

# *Edge of the Sacred*

## *Jung, Psyche, Earth*



DAIMON

David Tacey

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# Edge of the Sacred

Jung, Psyche, Earth



**DAIMON**  
VERLAG

to Craig San Roque, Leon Petchkovsky and Diana James

This book comprises a completely revised and expanded edition of the original version published by Harper Collins in Sydney in 1995

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## *Preface*

This book is about the experience of the sacred 'from below'. By that phrase, I mean that it comes to us today from the earth rather than heaven. It also comes from 'below' our awareness, that is, it comes as a surprise, when we least expect it, and from dimensions of life that have not typically been designated as holy. One consequence of the collapse of the old religious dispensation is that the divine takes on the character and attributes of a trickster, and we are often caught unawares as to where the holy is to be found, or where it chooses to reveal itself in a post-traditional context. Jung is one of the great pioneers of the discovery of what lies below the surface of awareness, and each chapter adopts his psychological perspective, but the early chapters are directly concerned with his reflections on mind, earth and interiority.

The book is also concerned about things 'down under' in a geographical sense. Chapters 5 to 10 explore the Australian soul. I turn to history, society and the arts and ask what these might tell us about a shift to a new kind of awareness: from conscious to the unconscious, from patriarchy to the feminine, from heroic activity to receptive silence, from egocentrism to concern for earth, spirit and soul. I attempt to 'track the sacred', see where it has gone, and find out how and where it is revealing itself in a society that appears to be purely secular.

This book first appeared as *Edge of the Sacred* in 1995. It was published in Australia and did not have international distribution.



The present edition is revised and updated, and written with an international audience in mind. The introduction and chapters 1, 2, 3 and 10 are entirely new, and a former chapter on Patrick White has been omitted. Chapters 4 and 8 are based on earlier versions but have been substantially reworked, especially in light of the Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, offered by the Rudd Labor Government in February 2008.

I am grateful to Robert Hinshaw of Daimon Verlag in Einsiedeln, Switzerland, for encouraging me to prepare a revised edition. I thank Ian Player of South Africa, for first suggesting an international edition of this book. I am indebted to Roderick Main of the University of Essex, for helping me think through some of the philosophical implications of the mind's relation to earth.

I would like to acknowledge, collectively, the people of the Pitjantjatjara, the Aranda, and the Warlpiri nations, for their generosity in discussing matters of spirit, culture and land with me at various times over the last forty years. Most of these discussions were informal and unplanned, but they proved decisive in shaping my understanding of Aboriginal cultures and religions.

Chapters 1 and 2 first appeared in *Jung Journal: Culture and Psyche* Vol. 3, No. 2 (2009). I thank Dyane Sherwood, editor, and the University of California Press for permission to use these chapters again and to retain their original editing of the material.

David Tacey  
Melbourne, March 2009

## Introduction

### *The Sacred From Below: The Earthly Spirit of Our Time*

Dear lost God, you endless path!  
Only because you were broken and scattered  
have we become the ears of nature and her voice.

— Rilke 1922: 105

#### *1. The Changing of The Gods*

Our civilization is at the edge of a new experience of the sacred. The sacred is about to be realized in the realm of nature, earth, embodiment and physicality. This is a momentous change not only for the West, but insofar as a Western-style mentality has infiltrated everywhere, for the globe. The shift is a relocation of the sacred from the heavens to the earth, from the cosmic realm to the realm 'below'. Typically, in the monotheisms of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, the divine has been located 'above', in the empyrean of starry space and distant skies. In symbolic terms, the figure of a Heavenly Father has ruled over our apprehension of the sacred. But the Sky God has expired, 'God is dead', and the divine effulgence has fallen to earth, lighting up the world of nature with an otherworldly glow.

The divine energy never disappears; it merely shifts its location. It cannot disappear, as it is archetypal, that is to say, a core feature of reality. In physics, energy changes its form and never expires. When

one God dies, another appears, but the new God is often in a place where we least expect it. The divine is mercurial and plays tricks on us, especially if we have killed off the last God through egotism and lack of reverence. The new God will not reveal itself immediately, but only gradually, through time. The new God will appear under our noses, but it requires an act of vision, of prophetic imagination, to see it. Poets get there first, and artists and musicians. Only later do the intellectuals and theologians follow suit. Philosophers come after the poets and before the theologians, who only 'see' once it has all been written down. Theologians spend a long time mourning the death of the old God, and as such are not predisposed to welcoming the new.

