Rapikwenty: 'A loner in the ashes' and other songs for sleeping

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Abstract: *Rapikwenty* is a traditional Australian Indigenous set of stories-and-songs from the Utopia region of Central Australia performed by Anmatyerr speaking adults to lull children to sleep. The main protagonist is a boy who is left to play alone in the ashes. Like many lullabies, *Rapikwenty* is characterised by scary themes, soft dynamics, a limited pitch range and repetition. The story-and-song form is not common in the Australian literature on lullabies, yet such combinations of prose and verse are found in other forms of verbal art of the region (Green 2014). This verbal art style is also well-attested in other oral traditions of the world (Harris & Reichl, 1997). *Rapikwenty* resembles other Anmatyerr genres in its song structure; yet differs in its performance style. Echoing Trainor et al. (1999: 532), we find it is the "soothing, smooth, and airy" delivery, rather than any formal properties of the genre, that achieves the lulling effect. In addition, *Rapikwenty* uses the recitative style known as *arnwerirrem* 'humming'. The voice thus moves seamlessly between spoken story and sung verse, creating a smooth delivery throughout. We suggest that the combination of prose and verse reflects an Anmatyerr concept of song as prototypically punctuating events in a story rather than a medium for story-telling itself. This article suggests a more nuanced approach to the relationship between genre and performance styles.

Keywords: lullaby; oral literature; Anmatyerr; song-story; Australian Aboriginal song

1. Introduction

Songs that encourage children to sleep are sung by mothers and other caregivers the world over (Del Giudice 1988; Hawes 1974: 141; Opie and Opie 1952; Watt 2012: 203). Referred to as lullabies, nursery rhymes or cradle songs, these songs attempt to achieve their objective of soothing infants by the repetition of soft and soothing melodies. It is well-recognised that while the musical form may be gentle, the subject matter can at times be sinister and scary, containing

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harsh topics that may seem contrary to the objective of sleep inducement (Castro 2013: 24; Ikegami 1986: 105). As many have observed: "Negative imagery abounds in lullabies, as it does in much of children's folklore, often serving as cruel intimidation of the child in order to subdue it" (Del Giudice 1988: 275). A Japanese example of this paradox is illustrated below:

> Sleep, little one, sleep!
> If not, I'll throw you into the river.
> Sleep, little one, sleep.
> If not, I'll build your tomb.
> (Ikegami 1986: 105)

Notwithstanding the question of the age at which a recipient of this song would fully comprehend the meaning of the lyrics, in this example the soothing melody would have a lot to contend with.

Such bedtime songs are also found in the Australian Indigenous context, although these are a little-documented form (Walsh 2007: 134). Kartomi (1984: 69), who considered lullabies from three geographically distant regions of Australia, notes the calm and effortless vocal performances of the singers and the "extremely relaxed state in which lullabies are sung", which distinguishes these songs from other, more energetic, repertoires. Mackinlay (1999: 109) gives an ethnographic introduction to Yanyuwa lullabies and finds these are thematically linked to the child's "patterns of language, culture and everyday life experience". Scary themes are also found in a Ngaanyatjarra lullaby, sung by Lizzie Marrkilyi Ellis (pers. comm., June 2017) who recalls her mother singing it to her when she was an infant:

> Lu lu lu lu lu   ngurra-nku   purlparra-rnu
> 'Lu lu lu lu lu, your home has collapsed'

Whether by design or by chance, lullabies enculturate infants and young children into society (Watt 2012). Lullabies can be considered "first lessons in music" (Del Giudice 1988: 270 Emeksiz 2011) and they assist in the child's development of language (Watt 2012: 125). Others have noted that the soporific effect is an instance of a broader function of singing as influencing the outcomes of events (Lauridsen 1983: 77; May 1983). For example, in Aboriginal Australia songs can be performed to bring on rain, heal someone or make a whirly wind change direction (Ellis and Barwick 1989: 34).

How do we reconcile the matching of soothing sounds with their frightening themes? Rock et al. (1999) argue that it is the sound of lullabies that assist

in putting children to sleep and that any song can be sung in a lullaby style for this purpose. In regards to their frightening themes, the lullaby allows one to release "feelings of hostility, tension or anger in a depersonalised and therefore sanctioned way" (Hawes 1974: 147). Others have emphasized that lullabies "give expression to solitary or communal suffering, express hopes and dreams" (Emeksiz 2011: 147). These themes may also instil fear in children so that they are obedient and do what they are told. Others have suggested they are a form of apotropaic magic, fending off evil through charms and objects (Esteve-Faubel et al. 2014: 109; Watt 2012: 24). Singing about bad things may protect the sleeping child from malevolent forces. In a similar vein, some Indigenous people say that if one dreams of something bad happening, the dream should be told to the relevant person to ensure the event does not happen.

In this article we consider *Rapikwenty*, a set of thematically related narratives with eight songs performed to put children to sleep at night by women in Central Australia. We first consider the style of vocal delivery and then examine the cultural themes that are apparent in the song texts and in their exegesis. We then discuss the formal features of the songs and discuss similarities and differences between *Rapikwenty* and other songs from the region. The analysis shows how, in addition to lulling infants to sleep, songs such as *Rapikwenty* enculturate children into the musical and moral schemata of society (Del Giudice 1988; Ebeogu 1991). We conclude by considering the paucity of documentations of bedtime oral traditions and the form that includes both prose and poetry. We then look at the relationship between these in other Anmatyerr song genres. We begin by examining the social context of performances of *Rapikwenty* .

