **good mood** again. He’s **well disposed** and you are **well disposed** towards him.’

Conflict

As indicated by the reference to apology in example (5), *binji* and *kangu* connote conflict. *Kangu-mon* (and *kangu-weh*) can be associated with fairly violent situations involving actual ‘fight’—rather than just bad moods and petty arguments. The adjective *kangu-yirru-mon*, *kangu* + ‘fight’ + ‘good’, can be used to describe a belligerent and aggressive person or animal. The expression *kangu-nguddu-bakka* conveys the idea of surrender—succumbing to a disease, for instance. One may also use *nguddu-bakka* alone. Adding *kangu* does not seem to amend the sense of the expression; it simply spells out the site where this internal fight takes place. In example (6), the speaker explicitly locates a conflict in one’s stomach. She does so in spite of her qualifying the conflict at stake as an intellectual one¹⁴ in the first part of the sentence, using the verb *kodj-wokarrun*, literally ‘talk to oneself in the head’, or ‘wonder’, ‘be in a dilemma’. Nonetheless the event, as a conflict, is located inside one’s stomach. *Kangu-no* is thus consistently associated with conflict, regardless of the type of conflict.

- (6) *Kah-kodj-wokarrun kanihdja, nunh yirru, boyenj kah-yidjnjan. Kangu-no-kah.*
 he-head-tell:RECIP;PR there this fight big he>him-have:PR **belly**-his-LOC

Lit. ‘He’s talking to himself in his head there, he’s got this fight, a big one. In his **belly**.’

Free ‘He’s got a dilemma there, he’s got this fight, a big one. In his **belly**.’

Kangu-no as the locus and medium of emotions, moods and conflicts

The semantics of *kangu* (reflected in its Kriol counterpart *binji*) connects with interpersonal relationships, emotions and conflicts. Furthermore, example (6) mentioned

Following the same trend, further material properties associated linguistically with the belly connote not only one's mood on a specific occasion, but one's temper, one's character and personality, independent of a particular situation. The verb *kangu-yowyow*, literally *kangu* + 'flow', repeating the fluidity metaphor, provides a good example. *Kangu-yowyow*, illustrated in example (9), can be said of someone who has a good, reliable temper, who is open to others.

- (9) *Laik, bulu kah-nan biyi kirdikird bulkah-marne-kangu-yowyow.*
like they he-see:PR men women he>they-BENEF-*kangu*-flow;REDUP

Djehneng kah-yin radjdjarr. Mak bulka-njirrkmi-won.
as.if he-say flood.water neg he>they:IRR-hatred-give:PR

'Like, she comes across men and women and she is **kind** to them.
You'd reckon flood water. She doesn't have any hatred for anyone.'

When someone is not kind and generous, she is said to be *kangu-murduk*, *kangu* + 'hard'. The adjective *kangu-murduk*, often translated as 'had binji' (<Engl. 'hard') in Kriol, describes someone 'selfish', not inclined to share with others—whether it be belongings, time, jokes, as shown in example (10).

- (10) *Kah-kangu-murдумurduk-kun.*
he-*kangu*-hard;REDUP-GEN

Laik had flin laik kardu, kardu kah-durruniyan, kardu...
Like hard feeling like maybe maybe he-argue:FUT maybe

Munu kah-dja-ni yibungkarn, im ron.
intention.privative he-just-be:PR himself him one.self

'He's got a **hard belly**. Like hard feelings, like maybe, maybe he'll keep having arguments, maybe. He just stays there, by himself, all by himself.'

In these examples, it was clear from the context but also from the tone that *kangu-yowyow* was a positive description and *kangu-murduk* a negative one. But interestingly, *murduk* in *kangu-murduk* sometimes gets translated in Kriol as 'strong' rather than 'had', with *kangu-murduk* gaining a positive meaning: 'brave', 'courageous' (particularly in social situations). Example (11) describes, also with a positive tone, a 'strong personality'.

