During the second wave of military occupation of his country (1941-45), Alec Wirrijangu, a Ngarinyin barnman (composer-cum-healer) living in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, dreamt a series of new songs that spliced together three catastrophic epochs: the locally experienced effects of World War II, the violent settlement of the Kimberley at the turn of the twentieth century, and the cosmological conflict between humans and Wanjina (ancestral beings) during Lalarn, the originary epoch. This paper traces these songs’ “biography” - that is to say, tracing a life of the songs through exploring their effects upon those who come into contact with them (Luckmann 1991). By beginning my analysis from performances in the present as “the source point of all temporal positions” (Husserl xxiv) the “multi-stranded nature of temporality” (Goodwin 2002:19) is made visible rather than being eclipsed by some of the commonly assumed orientations towards the past or the future respectively ascribed to Indigenous and European cosmologies.

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