1.1. Data and methodology

Our study is situated in the Sandover region of the Northern Territory of Australia where speakers of the closely related Arandic languages Anmatyerr and Alyawarr live (Figure 1). The concept of lullabies is well-known in these languages, although it is not a named genre, as is the case in other parts of Australia and in many other languages from around the world (Kartomi 1984).
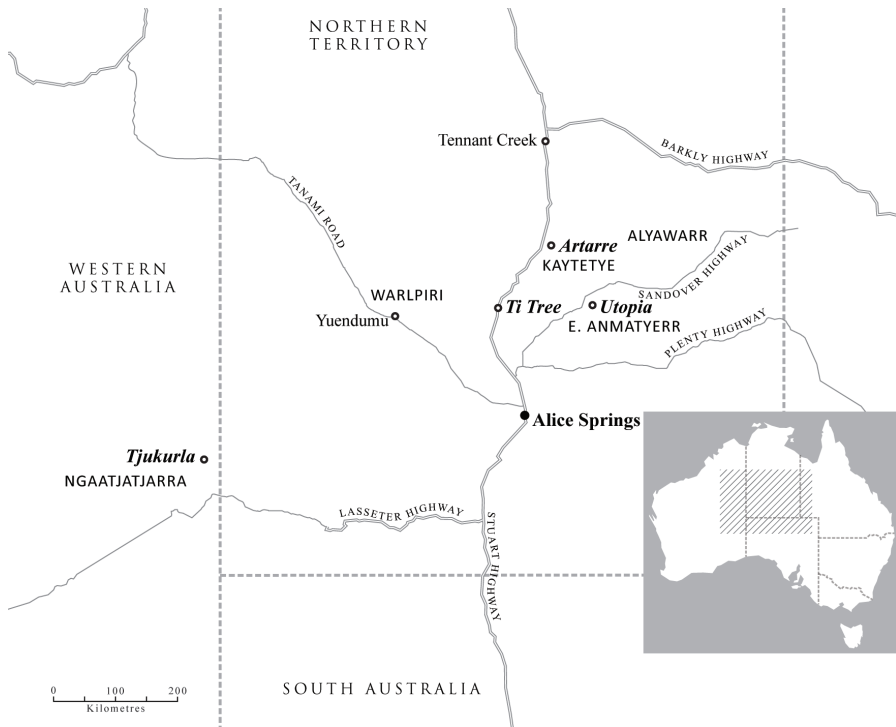
Figure 1. Map showing the region where *Rapikwenty* is known, located in the Utopia homelands in the Eastern Anmatyerr and Alyawarr speaking region of the Northern Territory, Australia. Map: J. Green.

Our corpus consists of two performances of *Rapikwenty*. The first, by Violet Petyarr was recorded by Jennifer Green and Jeannie Devitt in 1992. This performance lasted two hours and 13 minutes.[1] The second, recorded by the authors in 2007, was performed by Violet's sister, the late Nancy Petyarr, with her sister the late Myrtle Petyarr and another close relation, Lena Pwerl, joining in (Figure 2). This performance also included discussion about the meanings of the songs. Further discussions about the meanings of *Rapikwenty* were held with the Utopia women between 2007 and 2017. Although we have not observed these songs being deployed *in situ*, the singers say that the purpose of these sung stories was to settle children down and *ankwathenhem* 'send to sleep', and they recalled their own grandmothers singing the songs to them when they were young children.

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Figure 2. (Left to right) Sisters Myrtle Petyarr and Nancy Petyarr (singers in the 2007 recording) and Violet Petyarr (singer in the 1992 recording). Photos: J. Green, Utopia, 1980.

1.2. *Rapikwenty*

Rapikwenty, translated as 'the loner in the ashes', refers to one of the main protagonists in the story. The term is derived from the text of Line A of Verse 1, shown below. Following the practice of some Anmatyerr people, we use the word *Rapikwenty* from Verse 1 to refer to the song set as a whole. In this sense Verse 1 can be likened to the title track of the song set.[2] As in other Anmatyerr songs, a line can stand as an epithet for a character, in this case the neglected boy. The term is a compound of the 3rd person singular pronoun *ra*, the clitic *=arrp* 'alone' and the word *ikwenty* 'ashes'. *Ikwenty* is a type of fine white ash that is used for mixing with certain native plants and with various types of chewable tobacco, for healing wounds or for rubbing on the bodies of the bereaved in times of sorrow. The latter use of *ikwenty* is applicable in the *Rapikwenty* context, as the central character, a young male child, rubs his body with ash as he believes his mother has passed away. The line also contains the suffix *-areny* 'denizen of' which leads to additional connotations of someone who never ventures far from the hearth. In the context of *Rapikwenty* one imagines a child who is *ikwenty-areny*, with no company and no toys to play with. Line B of the verse is a complex verb which connotes running around aimlessly rather than the jovial action of playing.

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[2]   The numbering of verses in this paper is arbitrary. Verses can be omitted in performance and there appears to be no set order. Only Verse 1 occurs in both performances.

Verse 1

Line A	*Rapikwentyay ikwenty-areny*	The loner in the ashes
Line B	*Arlelp-arlakelhetyart-ang*	Always playing (alone)

	A		B
	R=arrp	ikwenty-ikwenty-areny	arl-elp-arlakelh-etyart=ang[3]
	3sg=alone	ashes-ashes-DEN	ITER-play-PST:IPF= EMPH/INT

Like other traditional Arandic songs, *Rapikwenty* is regarded as pre-existing from the *Altyerr,* 'Dreamtime', 'Dreaming' or 'Creation' time, rather than as being composed by an individual known person.[4] We have not encountered anyone outside of the Utopia Homelands who is familiar with *Rapikwenty*, although different lullabies are known in the western part of the Anmatyerr region (Cook and Green 2007). We have also not heard of *Rapikwenty* being sung by anyone other than the sisters whom we recorded. Given that "lullabies are an intimate genre, unlike the communalness of the ceremonial music" (Kartomi 1984: 77), it is possible that individual lullabies such as *Rapikwenty* were not widely known outside of the family groups who performed them. Senior Anmatyerr woman Lena Pwerl (pers. comm., 2 June 2017) regards the songs as belonging to the Petyarr singers and originating in their traditional Alhalker/Anangker country. It is not clear whether the songs originated with one of the Petyarr sisters, or have been handed down for generations.

Although *Rapikwenty* is remembered by senior women, it seems likely that it is no longer sung. The current generation appear not to sing songs such as these and the meanings of the songs remain sketchy in their minds, no doubt partly because of their unusual vocabulary and the modifications to speech sounds made when the text is sung, which we discuss below.

Performance of *Rapikwenty* involves narration of a story by a single person, and in both recordings these are women. One of the performers recalled that: "Our grandmother used to tell this story in the women's camp and make us all fall asleep; it's a children's story".[5] Nevertheless, some people do recall men tell-

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[3]   An alternative analysis of Line A is that the first word is a name followed by an adjectival noun phrase, i. e. Rarrpikwenty ikwenty-areny 'Rarrpikwenty of the ashes'. An alternative translation of Line B, if the final clitic is regarded as an interrogative, is 'How come he just plays (alone)?'.