- (11) *Im breibwan, im kin dangfait.*
he brave he can tongue.fight

Kah-djong-bruh, mak ka-djong-mun.
he-fear-dry neg he:IRR-fear-become:PR

Bulah-dungiyān *mak* *ka-djong-muniyan.*
 they>him-abuse:FUT neg he:IRR-fear-become:FUT

Kangu-murduk. *Im* *sten* *fo* *det* *fait.*
kangu-strong he stand for that fight

Lit. 'He's brave, he can fight with his tongue. He's without fear, he's not scared. If they abuse him, he won't get scared. **Strong belly.** He stands for fight.'

Free 'He's brave, he knows how to argue. If they abuse him, he won't get scared.

A strong personality. He stands up to fight.

Hence, remarkably, the same word may be used to criticise a selfish person and to praise a person being brave in social contexts. *Kangu-murduk* seems to be inadequate when one's bravery is not social. The expression *yang-murduk* ('content of speech' + 'strong'), 'verbally strong', once used to explain *kangu-murduk*, confirms that *kangu-murduk* applies to social situations. We will see how speakers deal with this ambivalence of *kangu-murduk* in the discussion of *yolh*, later in the text.

Kangu-murduk, understood as 'had binji', 'hard belly', 'selfish', contrasts with the adjective *kangu-bolabola*. *Bola* does not exist as a lexeme but is used, for instance, in *kurlah-bolabola* 'skin' + 'soft', describing the tender skin of the inside forearm. *Kangu-bolabola* describes generous persons prompt to share with others (daily things such as food, radio sets and so on), as in example (12), where the speaker proudly applies it to herself. *Kangu-bolabola* can also be said of someone who enjoys the presence of others—a happy, funny, enjoyable person.

(12) *Nunda* *mani* *nunh* *ngah-ngabbun* *kenbo* *bolah-ngabbuyan.*
 this.time money this I>him-give:PR then they>he-give:FUT

Ngey *ngah-kangu-bolabola.*
 me I-*kangu*-sensitive;REDUP

Lit. 'This is when I give money, then they give. Personally, I have a **sensitive belly.**'

Free 'This is when I give money, then they give. Personally, I am a **generous, giving person.**'

Kangu-yerrkmu (*kangu* + 'slip'), *kangu-yowyow* (*kangu* + 'flow'), *kangu-bolabola* (*kangu* + 'soft'/'sensitive'), *kangu-burrāma* (*kangu* + 'good'), *kangu-murduk* (*kangu* + 'hard' or 'strong'), *kangu-weh* (*kangu* + 'bad') all describe one's temper, personality—tendencies in one's interactions with others. These expressions are all interconnected: speakers use one to define others, by contrast or association. One is made/considered a happy person because she enjoys the presence of others and

is therefore good company; enjoying aloneness is associated with selfishness, sadness and unhappiness. Higher value is put on being generous, on sharing and enjoying the presence of others. This preference was once expressed by two interviewees bursting into a delighted chorus when I eventually uttered ‘*kah-kangu-yowyow*’, ‘her belly flows’ (a sentence to study which they chose to hear as a statement), just after our discussing ‘*kangu-murduk*’, ‘being selfish’. This ethical framework matches what Myers describes as an emphasis on relatedness, the defining connection of individuals sharing with one another within the social group, as opposed to autonomy, the individual’s specificity and independence. The ambivalence of *kangu-murduk*, meaning both ‘selfish’ and ‘courageous’ in social conflicts, constitutes an interesting exception to the coherence of the system.

Several of the expressions mentioned previously rely on a representation of the belly (or possibly the stomach) as more or less soft/fluid vs. hard/solid. The structure of language is not in itself a sign that speakers do actually hold the fluidity of one’s stomach to determine one’s personality. Indeed, the figure is not realistic, as body parts cannot, strictly speaking, be fluid. But one can imagine them as more or less soft and malleable: fluidity and malleability unite in their opposition to hardness. And in fact, there is some evidence that speakers do endorse a fluidity/malleability representation of the belly.