This 'changing of the gods' comes at an auspicious time in history. The earth is facing an unprecedented ecological crisis, and the biophysical depletion of nature and its resources has been carried to an alarming degree by the progressive mentality that has governed Western society since the rise of science. As the earth faces a pivotal 'point of no return', it is timely, to say the least, that the earth should appear at this moment as a source for the resacralization of consciousness. The so-called 'environmental crisis' is wrongly termed, in my view, for it is a crisis of human consciousness, a failure to view the physical world and its elements as sacred. For only that which is sacred is treated with respect, and when something is treated as profane it is taken for granted. The earth once was a sacred creation, and the invisible hand of the creator was seen in every rock, river and blade of grass. But as soon as we lost this awareness, we began to treat the earth as a lifeless, empty resource for human advancement. The desacralization of consciousness is responsible for the environmental crisis, and the sooner we can recover a sense of the sacred, the sooner will the earth be able to recover from the damage that has occurred.

## *2. The Feminine Divine*

One cannot escape the impression that the issue of gender lurks just beneath the surface of this history of disrespect. In the same way that patriarchy has devalued women and the human embodiment of the feminine, so has it devalued the earthly embodiment of the feminine. As ancient mythologies and pagan religions attest, nature is best personified as the Earth Mother who governs the field of creation, procreation, birth, death and rebirth. Indeed, the English word 'matter' derives from the Latin term *mater*, or mother. It is not accidental that centuries of patriarchal consciousness have culminated in an industrial-technological complex that has devalued the feminine earth and brought it, or *her*, to the point of ecological collapse.

It is important that we attempt to bring this mythic personification of nature back into our cultural awareness, and not just treat the earth as an external object, lacking identity or independent life of its own. As Jung wrote in the last year of his life:

A concept like 'physical matter', stripped of its numinous connotation of the 'Great Mother', no longer expresses the vast emotional meaning of 'Mother Earth'. It is a mere intellectual term, dry as dust and entirely inhuman. (1961b: 584)

I remember the first time I heard of 'Mother Earth', my heart leapt forth and I felt stirred from within. It was at an assembly in primary school, and the headmistress was trying to convey to the students something of the importance of the rhythm of the seasons. I suppose from a rational point of view, her talk about Mother Earth must have looked old-fashioned and quaintly sentimental, but it conveyed meaning to me in such a way that no mere talk about the seasonal cycles could ever have done. Later in life, when I heard about the 'Gaia hypothesis' of James Lovelock, it meant more to me than any merely intellectual term. I think there is a part of us that comes alive when we return to the mythic personifications that scientifically-based education has dispensed with. Emotional knowing is as important, and sometimes more important, than conceptual

knowing, especially if we need to summon psychic energy to meet the ecological crisis that we currently face.

Some people refer to the 'rape' of nature, and this is an apt metaphor because the mentality that abuses nature is a heroic-masculinist one that has run rampant for too long. It might be a ruse of nature to suddenly reverse the tables, and present matter, *mater*, physicality and creation as sacred, at precisely the time when it is most threatened by a consciousness that has been blind to nature's sacredness. Moreover, at this same time we are witnessing the decline of the patriarchal sacred order, and the loss of God the Father from our awareness. Nietzsche declared that God was dead in the late nineteenth century, and ever since the West has moved steadily away from a religious awareness that could make sense of the old deity. In the 1960s, an American astronaut returning from space was asked by a cynical journalist if he had seen God out there. His humorous reply was, 'Yes, and she's black!' This was probably more profound than either the journalist or the astronaut were able to appreciate. For the fact remains that the decline of the Heavenly Father as the center of sacred life has left a spiritual void, which may need to be filled by an equal and opposite archetypal force.