[4]   For discussion of the complex meanings of Australian Indigenous terminologies in the domain of the 'Dreaming' see Green (2012).

[5]   Violet Petyarr, 1992. AIATSIS tape number JG02_020335.

ing stories such as these to children (Cook and Green 2007). At points in the *Rapikwenty* narrative the narrator sings an associated song and other women present will often join in for the song proper. As is typical of lullabies in other cultural contexts, "The child behaves as a recipient rather than a presenter of the text" (Ikegami 1986: 96), and thus the lullaby as a form sits ambiguously between adult and child folklore (Watt 2012: 22).

2. Meaning and themes

When it comes to the scary subject matter alluded to in other lullaby traditions, *Rapikwenty* is no exception. Danger is portrayed in the form of flood waters and a menacing hungry dog, dehydration and starvation. Fear of abandonment and neglect is suggested by the image of a boy left to play on his own in the ashes, with only a warped and bent (and thus useless) boomerang. We encounter two tawny frogmouths (nocturnal birds), who are perhaps the incarnation of the central characters, two young boys. Some themes in *Rapikwenty,* such as the relationship between specific kin, are ubiquitous in songs from this region. Nevertheless, it is impossible to more than speculate about what residues of the semantic content of the song text remain with the child as they teeter on the edge of sleep, and then finally succumb to slumber.

In the 1992 performance the boy is portrayed as a *kunyamperl* 'poor thing', deserving of empathy and pity. He travels across the landscape with his elder brother, looking in vain for meat.[6] He traverses gullies and sand hills, drinks water from creeks and from hollows in river red gum trees, and ekes sustenance from dry bones. He drinks the blood of cooked kangaroos, and smears his head with health-giving fat. He wonders what has happened to all the game, "It's as if a monster has eaten the heads off everything!" Sleepless, starving and homesick, the two of them journey on, travelling in all directions and through many cycles of day and night. They fashion spears that they find in camps of the deceased, binding them with sinews and rubbing them with charcoal. At times they converse in sign. "Where shall we go older brother?", says the younger one. The mesmerizing sleep-inducing recitation of the journey lasts for almost two hours. One sung verse punctuates the narrative, which comprises conversation between the two brothers as they journey on, and the contextual commentary made by the narrator. Finally they meet up with a group of their cousins, and they return to a camp they had previously

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[6]   The theme of hunting is also found in a Kayardild lullaby (Kartomi 1984: 72).

established. Although the journey may have some local geographic consistency, as Del Giudice has observed, narrative logic may not play a large part of such stories, as "something akin to the free association of ideas and images" may be associated with a dream-like state (Del Giudice 1988: 273).

We observe that this fear/danger theme is closely linked to the primary function of *Rapikwenty* as 'settling children down', as has been noted in lullabies the world over (Watt 2012). Even outside of the lullaby context, instilling fear is a well-known way of controlling children in Anmatyerr and many other cultures (Watt 2012: 27). Whereas in some European lullabies and fairy-tales fear is of an "encounter with a famished predator such as a wolf'" (Del Giudice 1988: 272, 276), in Verse 2 of *Rapikwenty* a specific threat of danger comes from a dingo:

Verse 2

| Line A | *Akngwelyelarl irretyek-anek* | The dingo nearly ate him[7] |
| Line B | *Itethantey-anem anepanem* | But he is still alive |

A		B	
Akngwely-el=arl	irr-etyek-an-ek	iteth-antey-anem	an-epan-em
dog-ERG=REL	? - PST:POT-PC	alive-still-now	sit-CNT-NP

As in many songs, the identity of the protagonist – the one that was nearly eaten by the dingo – is not made explicit. Possibly it was the boy who was left to his own devices by the hearth.

2.1. Night-time and sleep

Not surprisingly, the theme of sleep abounds in descriptions of lullabies (Esteve-Faubel et al. 2014; Watt 2012). Even if not explicitly mentioned, the concept of sleep may be implied through metaphors such as 'fall' in the well-known Anglo-American lullaby Rock-a-bye baby (i.e. fall asleep); where the verse as a whole can be interpreted as connoting the liminal state between being awake and sleeping. While none of the *Rapikwenty* verses explicitly refer

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[7]   While the verb stem in Line A is not known, singers provide the transitive verb *arlkw-* 'to eat' as an equivalent to this line. Anmatyerr songs frequently contained vocabulary that is not from everyday speech.

to sleep, as has been noted for a number of other Aboriginal lullabies (Kartomi 1984: 64; Mackinlay 1999: 105), two verses refer to night-time, a theme closely associated with sleep. It is possible that such night-time imagery stands for sleep, as night/sleep metonymy is widespread in Australian languages.[8] Verse 3 refers to the nocturnal 'tawny frogmouth' (*Podargus strigoides*). Two striking features of this bird are its ability to blend in with the bark of trees where it nests, hiding its form like the much-feared ritual avenger; and its eerie 'm-m' night-time call. In a child's mind, this bird may evoke fear of evil spirits and the need to remain quiet and go to sleep, as espoused by Anmatyerr caregivers.

Verse 3

| Line A | *Antatherr-atherr-el* | On the two forked branches |
| Line B | *Uringk-atherr alperr-alperrem* | The two tawny frogmouths returned' |

A		B	
Antatherr-atherr-el		uringk-atherr	alp-err-alperr-em
branch-two-LOC		frogmouth-two	return-dl-RED-NP

The cycle of day and night is also obliquely referenced in Verse 4 which refers to the sun rising. This verse is said to be about a male parental figure waking up a boy early in the morning to go hunting. The Pleiades star constellation is only in the sky for part of the year, when it becomes visible above the eastern horizon for a brief moment just before sunrise. Thus, while Verse 4 evokes imminent sunrise, it also evokes a time of year – the end of the cold weather.

Verse 4

| Line A | *Alernng lenh apety* | The sun is coming now |
| Line B | *Arrarrkw lenh apety* | Pleiades is coming now |

A			B		
Alernng	lenh	apety	Arrarrkw	lenh	apety
sun	there	come	Pleiades	there	come

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8   For example, in Kaytetye, the adjacent and closely related language to Anmatyerr, the word for night is literally *atnkwarenge* 'belonging to sleep'.