First, Kriol definitions of *kangu-murduk* used the Kriol *had*, literally ‘hard’, or *strong*, ‘strong’, with *strong* being used to describe hard ground. This recurrence in Kriol is a sign that the morpheme *murduk* does retain its original semantic value here. More importantly, *kangu-yowyow* was explained by a very explicit comparison with flood water. This comparison sounds like a cultural trope, as shown by the recurrent and more or less reified comparison with flood water exemplified in (9), repeated later:

- (9) *Laik, bulu kah-nan biyi kirdikird bulkah-marne-kangu-yowyow.*
Djehneng kah-yin radjdjarr. Mak bulka-njirrkm-won.
 ‘Like, she comes across men and women and she is **kind** to them. You’d reckon flood water. She doesn’t have any hatred for anyone.’

Crucially, both major female consultants separately described a secular ritual¹⁵ whereby a young infant was dragged on her belly over the sand from the top to the bottom of the river bank, and her belly was rubbed with sand. The water then flowed over the bank (during rain season), making the baby *kangu-bolabola*, a generous, happy person, who ‘never says no to anybody’. Symbolically, the fluidity of the sand and water are transferred to the baby’s belly thanks to massaging—which, in itself, can also render the belly malleable. Thus, the representations displayed by the semantics of Dalabon did correspond to material actions in ritual practises. Individuals’ tempers and personalities, their ability to interact with others in an ethically appropriate manner, are understood to be related at least symbolically, to properties

of their bellies, mainly fluidity or malleability as opposed to hardness. It should be noted that the properties of the sand and water may be regarded, in the ritual, as both symbolic and material. They are real material properties *and* stand as symbolic tokens for such properties. Material manipulations upon the belly, activating symbolic representations of physical properties, are considered adequate actions to make the child a good person.

An interface between the person and the outside world

Kangu sometimes occurs in contexts that do not match any of the uses described previously. The most salient case is the expression *kangu-barrhmu*, *kangu* + ‘crack’, which means ‘have a fright’, ‘have a shock’, ‘be very surprised’ by something. An occurrence of *kangu-weh* referring to a bad feeling that was, in fact, a premonition also indicates that *kangu* may be understood as the receptacle of external events affecting the interface between the person and the outside world. This does make sense in connection with the idea that the belly is the locus of interpersonal emotions and affects because in the Dalabon universe, interactions with others are the most prominent aspect of one’s interactions with the environment.

To summarise, we may state that the semantics of *kangu* in Dalabon correlates with the fact that *kangu-no*, the belly, is regarded as the locus of interpersonal emotions (the kind of emotions described by Myers in the Pintupi context), linked to affection or animosity—with an emphasis on conflict. *Kangu-no* is not only linguistically depicted as the locus of interpersonal emotions, but also as their medium. The belly (or stomach) is affected when one experiences an emotion. Its material properties, its being fluid or malleable as opposed to harder, determine one being more or less open to others, more or less socially valuable. This representation of the physical properties of the belly is echoed by accounts of manipulations undertaken on young infants, involving sand and flowing water as symbols and instances of fluidity, to make the infant’s belly more fluid and malleable so that she grows as good-tempered. Further, *kangu-no* seems to be considered the receptacle of what comes from outside more generally—an interface between the person and the external world (other human beings constituting the most important part of the external world for Dalabon individuals). To the extent that *kangu-no* is conceived of as an interface between the person and the outside world, it seems that Dalabon speakers’ constructs of the belly play an important part in what has earlier been called ‘emotions’. Indeed, emotions were defined as observable, ‘reachable’ phenomena (as opposed to ‘unreachable’ private feelings) standing at the interface between an individual and the world. Because Dalabon value relatedness to others, one’s *kangu-no* primarily shelters emotions triggered by interpersonal interactions—that is, emotions of the sort emphasised by Myers in the Pintupi context. I will now describe meanings and uses of *yolh-no*, thus shedding light on Dalabon speakers’ conceptions of private feelings, of the self as an autonomous entity.