### 3. Correcting an Imbalance

It was the ancient philosopher Heraclitus who proposed the principle of *enantiodromia*, that is, a tendency for energy to 'run in the opposite direction', once it had reached its limit in an existing situation. What we are seeing today, I believe, is nothing less than a changing of sacred values in our culture, to redress an imbalance. This dramatic shift is not of our choosing, but is happening of its own accord, since the archetypal dominants of our culture are disturbed, and need to be compensated by a new development. Psychic energy in the patriarchal mould has 'peaked' and is in decline. Even feminism, with all its revolutionary energy and protest, is a response to an *enantiodromia* rather than the instigator of it. There are objective forces at work in the *zeitgeist* or spirit of the time, and at such a

time we can only stand in awe of the pace at which long-established values are being reversed and time-honored beliefs are being overturned. As Jung wrote:

We are living in what the Greeks called the *kairos*, the right moment, for a 'metamorphosis of the gods', of the fundamental principles and symbols. This peculiarity of our time, which is certainly not of our conscious choosing, is the expression of the unconscious man within us who is changing. (1957: 585)

Jung's language is dated and not precise. It is not so much the 'unconscious man within us' who is changing, but rather the interior woman. It is 'she' who has had enough of patriarchal oppression, and is bursting out with impact and force. The interior man stands amazed and confused, as his feminine counterpart takes on a new life and demands her right to expression and influence. Call this, if you will, feminism at the deep archetypal level, a psychic or mythic equivalent to what we have seen in the social and political sphere over the last fifty years.

We are about to see, and are already beginning to see, the revival of pagan religions of the earth and its seasonal mysteries, as well as a rise in the cult of the feminine, the veneration of the goddesses and of the Earth Mother and Eternal Feminine. As well, at this same time, we are seeing a new and remarkable worldwide respect for archaic, tribal, and indigenous religions and cultures, such as those of the North American Indians and the Australian Aborigines, about whom this book is concerned. It is these ancient cosmologies, which historically can be seen to be on a completely different tack to the patriarchal monotheisms, which appear to show the way in terms of how we might recover our respect for the earth and our veneration of natural mysteries.

Naturally, the remnant patriarchal traditions are alarmed by the rise of feminine spirit in our time. They warn of the 'dangers' of natural, as distinct from revealed, religion, of the 'problems' of heathenism, as distinct from transcendental and scriptural truth, and of the 'temptations' of the earthly pleasures and the body. But such warnings are anachronistic and false. The only danger that faces us

today is continued one-sided adherence to a patriarchal order that scorns the feminine and reviles the earth. The greatest favor we can do to ourselves and the planet is relax the anxiety of the patriarchal tradition toward the body and earth, and experience the feminine mysteries in a positive light. The pendulum of our civilization needs to swing in the opposite direction; otherwise we will never find the balance that allows us to live in harmony with the earth and the natural mysteries.

It is not, however, that we need to spurn the achievements that have been won in the name of scientific advancement. It is not that we need to turn against the Father and bring him down so that the Mother can reign supreme. Even Nietzsche was not thrilled to announce the death of God, despite the fact that he has been misrepresented by atheists in our day as a philosopher who was delighted to make this announcement. Nietzsche said we had murdered God, and we were hardly aware of our terrible act. We had to become more aware, and we had to replace the old and dying God with a new image of the sacred, which Nietzsche felt could be found in Dionysus, the sacred god of the feminine mysteries of earth, fecundity and procreation (Nietzsche 1872). The rational and intellectual principle of Apollo, he believed, ought to be compensated by the erotic and intuitive life of Dionysus. Dionysus is a masculine figure, but he served the feminine mysteries in the cults of Greece and the ancient world (Otto 1965).

A correction needs to be made in favor of the feminine, but it would represent a regression to extinguish the advances that have been made under the aegis of the patriarchal regime. It is time to bring Father and Mother, Spirit and Matter, Heaven and Earth, together into a new totality of human enterprise and endeavor. The necessary correction may look like a fatal assault to the patriarchal traditions that are fearful of the Mother and her pagan ways. The adherents to the monotheisms will complain about infection by polytheistic cosmologies, and the advocates of transcendental spirit will complain about the immanentalism of the rising spirituality. Supporters of the old patriarchal ethics of perfection will worry about the holistic and body-affirming emphasis of the new worldview. But these worries

and protests are inevitable and nothing can be done about them. There has to be some pain, shock and reorientation as we come to terms with a side of life that has been systematically suppressed by the patriarchal order.

#### *4. The Changing Nature of Truth*

There will be warnings that civilization is going to the dogs unless we return to the ways of the past. But unless we break our moral and spiritual identifications with the former patriarchal system, unless we recognize that it needs complementing by a healthy dose of what it has suppressed, we will be heading for ruin. This makes our time all the more stressful, because spiritual and moral authorities, acting in accordance with the light of the past, issue warnings and pleas based on the truth as they understand it. But truth has changed, and what was true in the past has become false in our day. We need a new 'testament' to take into account the rise of the feminine from its suppression, and the rise of nature from its subjugation by patriarchal spirit.