2.2. Multiple perspectives

Rapikwenty can be interpreted from multiple perspectives, including that of a mother worrying for her child. Verses 1 and 5 below conjure up images of a neglected child, yet it is only in the associated story that the narrator expands upon the dilemmas of the mother in relation to her husband, the step-father of the child.

Verse 5

| Line A | *Kwaty apint irrkant-arlk;* | The flood water is now everywhere |
| Line B | *Wey akwek, wey akwek* | Small boy, small boy |

A			B	
kwaty	apint	irrkant-arlk	wey	akwek
water	flood	everywhere-also	boy	small

Verse 6 has a text in the infant-directed speech register. Trainor et al. (1999: 527) argue for a close relationship between lullabies and infant-directed speech, as both convey meaning through prosodic features and vocal quality rather than through lexical content. In Anmatyerr, as in many other Australian languages, there is a formalised way of talking to infants that is said to mimic the way infants themselves speak, sometimes referred to as 'baby talk' (Turpin et al. 2014). In the baby talk register there are regular sound changes, the effects of which can be seen in the text (underlined) of Verse 6. First, both prepalatal and the interdental laterals are pronounced as palatals *aylayl ⇒ alyaly*; and *welherl- ⇒ welyerl-*. Second, the rhotic is pronounced as a palatal glide, 'r' ⇒ 'y'; and finally the consonant cluster 'mp' is reduced to only the second consonant 'p', thus *amperamper ⇒ apeyapey*.

Verse 6

Line A	*Alyalyel apeyapeyel*	The warped boomerang
Line B	*Welyerl-apem*	(i) I go and play with it
		(ii) Go play with it!

A		B
aylayl-el	amperamper-el	w-elh-erlap-em
boomerang-INST	warped-INST	throw-DTR-GO&ALONG-NP

Given that there is no overt subject in this verse, and that it is in the baby talk register, the verse could be either from the perspective of the boy himself, as in (i); or from the mother, telling him to go off and play with a useless toy boomerang as in (ii). The phrase 'warped boomerang' probably refers to a boomerang that is misshaped and hence doesn't throw well.

2.3. Kin

Another value that *Rapikwenty* instils is the importance of kin and their mutual obligations, including those instantiated in ceremonial performances. Verse 7 is said to refer to two boys performing in the rain (dancing, painting up and singing) for their ceremonial cousin. Despite rising flood water, the two boys continue dancing until one of them drowns. At one stage the narrator describes how only the legs are visible, bobbing up and down in the flood water.[9] The boys seem to be dancing in the fork of a tree, as if trying to escape the rising flood. The kin term *atny-* refers to a 'cousin-uncle', a closely related mother's brother's son or father's sister's son.[10] While *irrpany* is not an everyday word; it appears to describe the cousin-uncles, either as a synonym or adding an adjectival description of them.

Verse 7

Line A	*Wey-atherr anyengw-atherr*	The two boys, your two cousin-uncles
Line B	*Arnarntel irrpany-atherr*	Are in the fork of the tree

A		B		
Wey-atherr	atny-engkw-atherr	arnarnt-el	irrpany-atherr	
boy-two	cousin_uncle-2KinPOSS-two	fork-LOC	? -two	

The final verse refers to a man who has just returned from a successful hunt. Possibly the child protagonist's father, he has a mop of hair like a hill-fuschia bush and is said to have cooked some kangaroo and then put the meat on

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[9]   This image refers to a style of men's dancing that involves raising their knees as high as possible in order to stamp on the earth loudly.

[10]   This distinction between closely and more distantly related kin is found in the classificatory kinship systems of Indigenous Australia where genealogically distant relatives are in the same terminological categories as close ones.

his head to carry home. To ensure the meat is safe (perhaps from low lying branches) he takes a side track back home. In the desert the theme is reminiscent of the "promises of treats and sweets" which is common in lullabies (Honig 2005: 32).

Verse 8

| Line A | *Aka arreth-arreth arrernem* | Putting it on the matted hair |
| Line B | *Iter iwerram, iter iwerram* | The side track, the side track |

A		B
aka arreth-arreth	arrern-em	iter iwerr-am
head hill.fuschia-RED	put-NP	side path-EMPH

The eight verses contain images of the lonely boy, his kin, stars, night birds and everyday actions, such as hunting, sleeping and dancing. In others, such as the one where the boys dance themselves to death in flood water, everyday reality is subverted and behind the imagery there lies an element of danger. The imagery in the verses is woven into a narrative that recounts the travels of the boy. In the next section we discuss the relationship between the narrative and song and discuss their formal features.

3. Formal features of *Rapikwenty*

Unlike Anmatyerr ceremonial songs, *Rapikwenty* is primarily a solo genre, performed without rhythmic and visual accompaniment. Lullabies are commonly less rhythmic than other song genres across cultures (Trainor 1999: 528). The absence of visual accompaniment, such as painting, dance and sand drawing which are used in many other forms of singing and story-telling (Barwick and Turpin 2016; Green 2014), is not surprising given that the songs were performed at night in domestic spaces to make children fall asleep.

3.1. Vocal delivery

Like lullabies from other parts of the world, the vocal delivery of *Rapikwenty* is "barely more than a whisper … delivered in a dreamy, semi-trance like state by the carer" (Watt 2012: 98). In some cases, the voice is used solely as a musical instrument and the lexical content is so sparse that the communicative function of language is all but absent. As Watt (2012: 78) notes, "The simplest lullaby is a monotonous humming sound with no words, or it can have a very rudimentary melody with soothing syllables like 'la la' or 'ba ba' in English, 'baloo baloo' in Scots, 'bo bo' or 'do do' in French or 'ninna-nanna' in Italian." We have already mentioned the use of 'lu lu, lu' in the Ngaanyatjarra example. In Central Australia, another way of making children fall asleep is by reciting *rrarra* ♩.♪ repeatedly on a single pitch. This no doubt gives rise to the Kaytetye verb *arrarrarr-arrenke* 'to rock or soothe a baby to sleep' (Turpin and Ross 2012: 188).[11] However, Aboriginal people do not regard this as 'singing', nor do they regard '*rrarrarrarr*' as a song, but a method of putting children to sleep.[12] In contrast, *Rapikwenty* is made up of words rather than vocables and is regarded as 'song' delivered in a manner regarded as 'singing'.