YOLH

Feelings

As a first approximation, *yolh-no* may translate as ‘filin’ in Kriol and ‘feelings’ in English. Just like *kangu*, it is used to describe either good or bad feelings. *Yolh-burrama* (*yolh* + ‘good’) and *yolh-weh* (*yolh* + ‘bad’) express moods in a similar fashion to *kangu-burrama/kangu-weh* in Dalabon, *gudbinji/nogudbinji* in Kriol. In some contexts, expressions including *yolh* seem nearly interchangeable with expressions using *kangu*. This is the case in example (13), where *yolh-weh* describes the mood of a loner, who stays away from others. Example (13) compares with example (10), where the speaker refers to a similar situation but uses *kangu-murduk* (*kangu* + ‘hard’, ‘selfish’). It may be noted that in example (13), in contrast to example (10), the speaker sounded compassionate rather than judgemental.

- (13) *Kardu kah-yolh-weh, kah-nini kanihdja kardu kah-yolh-weh!*
 maybe he-*yolh*-bad he-stay;REDUP:PR there maybe he-*yolh*-bad

Lit. ‘He might **have a bad yolh**, he just stays there [by himself], maybe he’s got a **bad yolh!**’
 Free ‘He might be in a **bad mood**, he just stays there [by himself], maybe he is **melancholic!**’

Yolh is also found in expressions such as *yolh-yerrkmu*, *yolh* + ‘slip’, apparently a synonym of *kangu-yerrkmu*. Not all *kangu* compounds transfer to *yolh*, or vice versa,¹⁶ but the fluidity property of *kangu-no* partly applies to *yolh-no* as well. Consistently, this figure is extended via the idea of entanglement, with an expression apparently specific to *yolh*: *yolh-dukkarrun*, *yolh* + ‘tangled up’, translated in Kriol as ‘worimbat’ (<Eng. ‘worry’), ‘fil sori’ (<Eng. ‘feel sorry’). In example (14), *yolh-dukkarrun* conveys the idea of anxiety, typically the anxiety that is said to make one sick when worrying about deceased people for too long (a culturally typical scenario).

- (14) *Nunh munguyh ngaye-ningiyan, ngaye-bengkiyan, nunh wunga-yelung-moyh-rakkan.*
 this all.the.time I:SUB-stay:FUT I>him:SUB-know:FUT this I:APPR-then-sick-fall:PR

Yolh-ngan wunga-yolh-dukkarrun.
yolh-my I:APPR-yolh-tie.up:RECIP:PR

Lit. ‘If I remain by myself inactive all the time, if I think about it all the time, then I will get sick. My **yolh**, my **yolh will get entangled.**’
 Free ‘If I remain by myself inactive all the time, if I think about it all the time, then I will get sick. My **feelings**, I might become **anxious.**’

In example (14), the source of anxiety was, again, the speaker’s concern about a close family member being sick. However, *yolh-dukkarrun* refers to what happens to the person herself and the way her health is affected from the inside if she stays

withdrawn from others and from worldly activities. While *yolh* and *kangu* expressions are often interchangeable, here *yolh-dukarrun* is not equivalent to a *kangu* compound: *yolh* connotes what happens to the person proper, in the culturally typical scenario when she unhealthily focuses on her own feeling of sorrow. The entanglement metaphor recalls fluidity, but in that case, the feeling results from the absence of interpersonal, and broadly speaking external impacts. As we shall see, this idea that *yolh* connotes private feelings of the person is confirmed by further uses of *yolh*.

Desires and appetites

Yolh can be described as good or bad: good *yolh* is associated with good moods, bad *yolh* with bad moods. *Yolh* is thus treated as a neutral component, with its value yet to be qualified. But *yolh* may also bear a slightly different connotation. For instance, the verb *yolh-wudj*, *yolh* + ‘finish off’, describes the absence of cheerfulness, a low and depressed mood. This lack of enthusiasm contrasts with *yolh-ni*, *yolh* + ‘be’, which often means ‘feel like’. In this framework, being deprived of *yolh* amounts to an absence of enthusiasm, of gusto, and *yolh*, rather than being neutral, connotes higher, positive moods. Example (15) makes the connection of *yolh* with appetites and drives very explicit.

- (15) *Ngah-yolh-wudj*, *nunh* *mak* [*nga-nguniyan*].
 I-*yolh*-finish.off:PR this neg [I>he:IRR-eat:FUT]

Lit. ‘If if my *yolh* is finished off, then I won’t [eat].’