Jung puts our situation clearly: 'Eternal truth needs a human language that alters with the spirit of the times' (1946: 396), and in more paradoxical terms: 'All the true things must change and only that which changes remains true' (1955-56: 503). Truth never stays the same, and as the spirit of the times changes we have to change with it. This is hard, and for some of us it is impossible, especially if we feel that truth has been 'written in stone'. The patriarchal order likes to believe that its truth is true for all time, that it has been handed down from on high. However, this notion has to be sacrificed to make way for the new truth which is coming up from below. The challenge today is not to destroy the former truth, but to put it to one side so we can listen to the new truth that demands to be heard, from nature and the feminine. We need to listen to its sacred voice, to hear its plea to be respected as we have respected the 'law of the fathers' in the past.

### *5. Toward a New Romanticism*

In this monumental turn that I am delineating, the Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries begins to take on a new importance for us today. The Romantic movement in Europe and America generated some of the greatest poetry, literature, visual art and philosophy in Western history, and yet I do not believe that its spiritual and cultural significance has yet been fully grasped. It represented the compensatory return, in a patriarchal era, of the repressed feminine. Although the term 'romanticism' can be trivialized and reduced to an aesthetic affectation or erotic swoon, it was, and continues to be, a major archetypal expression of the sanctity of nature, the sacredness of creation, and the holiness of desire, embodiment, sexuality and libido. Romanticism is not just a stuffy, high-cultural movement confined to love-struck poets and philosophers, but a serious renaissance of the feminine and matriarchal dominants that have always existed in the Western psyche but which have been driven underground.

In this sense, the contemporary interest in primitivism, indigenous tribes, earth cosmologies, wicca, paganism, divinatory systems, herbalism, gardening, natural remedies, goddesses, attunement with natural forces, are contiguous with a new romanticism in the arts, philosophy, music, ecological science, feminist theory and physics. All of these cultural expressions are, in turn, resonant with a new earth-romanticism found in Jungian depth psychology, with its emphasis on the recovery of what has been lost to the patriarchal frame. Based on Jungian thought, and on Hillman's archetypal psychology, a new discourse has emerged which calls itself ecopsychology. Jung's work was constantly attempting to re-establish the unitary reality of what he called 'archaic man', whose relationship with nature was binding and emotional. However, much of Jung's work is concerned with pointing out how this binding relationship has been lost to our consciousness:

Through scientific understanding our world has become dehumanized. Man feels himself isolated in the cosmos. He is no longer involved in nature and has lost his emotional participation in natural

events, which hitherto had a symbolic meaning for him. Thunder is no longer the voice of a god, nor is lightning his avenging missile. No river contains a spirit, no tree means a man's life, no snake is the embodiment of wisdom, and no mountain still harbors a great demon. Neither do things speak to him nor can he speak to things, like stones, springs, plants and animals. He no longer has a bush-soul identifying him with a wild animal. His immediate communication with nature is gone forever, and the emotional energy it generated has sunk into the unconscious. (1961b: 585)

One need only place this quotation beside contemporary ecological writings to realize to what extent Jung has prefigured, and perhaps influenced, the present preoccupation with the resacralization of nature:

It is difficult to undo our own damage, and to recall to our presence that which we have asked to leave. It is hard to desecrate a sacred grove and change your mind.... We doused the burning bush and cannot rekindle it; we are lighting matches in vain under every green tree. Did the wind once cry, and the hills shout forth praise? Now speech has perished from among the lifeless things of earth, and living things say very little to very few. (Dillard 1984: 70)

We seek to 'undo our damage', and we are not even sure how to go about it. Working at the purely external or economic level on climate change and environmental matters is not enough. It helps to attend to things from outside, but since the real problem has to do with our psychological attitude and an absence of sacred feeling, I doubt the capacity of secular governments and well-meaning agencies to resolve the 'environmental crisis'. To put this another way, one cannot resolve this crisis with the same mental approach that created it in the first place. Something further is needed, and that something is a movement of the soul into the world, an act of vision which allows the so-called 'outside' world to reveal its interiority and its intense inward fire. If we continue to treat the world as 'outside' the soul, we continue to perpetuate the problem, rather than solve it.