In addition to the soft dynamics, slow tempo, small pitch range and musical and textual repetition, *Rapikwenty* is characterised by vocal glides and wavering pitches. There is also ingressive singing (singing on the inhalation), which also occurs in other song genres in the region; although this phenomenon is less obvious in group singing. Ingressive singing generates an uninterrupted flow of sound. This is a desirable effect that is also met in group singing by staggering the points at which a breath is taken. Ellis, who worked with Pitjantjatjara singers for many years, states that an uninterrupted flow of sound is necessary for "the continuous connection with the supernatural power source" (1980: 723). We suggest that the uninterrupted flow of sound produced by ingressive singing may also assist in lulling a child to sleep. Kartomi's description of vocal delivery in Pitjantjatjara lullabies applies equally well to *Rapikwenty*:

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[11]   The word consists of a compounding element '*arrarrarre-*' 'rocking, soothing', which may be onomatopoeic for the sound of a cooing baby or a mother soothing a child; plus an intransitive verbaliser *-arre-*. Note that this verb has an additional meaning, 'to call out during initiation ceremonies' (Green 2010: 207; Turpin and Ross 2012: 188), which is a formalized practice performed by the mother's and father's sisters of the initiate (A. Ross to M. Turpin pers. comm., 2017) during certain stages of the larger ceremonial complex.

[12]   We thank Georgia Curran for bringing a Warlpiri recording of this practice to our attention (BARRETT_M01-000073A).

The one factor which most distinguishes the lullabies from other Pitjantjatjara song genres is the extremely relaxed state in which lullabies are sung. The utter calm of the singers is largely induced by deep inhalation and controlled exhalation, sometimes while whispering words of the text; and this contrasts strongly with the vigorous, animated atmosphere of adult or child ceremonial singing (Kartomi 1984: 69).

In a comparison of Aboriginal lullabies from three parts of Australia Kartomi concludes that, while they differ musically, they all share a calmness and careful emission of breath. She describes a Kayardild lullaby sung by a man as having a "smooth, murmuring vocal quality, and its indistinct, slurred enunciation of the text suggest that the singer is almost asleep" (1984: 72). Similar delivery of lullabies is noted in other parts of the world. Georgian musicologists describe their lullabies as "sung in a very gentle way. We have a word to describe this manner of singing. It's 'ghinghini' – it means sing the song with half voice inside so it's like humming" (Watt 2012: 97).

3.2. Story and song

The most striking structural feature of *Rapikwenty* is its weaving of verse amidst prose. The blending of verse and prose is widespread in the poetic traditions of the world, and may vary between a prose story with occasional verse interspersed (*prosimetrum)*, or, at the other extreme, a verse with occasional prose (*versimprose)*. The mixed form has been called cantefable by folklorists, from the medieval french genre 'chantefable' (Harris & Riechl 1997: 11). In *Rapikwenty*, each verse can be sung three or four times repeatedly, before the main narrator continues on with the story telling, ad-libbing on the thematic outline of the stories. With its combination of speech and singing *Rapikwenty* resembles other documented Anmatyerr bed-time narratives or *Altyerr* (Dreaming) stories (Cook and Green 2007) as well as a children's rhyming game (Green and Turpin 2013).

In *Rapikwenty* the prose is delivered using the full range of narrative speech styles, including a soft singing style resembling recitative which is referred to as *arnwerirrem*, a word that also means 'humming' (Green 2014: 196). Both prose and verse can be delivered in this manner; that is, on the same pitch without a break and using the same dynamic range.

Figure 3 shows how sung prose and verse meld into a single breath in this delivery of *Rapikwenty*. The singer 'hums' (*arnwerirrem*) an impromptu line of speech in keeping with the theme of the *Rapikwenty* story, which translates as

'the boy was running around looking for some meat'. This is represented with crossed note heads in Figure 3. She then moves into the verse proper (Verse 1), *'Rapikwentyay'* represented with a phrase mark in Figure 3. From the recitative delivery of the prose and the first two syllables of the verse, the singer moves into a sung delivery of the verse represented here in 6/8.[13]

ya mpe la lel pa   la kel he tya mang   ke re ka the   ka nga ngay   ra   pi kwen tyay kwen tye la   lerl pa rla key   le tya rta nga
(kuny)-ampel   arlelparlakelh-etyam-ang   Ker-ek-athek-angangay   *Rapikwentyay kwentyela lerlparlakey lhetyartangay*
poor thing   ITER-play-PP:IMP-EMPH   meat-DAT-wards-EMPH   Verse 1

'Poor thing, he was running around everywhere looking for something to eat *Rapikwentyay…'*

Figure 3. Vocal delivery of prose and verse in *Rapikwenty*. Crossed noteheads represent prose delivered in a recitative style and the hollow notehead, aligned with the *ngay*, an ingressive sound. The verse, marked with a phrase, is delivered in a sung manner by the fifth syllable. �[14]

After the excerpt illustrated in Figure 3 the narrator continues in a vocal style easily identified with ordinary speech. *Rapikwenty* continues on his journey:

Unth-ety.alp-etyam.

search-DO&GO.BACK-PP:IMP

'He was walking around searching as he went back.'

Kwaty-warl-an   arraty-irr-ety-irrp-erl.alp-etyam.

water-ALL-FOC   straight-INCH-enter-DO&GO.BACK-PP:IMP

'He went towards the water and dived straight in.'

Angayakw   akwetantey.

hungry   continuously

'He was still hungry.'

By using a similar vocal style to deliver both prose and poetry, these merge into a continuous acoustic flow that no doubt enhances the function of sending

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[13]   Note that the rhythm of Verse 2 could also be represented in a ¾ meter.

[14]   Sound files are available in the online version of this paper. *Ed.*

children to sleep. The improvised text is not without bounds, however. In the narration above we can see that the final word of the verse, a complex verb, *alelpalakelh-etyam-ang* 'running around everywhere', is woven into the improvised prose *(kuny-ampel … ker-ek-athek-angangay)* thus expanding upon the pre-established themes of the *Rapikwenty* story.