Free ‘If I’ve got no **appetite**, then I won’t [eat].’

In other instances, *yolh-wudj* (*yolh* + ‘finish’) is explained thanks to Kriol expressions: ‘*im don wana laf*, literally ‘he doesn’t feel like laughing’, ‘*ai no hepi*’, literally ‘I’m not happy’. Lacking appetite and not being cheerful or happy are culturally equivalent in that context. They are all consequences of *yolh-wudj*, having no *yolh*, no pep, which results in being morose, serious, depressed (see example 14). In such cases, *yolh* is not neutral but denotes positive feelings, positive drives, rather than feelings generally. In line with this interpretation, *yolh* is used in some translations of what English describes as love. *Yolh*, as a root, may nonetheless be used to form expressions related to negative or lower moods, because the absence of drives, or unsettled drives, results in undesirable states (depression, anxiety, etc.).

A lot more could be said about *yolh* and *yolh-no*, but we may now articulate a hypothesis. While *kangu-no* designates the interface between the person and her (natural and social) environment, *yolh* and *yolh-no* seem to refer to moods understood as specifically personal—the set of one’s drives, stemming from ‘inside’ the person. These moods are not seen primarily as consequences of interactions with others (or with the environment), but as resulting from events within the person,

as in example (14). Additionally, the contrast between examples (10) and (13) tells us about the values governing the range of affects connected to *yolh-no* and to *kangu-no*, respectively. Both sentences describe a loner who likes to stay away from others. Example (10) uses a *kangu* compound (*kangu-murduk*, *kangu* + ‘hard’), describes a social situation, and is quite explicitly judgemental: one should *not* keep away from others. Example (13) uses a *yolh* compound (*yolh-weh*, *yolh* + ‘bad’) and sounds compassionate rather than judgemental: the speaker describes someone subject to an unexplainable and uncontrollable ‘melancholy’. This contrast indicates that, in the domain of *yolh*, individuals enjoy greater autonomy to borrow a term used by Myers to refer to the possibility that one may act as an independent entity. The moods related to *yolh-no*, freed from the constraints of relatedness, are rooted and dealt with within the individual and belong to the person proper. To that extent, they correspond to what was earlier called ‘feelings’.

Yolh-no as what is specific to the self

Here again, the hypothesis articulated on the basis of the semantic structure of Dalabon confirms that speakers do explicitly associate *yolh-no* with individuals’ autonomy. In example (16), the speaker defines *yolh-no* as the eminently and purely subjective component of the person. Her assertive tone emphasises the value put on autonomy, enacted as the right for one to be different—precisely, in her sentence, the right to not feel good, to be unhappy (we have seen that being happy, or at least cheerful and of good company, was morally praised in the domain of interpersonal relationships and dominated by the values of relatedness).

- (16) *Yolh-no nunh im/ oni yolh-no na. Laik blanga im filin.*
yolh-his this it [false start] only yolh-his there like POSS him feelings

Hau im fil. Im matbi nogud filin, im difren brom enibodi.
 how he feel:PR he maybe bad feelings he different from anybody

‘His *yolh*, this is/only his *yolh* there. Like, his **feelings**. How he feels. He might feel bad, he’s different from anyone else.’

Additionally, while in spontaneous translations speakers usually translate *yolh-no* with Kriol ‘filin’, the same speaker, when prompted to explain *yolh-no*, suggests a more refined translation, namely ‘wil’ (<Engl. ‘will’). *Wil* is not very frequent in Kriol, and considering the speaker’s limited mastery of English, what she means is not transparent. Nonetheless, if we lend to *wil* a semantic value more or less equivalent to the value of *will*, this definition remains amazingly consistent with example (16). Thus, we may safely conclude that *yolh-no*, one’s pep, the set of one’s drives and appetites, of one’s private feelings, stemming from inside the self as opposed to socially triggered emotions, is regarded as a defining element of the person, of the independent individual.