However, the notion that the spiritual link with nature has 'gone forever' is an overstatement. As Jung himself says in the same essay,

'Since energy never vanishes, the emotional energy that manifests itself in all numinous phenomena does not cease to exist when it disappears from consciousness' (1961b: 583). What is lost to our awareness falls into the unconscious, from where it has to be recovered, by hard labor, effort and creative endeavor. The emotional, psychic and spiritual connection with nature can still be brought into consciousness, so long as we have the courage to sacrifice some of our rationality and egotism, which keeps it at bay and prevents it from making its necessary return. For clearly, we cannot make way for the spiritual communication with nature unless we are able to make room for it in the psyche, and prepare a place for it in the hierarchy of our knowledge, wisdom and education.

Jung struggled to bring up the light of nature, the *lumen naturae*, into consciousness and culture. But one has to risk entering the darkness of the unconscious before this strange light, this numinosity or sanctity of nature, can be brought back to life. One needs to make a descent into the unconscious, and I think the idea of descent is at the heart of the experience of Australia, which has long been referred to as 'down under' and on the other (wrong) side of the world. The present book, *Edge of the Sacred*, is a contribution to the field of ecopsychology, an ecological elaboration of Jung's depth psychology.

It is the confinement of soul to the human being that has been responsible for the despiritualization of nature. To walk again in a sacralized universe, we need to feel that we are walking through the soul of the world, and soul is not merely human, but is an aspect of creation. Soul is thus 'returned' to the world; not that it ever left the world, but in our error and misperception, we imagined soul was confined to the human. When we revise our philosophy and epistemology, we will arrive at a poetics of being in which the idea of a sacralized universe can be represented to our thought, and experienced in our bodies as the foundation for the animated life in creation. In this way, we no longer inhabit a dead, alien landscape, but the earth becomes alive with the presence of the sacred, and the order of things is restored to our vision.

## Psyche and Earth

### Chapter I

#### *Mind and Earth: Psychic Influence Beneath the Surface*

##### *1. The Expanding Notion of Psyche*

Does earth have spirit or soul? The question might sound odd to some ears, and materialists might dismiss it as absurd. But it is a question that more people are asking, especially those who are interested in the depths of matter and the mystery of the natural world. In particular, those who are seeking a spiritual basis for the new ecological awareness are asking this question, as well as those seeking to build connections between contemporary consciousness and the earth-based religions of indigenous peoples (Tacey 2000: 93-122).

The notion that the earth *has* spirit could be a mistaken formulation, or an error of perception. Perhaps we could put it the other way around: spirit 'has' earth, and earth is insinuated in and surrounded by a much larger reality of spirit. This is what the ancient Greeks meant by *panentheism*, all things in God. Matter might be seen as the finite dimension of the infinite spirit. If this is true, then Western thinking about the world, based as it is on a dualism of earth versus spirit, is rendered false at the outset. Jung worked to undermine and deconstruct this dualism, finding it overturned in his clinical practice and in his studies in alchemy and medieval religion. In his essay on Paracelsus, he asserted:

Nature is not matter only, she is also spirit. Were that not so, the only source of spirit would be human reason. (1942: 229)

Summarizing Jung's position on spirit and matter, Meredith Sabini said: 'Matter is the tangible exterior of things and spirit the invisible interior' (Sabini 2002: 79). This radical vision of *spiritual immanence* challenges the typical materialist view, which sees matter as devoid of spirit and 'spirit' as a projection of the human upon an inanimate world. On the other hand, it also challenges the typical metaphysical view, which places spirit 'above' matter and regards it as beyond the material world, only entering that world in unusual moments of 'intervention'.

Jung arrived at his nondualist position by way of his intuitive investigations into the structure and dynamics of the psyche. At first he began with the Freudian assumption that the ego *has* an unconscious, and the unconscious contains elements rejected by the ego and suppressed by conventional morality. Then, on further reflection, he realized that the unconscious was not a product of the ego, but it had a collective dimension and did not 'belong' to individual persons. He then began to postulate that things worked the other way around: the ego is a creation of the unconscious, and it emerges from it like an island thrust up out of an expansive sea. Jung adopted the view that something infinite, and 'as yet unknown', creates and guides the finite realm, and consciousness is a product of the unconscious. He reversed the chain of causality that had governed psychodynamic thinking.