3.3. Melody

The melody of *Rapikwenty* spans only an interval of a fourth. It is primarily descending, as is common in lullabies across the world (Esteve-Faubel et al. 2014: 105). However descending melodies also characterise Anmatyerr ceremonial songs; and like these, the *Rapikwenty* melody specifies only the sequence of pitches but not rhythm. The *Rapikwenty* melody consists of a three-tone melody in the shape of a repeating 4–3 sequence with a short melismatic descent to a much longer repeating tonic. Figure 4 is a broad transcription of a *Rapikwenty* song item (a single stretch of uninterrupted singing of a verse). The tonic pitch is F, the 4th B♭ and the 3rd ranges between A–A♭. The melody commences on the 4th and this 4–3 section of the melody is three bars (phrase 1); and the repeating tonic F is seven bars (phrase 2). The verse repeats in an AABB configuration, although omitting the final line: AABB, AAB.

Figure 4. A *Rapikwenty* song item of Verse 3. This is a single iteration of the melody which consists of two phrases: a repeated 4–3 pitch sequence followed by a repeated tonic.

While the melodic contour resembles that of many ceremonial songs, the latter always has a solo introduction sung around the upper tonic that precedes the main melody sung as a tutti. No such introductory section exists in *Rapikwenty*, as it is a solo genre. The pitch for most *Rapikwenty* songs centres around the F below middle C, slightly lower than many women's ceremonial songs.

The structure of a *Rapikwenty* song bears a strong resemblance to ceremonial songs in that it consists of a repeating isorhythmic text set to a melodic contour in varying ways (Barwick 1989). In this respect *Rapikwenty* can be seen to enculturate children into the Anmatyerr musical canon that they will acquire over their lifespans. In the next section we consider the structure of the repeating isorhythmic texts that we call 'verses'.

3.4. Song structure

A *Rapikwenty* song consists of a repeated verse set to a longer melodic contour (Figure 4). This is the norm in ceremonial songs. This single unit of singing, referred to as a 'song item' in the literature (Barwick 1989: 13), is usually between 20–30 seconds duration, which is slightly shorter than a ceremonial song. Its shorter duration is due to a number of factors. A *Rapikwenty* song tends to have fewer cycles of the verse than a ceremonial song. In addition, the length of the text tends to be shorter. The shorter duration may also be due to the fact that the lullaby is primarily a solo genre, whereas ceremonial songs are group performances where breath intakes can be disguised by multiple voices and so the songs can be longer.

3.5. Verse structure

As in a ceremonial song, a *Rapikwenty* verse consists of two lines of isorhythmic text (labelled here A and B) that repeat in one of three configurations: (i) AABB, a quatrain; (ii) AB, a couplet; and (iii) ABB, a tercet. These configurations are exemplified below with the text of three *Rapikwenty* verses.

(i) Quatrain
  A[1] *Antatherr-atherrel*
  A[2] *Antatherr-atherrel*
  B[1] *Aweringk-atherr alperr-alparrem*
  B[2] *Aweringk-atherr alperr-alparrem*   (Verse 3, song item 20070403_01–02)

(ii) Couplet
    A *Rap ikwenty-ikwenty-areny*
    B *Arlelp-arlakelhetyartart-ang*   (Verse 1, song item 20070403_01–04)

(iii) Tercet
    A *Alyalyel apey-apeyel*
    B[1] *Welyerl-apem*
    B[2] *Welyerl-apem*   (Verse 6, song item 20070403_01–15)

While the pattern of line repetition is fixed for any given verse in a ceremonial song, *Rapikwenty* shows variation in four of the eight verses: Verses 5 and 7 are a tercet in some song items and a couplet in others. Similarly, Verse 3 is a quatrain in some song items (as in Figure 4) and a tercet in others. Instances of Verse 8 are sung in all three configurations: a quatrain, a couplet and a tercet. The remaining four verses are all fixed in their verse structure: Verses 1, 2 and 7 are always a couplet while Verse 6 is always a tercet in all song items. The unusual variability in verse structure found in *Rapikwenty* may be due to the fact that *Rapikwenty* is a solo rather than an ensemble genre.

In addition to the variation in verse structure, *Rapikwenty* verses also differ from ceremonial songs in that they favour the couplet rather than the quatrain. The couplet does not have the complex pattern of line alliteration found in quatrains (e. g. Turpin 2014). The predominance of couplets over quatrains in *Rapikwenty* suggests a preference for shorter and simpler verse structures. The two lines making up a verse tend to have contrasting rhythms, as in ceremonial songs. Table 1 shows that four verses have lines that differ in both their rhythm and duration, two verses have lines that differ in their rhythm but with the same duration, while only two verses have identical rhythms. The preference for contrasting lines within a verse is also a feature shared with ceremonial songs.

Table 1. Contrasting and identical lines in the eight *Rapikwenty* verses.

A and B lines	Verse number
different rhythm, different duration	2, 6, 7, 4
different rhythm, same duration	1, 8
identical rhythm (and thus duration)	3, 5

3.6. Line structure

As in ceremonial songs, lines differ in their number of syllables and beats. On the whole, the 16 lines of *Rapikwenty* are shorter and show greater variation than lines of ceremonial songs. The shortest *Rapikwenty* line is four syllables while the longest is 11. The most common length is eight syllables or less, as can be seen from Table 2, whereas 10 syllables or more is most common in ceremonial songs (Turpin 2014: 74).

Table 2. Number of syllables in the 16 *Rapikwenty* lines.

No. syllables	Line (verse followed by line A or B)
4	5B
5	8B
6	3A, 6B, 4A,4B
7	5A, 7B
8	1A, 1B, 6A, 7A, 8A
9	2A
10	3B
11	2B

Rapikwenty lines have a much freer tempo and show more rhythmic variation than those found in in ceremonial songs, making it difficult to ascertain an underlying meter. As noted, this is a feature of lullaby singing styles across the world. Rock et al. (1999) argue that these vocal styles signal a time to sleep, in contrast to a time to play.

In terms of text, lines may comprise a noun plus verb (e. g. Verse 3B), or just nouns (e. g. Verse 3A, 1A) or a verb alone (e. g. Verse 1B). As in ceremonial songs, verbs only ever occur in line final position. Although frequent in ceremonial songs, lexical parallelism is only found in one verse. In Verse 4, the word *alernng* 'sun' in Line A is replaced with *arrarlkw* 'Pleiades' in Line B, and the following two words remain constant. Both lines have the same number of syllables and thus the rhythm is the same. That there is little parallelism in *Rapikwenty* may reflect a downplaying of lexical content, as it is the musical aspects rather than the text that convey the message 'it is time to sleep' (Rock et al. 1999: 527).