The autonomy of *yolh-no*

While the root *yolh* may be used to denote moods like *kangu* does, these items are well differentiated. *Yolh-no* may be understood as the set of one's private feelings, as well as one's pep or gusto, the set of one's positive drives—feelings, desires, appetites, love. As the absence of drives may entail negative moods, *yolh* may also be used to express moroseness, melancholy, anxiety. (Some) speakers explicitly associate *yolh-no* with the specificities of one's personality or will, that is, with the individual's independence and autonomy. The domain of private feelings is thus associated with personal psychological well-being (happiness, enthusiasm and their counterparts, depression, lack of desire, melancholy etc.) and conceived of as independent of social order and values.

The assertion of one's right to be different in example (16) and the absence of judgement in the 'yolh related' description of a loner in example (13) demonstrate that autonomy is not ethically dismissed at all times. This is puzzling in comparison with the values enforcing relatedness, firmly asserted in the evaluation and control (by means of ritual manipulations) of people's tempers. The analysis of *kangu* had led to the conclusion that the Dalabon, matching Myers's description of the Pintupi, largely places ethical value in relatedness and connection with others. Indeed, Myers (1986) identifies a tension between autonomy and relatedness in the Pintupi context. But I have not observed any significant *tension* with Dalabon speakers. Socially oriented emotions mediated by *kangu-no* and individual feelings, *yolh-no*, rooted in the private self, do not seem to stand in opposition. Rather, these sets of values seem to operate on parallel planes. Within the hours of conversations I have recorded (and the rest of the time), the legitimacy of one's *yolh-no* was never denied—it was, in fact, acknowledged. And importantly, the ambivalence between *kangu-murduk* as 'hard belly', 'selfish' (example 10) and *kangu-murduk* as 'strong belly', 'standing up for his view' (example 11) remained unnoticed by the speaker even when the confrontation neared the surface. The negative evaluation of *kangu-murduk* relies on values of relatedness; the positive evaluation of *kangu-murduk* relies on values of autonomy. As the polysemy may go unnoticed, I am tempted to conclude that Dalabon speakers can be indifferent to what we perceive as a contradiction between these two sets of values. We are thus left with the problem of understanding the omnipresence of interpersonal relationships in a way that explains how the expected tension with personal autonomy may be avoided.

THE INTERACTION BETWEEN *KANGU-NO* AND *YOLH-NO*

Echoing the semantic overlap between *kangu* and *yolh*, some speakers talk of *yolh-no* as if it were located in the belly, or even as if it were the belly. In such cases, *yolh-no* and *kangu-no* are more or less conflated, reflecting the fact that both terms can translate as '*binji*' in Kriol. However, the matter is not clear cut. A female speaker explicitly rejected this equation. Several speakers, when asked to point at the *yolh-no* on the drawing of a (male) human body showing the organs as in the

local ‘X-ray style’ paintings, located *yolh-no* in the brain—fewer speakers located *yolh-no* in the belly or along the spine. One female speaker stated that *yolh-no* was not on the drawing—presumably because she considered it immaterial, not an organ that could be drawn.¹⁷ But she also added, ‘oni jis *kangu-no* dedsol’, ‘only his *kangu-no* that’s all’. This was, of course, induced by my asking where the *kangu-no* was just before. But we had been listing various body parts, and listening to the recording, it is hard not to imagine her reasoning along the following lines: *yolh-no*, being immaterial, cannot be represented on the drawing; thus, we can only see the associated organ, *kangu-no*. The same speaker uttered example (17) about the sand and water ritual on the infants’ belly, assuming that the manipulations operated on the infant’s *kangu-no* impact on her *yolh-no*.

- (17) *Kah-dja-Ing-kangu-burrama.* *Kah-kangu-yowyowmu.*
 he-just-then-*kangu*-good he-*kangu*-flow;REDUP:PR

Mak ka-yolh-borledmu, *mak ka-run.*
 neg he:IRR-*yolh*-change:PR neg he:IRR-cry:PR

‘She is **good kangu**. She’s got an **easy, fluid kangu**.
 She doesn’t have unstable *yolh*, she’s doesn’t cry.’