Far from being the product of the ego, the psyche or 'soul' was the origin of the ego. It was larger, wiser and more encompassing than the ego. The vastness of the psyche suggested to Jung that it was not ultimately human at all. Rather, what we call the 'human psyche' is our portion, our experiential segment, of a world psyche that embraces and envelops the whole of creation. Jung quotes the alchemists: 'The largest part of the soul is outside the body'. This linked Jung's thinking to Neo-Platonic philosophy and to ancient notions of the *anima mundi* or the *spiritus mundi*. The human psyche could be one aspect of a psyche the size of the world. The human

psyche is that part of the psyche we have immediate access to, but which often blinds us to the cosmological dimension of the psyche as a whole.

Hence the clinical idea that we 'have' a psyche or we 'create' an unconscious was slowly unraveled, and revealed as a prejudice of ego-based consciousness. If psyche is large enough to encompass the world, and is not confined to a subjective realm 'inside' us, the possibility arises that we not only walk through an outside world, but also through the *interiority* of the world. We can speak poetically of the 'innerness of things', and there is an internal dimension to the natural world that can impact on and affect us. This subtle idea, which Jung rediscovered but did not invent, has formed the basis of an important new discourse called ecopsychology, in which Jung's 'speculations' have become a source of great practical and ecological application (Roszak 1995).

## 2. The Influence of The Earth

In his thinking about mind and earth, Jung invited us to consider what he called, the 'chthonic portion of the psyche', a portion not immediately accessible but expressed indirectly through archetypal configurations. In a later phase of his career he introduced the notion of the *psychoid*, a level of mind where matter and psyche interpenetrate and become one substance or energy. He was constantly deepening his views with regard to the extent and reach of the psyche, but as early as the 1920s he postulated that human behavior was impacted by 'the psychic influence of the earth and its laws' (1927/1931: 53). Jung's argument begs many questions, not only about whether the human psyche has a chthonic or earthly aspect, but whether the earth has a psychic or spiritual dimension. To the amazement of some readers, Jung writes of 'the conditioning of the mind by the earth' (1927/31: 52) as if the earth were a living entity, as if it could impose its 'laws' and 'influence' upon us.

Jung's reflections on mind and earth are scattered throughout his collected writings, but are especially located in two essays, 'Mind and

Earth' (1927/31) and 'The Complications of American Psychology' (1930). They are extraordinary essays in some ways, because while Jung makes the most 'mystical' of claims about psyche and earth, he does so with the appearance of being cool-headed and scientific. He speaks of his 'findings' about the influence of earth on the mind, as if he were delivering a research paper at a scientific meeting. He claims that he is 'not indulging in any psychological mysticism' (1927/31: 84) while indulging the mystical all the time.

What he meant by this, I think, is that he wanted to approach the mystical through a scientific method. Some might see this as sleight of hand or deceptive, but a more sympathetic approach might concede that Jung is attempting to bring complicated and 'very subtle [matters]' (1927/31: 54) into the realm of thought. He is concerned that the relations between mind and earth are often felt, but rarely discussed because we have no language to speak of them. This topic is generally regarded as too difficult to deal with, but Jung wants to bring it into discourse, in the interests of making the unconscious conscious.

### *3. The 'As If' Model and The Problem of Science*

In discussing this topic, Jung wants to appear credible, wary and scientific. He is reluctant to make wild assertions about the nature of ultimate reality and requests at the start that we adopt a metaphorical approach as part of our 'working hypothesis'. 'Our inferences can never go beyond an "as if"' (1927/31: 51), he cautions the reader. Here he is trying to appear scientific, and yet his warning seems almost ironic, because he regularly moves beyond metaphor, and frequently violates his own hypothetical model. His true intellectual passion, as distinct from his self-consciously groomed stance, is anything but cautious or empirical. His real concern is to affirm the reality of hidden universal forces in nature, and at one point in his essay 'Mind and Earth' he drops his guard, becomes impatient with the 'as if' approach, and declares his subject is 'anything but a

metaphor'. He even chides his readers lest we think that 'all this is only a metaphor' (1927/31: 64).