As in ceremonial songs, lines are simply juxtaposed without any linking between them. In summary, *Rapikwenty* lines are shorter and show greater

diversity and variability in rhythm than ceremonial songs. We now consider a poetic convention found in *Rapikwenty* which is also common in Anmatyerr ceremonial songs.

3.7. Poetic conventions

Like ceremonial songs, some *Rapikwenty* verses undergo a process of 'consonant transfer' (Hale 1984: 260) to ensure that the first word of a line begins with a consonant instead of a vowel (Verses 3 and 8).[15] Consonant transfer involves moving the final consonant of a word to the beginning of the following word, where the following word begins a new line. The first syllable of this line-initial word ideally coincides with the first beat of a bar. Only syllables with an onset can occupy this strong metrical position (Turpin 2014). This has parallels in the spoken language, as only syllables with an onset can host stress. To illustrate consonant transfer, let us consider Verse 8. Its sung form is shown in Figure 5 while its underlying lexical structure is shown in Figure 6.
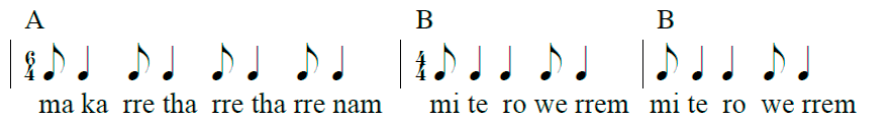
Figure 5. Sung form of Verse 8.

When line A of this song is sung, the final consonant of each line, 'm', also forms the onset of the initial vowel of the following line, as diagrammed in Figure 6.

A	akarretharreth arrernem	*Putting it (on) his fuschia headed-hair*
B	iter-iwerram	*(Taking) the back road*
B	iter-iwerram	*(Taking) the back road*
	etc.	
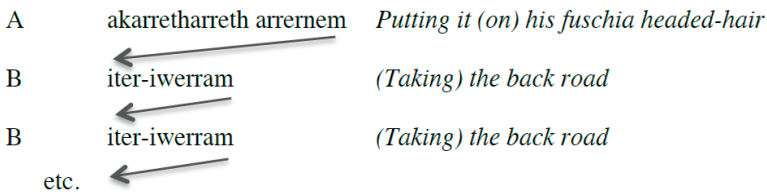
Figure 6. Lexical structure of Verse 8 showing consonant transfer

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[15]   Consonant transfer can be seen in other Arandic songs (Green and Turpin 2013; Strehlow 1971; Turpin 2014).

Most Arandic words start with a vowel, and thus a solution involving either consonant transfer or initial vowel deletion is required to ensure a syllable with an onset falls on the beat. Vowel deletion is used in the other six *Rapikwenty* verses. An example of vowel deletion can be seen in Figure 7. Here the initial vowels of the words *akngwely* 'dog' and *irretyekanek* in the second bar are deleted and the following consonant aligns with the first beat of a bar.
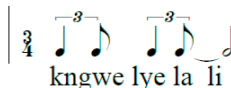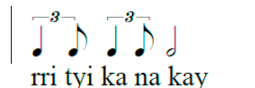

sung:	kngwe lye la li	rri tyi ka na kay
lexical form:	akngwely-el=arl	irr-etyekan-ek
meaning:	dog-ERG=REL	?- PST:POT-PC

'The dingo nearly ate him'

Figure 7. Vowel deletion in Verse 2 Line A.

In this section we have seen how *Rapikwenty* draws on the metrical and poetic conventions of ceremonial songs. In the next section we consider variants of the verses, which are more common than in ceremonial songs.
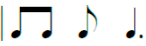
3.8. Variation in the *Rapikwenty* verses

Rhythmic and textual variations can be heard as the verse repeats throughout the course of a song item. They can also be heard in different song items of the one verse; as well as across different performances. In many cases the variation is only slight, such as substitution of a near-synonym. This occurs in Verse 1 where the past completive *-etyam* is replaced with the past habitual *-etyart* in some instances *(arlelp-arlakelh-etyart ~ arlelp-arlakelh-etyam)*. Not only does this variation result in song texts that have similar meanings, but they also have the same number of syllables and so there is no change in the rhythm.

Lexical substitutions that differ in their number of syllables are more significant, as these also affect rhythm. Such variation can be seen in Figure 8, where the suffix *-areny* 'denizen of' replaces *-el* 'in' (underlined) in variants (i) and (ii) of Verse 1.[16] While the meaning of the two forms is similar, the

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[16]   Verse 2 is the only verse that was recorded on two occasions, 15 years apart, and sung by two different women. Note, however, that this variation also occurs within the 2007 performance.

latter has one less syllable and thus it has a different rhythmic setting. Note, however, that the overall duration of the sequence (3 beats) is the same in both (i) and (ii).

i.

ra pi kwi ntyay   kwi ntya ri nya
                        ikwenty-<u>areny</u>
                        ashes-DEN

ii.
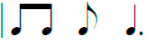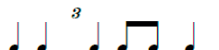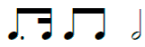
ra pi kwi ntyay   kwi ntya la
                        kwenty-<u>el</u>
                        ashes-LOC

Figure 8. Variation in text and rhythm, Verse 1, line A.

Similar variation involving the addition of a clitic =*anem* 'now' is shown in Figure 9. When it is added to the middle of the line in (ii), the final syllable of the word, *ya*, is reduced to a crotchet so that the overall duration of the line remains the same. Similar variation, which does not alter the duration of a line, can also be seen in Verses 4 and 8.

i.

te than ti ya ne ma   a ne pa ne ma
iteth=antey=anem   an-epan-em
alive=still=now   sit-CNT-NP
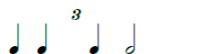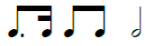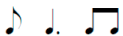
ii.

te than ti ya—   a ne pa ne ma
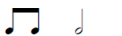iteth-antey   an-epan-em
alive=still   sit-CNT-NP

Figure 9. Variation in text and rhythm, Verse 2.