The question of the exact connection between *kangu-no* and *yolh-no* is intricate and deserves dedicated research. *Yolh-no* and *kangu-no* are distinct; some speakers, in some circumstances, locate *yolh-no* in the belly, but this is far from systematic. Nonetheless, some speakers clearly (if implicitly) establish some physiological connections between *kangu-no* and *yolh-no*, as in example (17). Although the nature of this connection remains vague, this example provides an interesting insight.

The above-mentioned quote followed the description of the ritual whereby an infant’s *kangu-no* is made fluid and malleable, resulting in her becoming a good, generous person, but the speaker mentions consequences for the infant’s *yolh-no* as well. We thus face the following configuration. *Kangu-no* is a body part or internal organ. On the one hand, it is represented linguistically as a malleable (literally depicted as fluid) bodily interface, affected by external events (primarily interpersonal relationships, in this cultural context), triggering many socially framed and socially oriented emotions. On the other hand, *kangu-no* is connected to one’s *yolh-no*, one’s set of private feelings. Hence, *kangu-no* may, in fact, be understood as the malleable interface connecting the private self to the outer world. This can be made sense of in two ways. Explicitly, one’s *kangu-no* being malleable means that she is sensitive to others, a highly valued personality feature. Less explicitly, the fact that her *kangu-no* is malleable also means that the properties of one’s *kangu-no* can be modified by means of physical manipulations, as we have seen with ritual manipulations. And via one’s *kangu-no*, such manipulations eventually impact on one’s *yolh-no*. This understanding of the nature of *kangu-no* is in line with the phenomena described by Keen (2006) as ‘extensions of the person in space and time’. Keen

explains how some bodily substances and body parts may be considered extensions of the person and can be made to act upon someone (via sorcery), from a distance. While there is no concept of extension in our case, the external world is allowed to penetrate and modify the most private aspect of the person by means of physical action upon an organ conceived of as a malleable interface, an interface which external influences—and crucially, social influences—may reach.

We have seen that, in spite of this permeability of the person, personal autonomy is well acknowledged and recognised as such. In the Western, Cartesian tradition, feelings that define the ‘subject’ may be partly controlled, mainly thanks to the power of the mind—that is, via rational thinking. In the conceptual, or symbolic, model observed with Dalabon speakers, the subject may also be reached ‘materially’ speaking: actions operated on the body may indeed impact on the mind as well. In this conceptual framework, just as in the Cartesian framework, the autonomy of the self is acknowledged, and in both cases, it may be partly controlled. But the means by which it is controlled, and the related conceptions of the body, of the mind, of reasons and affects, of what is material and immaterial and of the interactions between such components, vary significantly.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

Many of our findings do echo Myers’s description of the Pintupi ‘emotional landscape’. Nonetheless, the reservation about Myers’s (1979) radical opposition between a dismissed private sphere and a morally valued public sphere is apparently grounded. Such a sharp opposition is not to be found in the Dalabon context. The tension between autonomy and relatedness described by Myers (1986) does not seem to occur among the Dalabon. These spheres tend to evolve independently with respect to moral judgements; judgements stemming from different spheres do not collide. From the point of view of the person, they appear as interconnected, as the self is defined by both *kangu-no* and *yolh-no*, which are physiologically interconnected. Practically, however, interpersonal relationships cover literally every aspect of (female) Dalabon life—but this does not undermine the right for one to claim her feelings and live by them. But how can we explain and interpret the omnipresence of social interactions so that it does not result in a tension with the value of autonomy? Before we can answer this question, we shall have to describe the epistemological features associated with this omnipresence of interpersonal relations.

The second reservation, related to the cultural specificity of the supposedly Western concern for private feelings, seems grounded too. Indeed, Dalabon semantics, practises and representations do display a distinction that mirrors the distinction between emotions and feelings. The belly, *kangu-no*, is represented as an interface between the person and the world and is thus the locus of something akin to emotions. Indeed, the emotions mediated by one’s *kangu-no* may be considered bodily reactions (matching the neuroscientific conception), or they may be described in terms of social situations (matching the anthropological conception). One’s *yolh-no*,

on the other hand, encompasses the affects stemming from one's own, private nature—reflecting the reference to private, non-observable feelings. This distinction is not strictly identical to the Western emotions/feelings distinctions, but it does bear resemblances. An obvious difference is that, within the system I have described, the self is also defined by its materiality, via the properties of one's *kangu-no*, impacting in turn on one's *yolh-no*. In 'Western', Cartesian conceptual models, the 'essence' of the self is either considered immaterial, or reduced to physical properties (the neuroscientists' model). In the 'Dalabon system', the self is the body as well as the mind.