He tries to establish a metaphorical model, and becomes frustrated with it, because we might be imagining that he is discussing an idea that is 'only' or 'merely' metaphorical. A true metaphor for Jung, like a true symbol, points beyond itself to something real. He wants to grant the spirit of the earth a degree of reality, and if he speaks in metaphors he wants them to refer to facts that cannot be directly apprehended. That is, he wants the metaphors to be point to metaphysical postulates. Jung is aware that metaphor and symbol have been heavily discounted, and are given no more weight than illusions or lies. This frustrates him because so much of his system is based on symbols and metaphors. The archetypes are symbolic constructs, and the psyche itself (as he conceives it) is symbolic, based on an 'as if' perspective. The importance of his constructions is undermined as soon as we say the archetypes are 'only' symbolic, or the psyche is 'only' psychological. To safeguard his speculations, Jung is inclined to claim more for his ideas than science would allow. He does this in the name of bolstering the reality of psychic structures, but it can have the reverse effect, if we feel that he is artificially weighting his concepts with a truth-value that is not apparent.

### *4. Jung's Two Voices*

Jung is worried that he cannot make himself understood about the 'power of earth' and its hold over us. The reader can either reject his reflections as silly and unscientific, or suspend judgment and enter with Jung into his investigation into the semi-darkness, giving him the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps we can reduce the sense that he is being deceitful by speaking about Jung's paradoxical or two-fold approach. His first voice in these writings is that of the reasoned mind, trying to open up mysteries that have long lain buried in the unconscious. This voice attempts to remain true to the methods and assumptions of science, and resists flights into fancy and speculation.



However, his second, other voice is highly intuitive and passionately engaged in realities that empirical science cannot see and therefore cannot prove. His second voice is convinced that the earth is alive, and the psyche is alert and responsive to the earth's aliveness.

Jung's acquired stance is scientific; he tries to maintain reserve and pretends to be dispassionate. But his deeper self is mythopoetic, visionary and prophetic. In these essays, we witness the inherent tension between the scientist and the prophet, the man of learning and the man of vision. Despite his cautionary warnings about not going too far, Jung is convinced that the earth is sentient, knowing and intelligent, and directed by inexplicable cosmic forces. He grows tired of his scientific persona, which is like a shackle he wants to throw off. His true voice is passionate, cramped by reason, and eager to allow his imagination to soar. His reflections on the 'power of the earth' thus represent an internal debate with himself, but generally speaking the scientist and his cautions give way to the poet and his visions. For some scientists, this means he oversteps the mark and can no longer be considered in a scientific way.

### *5. The Ancient Night Religion*

In speaking of the sway of earth over mind, Jung says he is not talking about the influence of external physical or environmental conditions – not about 'the banal facts of sense-perception and conscious adaptation to the environment' (52) – but about things archaic, elemental, chthonic and primordial. He sums up the influence of earth over mind by referring to the 'night religion' of 'primitives' (Jung's word) and children:

What I call 'night religion' is the magical form of religion, the meaning and purpose of which is intercourse with the dark powers, devils, witches, magicians, and spirits. Just as the childish fairytale is a phylogenetic repetition of the ancient night religion, so the childish fear [of the dark] is a re-enactment of primitive psychology. (1927/31: 59)

This ancient religion, with its 'dark powers, witches, magicians, and spirits', expresses the forces of the earth as they represent themselves to and in the mind. Jung argues that we should not take these figures literally, and that we need to separate the 'forces themselves' from their 'infantile forms' (59). Clearly, Jung treats witches, demons, spirits etc. as secondary personifications of a more primary, but perhaps no less terrifying, background reality. What this reality is, Jung cannot say, only that it is unknowable. He seems to think that if we grasp this reality psychologically it will be more knowable. As Jung said in another context, in our efforts to 'explain' the nature of invisible reality in modern terms, all we can do is offer a 'more or less successful translation into another metaphorical language' (1940: 271).

The primary reality is irrepresentable as such, and can only be known through its symbolic representations. Hence although Jung's scientific persona recoils from the idea of demons and spirits, his second self is forced to embrace them and treat them with more respect than his scientific training would allow. He is forced to have 'second thoughts' about symbolic forms that he would normally dismiss as infantile. That is, he has to take seriously these archaic forms, until new forms come along. Perhaps his poetic vision looks forward to a future time, when a new symbolic order will come into being, and we can move beyond the 'infantile forms' that have governed the representation of chthonic forces in the past. Until science comes up with new and compelling metaphors, we are stuck with the old ones.