Some lexical substitutions, however, do impact on the overall duration of a line. Such variation can be seen in Figure 10, where the suffix -*atherr* 'two' (underlined) is added to the final word *akely* 'small' in variant (ii). Semantically the suffix 'two' clarifies the number of small boys rather than contradicting variant (i) which is unspecified for the number of boys. The two additional syllables resulting from -*atherr* are accommodated by adding two additional quavers. Rather than shortening the duration of the final syllable of the line to one quaver, the dotted crotched duration of this syllable is retained

and the overall duration of the bar is increased by one beat, from three beats to four. This process of 'additive rhythm' is widespread in ceremonial songs (Ellis 1968).

i.
kwa tyi pin tarr   kan tarl ka   we ya ku ka
kwaty apint   arrkant=arlk   awey   akwek
water flood   (?)   =also   boy   small

ii.
kwa tyi pin tan   tarr kan tarl ka   we ya ku ka the rrai
kwaty apint-<u>ant</u>   arrkant=arlk   awey   akely -<u>atherr</u>
water flood-only   (?)   =also   boy   small two

'And flood water everywhere; the (two) small boy(s)'

Figure 10. Variation in text and rhythm, Verse 4.

Note that the two variants of this verse vary in two other respects. First, there is an Alyawarr term *akely* 'small' in (ii) in place of the Anmatyerr word *akwek* 'small' in (i). Like the *-etyart ~ -etyam* variation in Verse 1, this has no impact on rhythm, as the number of syllables is the same. Second, there is an additional suffix *-ant* (underlined) on the second word *apint* 'flood water' in (ii). This additional syllable requires an extra note which is put into bar 2, creating a 4-note sequence instead of the 3-note sequence in (i). Like the variation in Figure 8, this does not affect the overall duration.

Much of the variation considered in this section would be commented on as 'errors' by the singers if it occurred in ceremonial songs. In such cases, the singers would concur and form some agreement as to a single version of the text. In *Rapikwenty,* however, no such comments were made and different versions are maintained and accepted over multiple song items. For example, dialectal variation in the song text may follow previously used forms in the prose narrative, as we saw in the variation of the past tense forms *-etyam* and *-etyart*, and the words *akwek* and *akely* 'small' in Figure 10. While it is possible that such variation may be a result of attrition, it is also possible that this song genre lends itself to variability as the singers aim to spontaneously weave the forms and meanings of the narrative into the songs. There may be a close relationship between cantefable (the mixed form) and the large degree of variation which we find in *Rapikwenty.*

4. Conclusion

Rapikwenty chronicles the adventures of a loner who travels across the landscape where danger looms. Various challenges are met by resilience and ingenuity and with knowledge of the country and its resources. Thematically, *Rapikwenty* fits well in a well-known canon of stories about journeys, with movement establishing a spatial and temporal rhythm (Klapproth 2004). The cultural importance of travel and the prevalence of the journey as a structuring template for Indigenous narratives is well-recognized (Green 2016, Hoffmann 2015: 18, McGregor 1987: 20; Wilkins 1991: 252). Ancestral beings themselves embarked on tiring and arduous odysseys, and in this sense the recitations of the travels of *Rapikwenty,* on and on, and through many cycles of day and night, forms no exception.

In *Rapikwenty* the boundary between everyday events and the abnormal or unexpected is blurred. Perhaps it is this juxtaposition of dream and reality that creates the frisson of fear that accomplishes the lullaby's task. Given all the frightening things that are 'out there', maybe the infant's decision to remain encircled by kin in the safety of the home hearth, and fall asleep, is the best one. As one of the singers stated, stories like *Rapikwenty* were told "to make us fall asleep, and to stop us from running around". Such themes are also well attested in Aboriginal child-directed narratives. Stories of this type may feature children who vanquish rapacious monsters (Cook and Green 2007: 111), the dire consequences for infants who crawl away from the safety of home (Róheim 1988: 158–59) or evil elder sisters who steal babies (Wallace and Lovell 2009: 44). In contrast these themes of danger are rarely the subject of ceremonial songs. Nor does *Rapikwenty* appear to be explicitly apotropaic and associated with special powers in the way that many Anmatyerr ceremonial genres are.

Where *Rapikwenty* stands out from other lullabies documented in the literature is that it includes both poetry and prose. As Harris and Reichl (1997) point out this poetic flux "is far more widespread than literary scholars working in only one tradition are generally aware of" (1997: 1). These mixtures of verse and prose are found, for example, in ancient Celtic, Indian and Arabic traditions. While this form is the basis of the western genre of 'musicals', rarely is this a feature of lullabies. Watt (2012: 98), notes that some lullabies are more narrative in nature and sometimes they may follow a bedtime story. Pete Seeger's popularization of the Bantu lullaby *Abiyoyo* is a contemporary example (Seeger and Hayes 1987), yet it is not known how widespread this practice is in oral lullaby traditions. It may be that research methodologies that focus on categorical distinctions between 'speech' and 'song' do not always document the wider discourse practices in which lullabies are embedded. For example, Lethbridge (1937) documented the Maranoa lullaby from southern Queensland in the

1920s, yet nothing is known about the discourse context in which it was sung. Furthermore the micro-variation in the style of vocal delivery that is seen in *Rapikwenty* and other song-poems of its kind tends to be overlooked.

In *Rapikwenty* the improvised story is delivered in a recitative style that moves seamlessly into the song which is delivered in a characteristic lullaby crooning style. The use of vocal styles that may be characterized as somewhere on a cline between 'ordinary' speech and 'song' adds another comparative dimension. While ceremonial performances rarely involve embedding songs within a narrative, performers often explain how a song fits in with a creation story, or make a comment demonstrating that they know the 'story' associated with the song. Notwithstanding this unusual form, *Rapikwenty* is clearly in the style of Anmatyerr adult folklore, and its vocal delivery and narrow pitch range are features common to lullabies the world over.[17]

Abbreviations

ALL allative; CNT continuous; DEN denizen of; dl dual; DTR destransitiviser; EMPH emphatic; GO&ALONG action happens with concurrent motion; DO&GO.BACK action happens before moving away; INCH inchoative; INST instrumental; ITER iterative; KinPOSS kin possessive marker; LOC locative; NP non-past; PC past completive; PST past; PST:IPF past imperfective; PST:POT past potential; RED reduplicated form; REL relativiser; sg singular

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