As a consequence, what Wittgenstein calls the 'beetle' is assigned a different position in this system of language games. As we have seen, in the parabola, the 'beetle' stands for private feelings reified as objects of reference. According to Wittgenstein, the question of the existence of such private feelings lies outside the scope of our language games: our 'beetle' does not enter our world. But this (standard) interpretation of Wittgenstein's writings does not account for the fact that the figure of the 'beetle' *does* keep coming back in our language games. Interestingly, it seems that Dalabon language games present us with a different perspective on this dilemma. They do, indirectly, incorporate the 'beetle' into their social interactions, via ritual manipulations whereby private feelings may be physically affected. In such a social, symbolic game, the self and her feelings *are* reachable objects. This suggests an alternative way of solving the 'beetle' problem, the problem of the integration of feelings and the private self within a conceptual and social system.

NOTES

- 1 My expression.
- 2 Whether there is such an entity as a 'Dalabon group', and what it is, can be questioned. In this paper, this expression generally refers to 'the descendants of Dalabon speakers'.
- 3 Damasio distinguishes two stages of consciousness of feelings, but this is not relevant to our argument.
- 4 And they do not match the respective semantic categories of feelings and emotions in daily language either.
- 5 Myers refers to Peirce, but Wittgenstein and Peirce are very compatible.
- 6 I take the opportunity to thank AIATSIS for funding my research projects. I am particularly grateful to Sarah Cutfield and Tony Boxall. I also thank Nick Evans and my anonymous reviewers. My greatest thanks are for Dalabon speakers, in particular Maggie Tukumba and Lily Bennett. Warm thanks to Salome Harris for conversation and advise.
- 7 See Evans and Merlan (2004), Evans *et al.* (2004), Cutfield (in prep.), Evans *et al.* (2004) for details of Dalabon grammar and vocabulary.
- 8 Quinn and Holland (1987), and other authors in this volume, refer to 'cultural models' and not to 'conceptual models'. I prefer my formula, which is free of the assumption that members of a social group share the same model, or what is called a 'culture'. In my view, while there would be 'family resemblances' between the conceptual models used by members of one social group, we should bear in mind that these models are unlikely to be identical or to respond to any set of 'cultural rules'.

- 9 Some aspects of Dalabon culture may remain inaccessible to one or the other gender—mostly to women.
- 10 See Evans and Merlan (2001), Cutfield (in prep.) for details about this complex phenomenon.
- 11 The sixth speaker implicitly agreed with this scope, while defining *kangu-no* as the whole thorax.
- 12 The meaning of *darrmu* is yet to be clarified.
- 13 *Abbreviations*: [pers.x]>[pers.y], x is agent, y is object; APPR, apprehensive mood (if Ø, then the mood is realis); BENEf, benefactive case; COM, comitative case; DAT, dative case; ELAT, elative case; FUT, future tense; high, object is a human being or a being classified as higher than agent; interj, interjection; IRR, irrealis mood (if Ø, then the mood is realis); LOC, locative case; neg, negation; PI, past imperfective; POSS, possessive case; PP, past perfective; PR, present tense; RECIP, reciprocal verbal form; REDUP, reduplication; SUB, item represent the argument(s) of subordinate clause (if Ø item is the function of main clause).
- 14 The root *kodj*, which approximates to ‘head’, is used to describe intellectual states or processes (Ponsonnet 2009).
- 15 The speaker reported having operated these manipulations on her own children and grandchildren. However, since 1998, I have never heard of this ritual being performed—although I am usually notified of initiation rituals and other ceremonies.
- 16 Exactly which expressions may be used with both remains to be thoroughly documented.
- 17 See Ponsonnet (2009) for a similar reaction about *men-no*, the set of one’s thoughts.

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