### *6. Three Ways of Imagining The Invisible*

It would seem that Jung's writings posit three separate ways or stages of approaching nonrational phenomena: 1) premodern literalism and supernaturalism, 2) modern disbelief and skepticism, and 3) a post-rational reappropriation of the unseen forces. In the first, spirits of the earth are treated as forces 'out there' in the world, requiring the intercessions and interventions of shaman priests and

witch doctors. The first stage is called animism, and is generally represented by modern anthropologists and scientists as irrational and anthropomorphic. That is, they see these forces as mere projections of the human mind upon inanimate phenomena. But those who espouse and practice these folk religions do not treat these forces as subjective, but see them as entirely objective forces of the world.

In the second stage of modern disbelief and skepticism, the dark figures of night religion are regarded as morbid figments of fantasy, arising from disturbed, unenlightened or infantile minds. This is the approach adopted by Freud and his psychoanalytic school, at least until Winnicott and Bion adopted a completely new and more positive approach to the meaning and value of fantasy. But as I have indicated, modern Western science and education operates almost entirely in this second stage, having no regard for cosmic forces apart from viewing them as tell-tale projections of the human mind, usually to be traced back to hysterical ideas or unruly emotions.

In the third stage of post-rational vision, the forces of the earth are 'real' again, but their traditional forms are regarded as outdated, and appropriate for an earlier time. This is the approach that is now in the making, and we can see early traces of it in the psychology of Jung, the biology of Rupert Sheldrake, the physics of David Bohm, and the ecological science of 'deep ecology'. We stand on the brink of a new dispensation, where we become receptive again to the transpersonal forces of earth and world. But we urgently need new cosmologies and symbolic systems appropriate to our advanced, post-scientific view of the world.

In his Terry Lectures, which were published as 'Psychology and Religion', Jung made clear the nature of stage one or magical thinking. He was particularly interested in how magical thinking was gradually undermined by the rise of science:

The world is as it ever has been, but our consciousness undergoes peculiar changes. First, in remote times (which can still be observed among primitives living today), the main body of psychic life was apparently in human and in nonhuman objects: it was projected, as we should say now. Consciousness can hardly exist in a state of complete projection. At most it would be a heap of emotions.

Through the withdrawal of projections, conscious knowledge slowly developed. Science, curiously enough, began with the discovery of astronomical laws, and hence with the withdrawal, so to speak, of the most distant projections. This was the first stage in the despiritualization of the world. One step followed another: already in antiquity the gods were withdrawn from mountains and rivers, from trees and animals. (1938/40: 140)

The withdrawal of psychic projections leads to stage two thinking, which we know as the dominant form of thinking in the modern period. Stage two thinking lands us in a spiritual and emotional wasteland, in which reason and science have cleansed the world of all projections, leaving nothing left in the world for us to relate to or form spiritual bonds with. Stage two thinking leads to the ecological crisis, since the world is no longer experienced as sacred, and because it is divested of spiritual significance, we have no reason to care for the world. No longer sacred, it becomes real estate or natural resource to be used to satisfy egotistical desires. The desacralization of nature thus leads too easily to the degradation and exploitation of nature.

### *7. Animation Beyond Projection*

Jung's work clearly looks toward a third stage in which the world is enchanted again, but in a different way from stage one. With the third stage comes the realization that the so-called 'projections' which animated archaic thinking may not be of personal origin. True, they come from within us, but their origin may be archetypal rather than personal. The most profound projections are expressions of archetypal reality that speak of the nature of ultimate reality. In other words, these projections do not only belong inside us, or to the human mind, but might belong inside the soul of the world, the anima mundi.

The very word 'projections' may be wholly inadequate, because it assumes a dualistic Cartesian universe at the outset, in which nature possesses no spiritual content unless it is first projected into it by

the human being. If we adopt a dualistic approach, there can be no way that we might comprehend that spiritual forces in nature are 'always already' there, independent of our mental activity. I think Jung worried a great deal about the subjectivism of the position that speaks about all animations as 'projections'. Indeed, as Roderick Main has argued, 'the concept of projection had in its way contributed to the disenchantment of the world, for the concept implies that the meanings we perceive in the world are not there in reality, but are being foisted onto the world by the human mind' (2007: 26). At the heart of psychology is a Cartesian dualism which is difficult to transcend, since Descartes provides the basis upon which psychology is established. By the time Jung arrived at the concept of synchronicity, however, he no longer spoke about projections as the basis for the connection between psyche and world. Synchronicity, which assumes a meaningful connection between the human subject and the world, calls for a different philosophical conception of the world other than that provided by the model of projections.

If, after withdrawing our projections, there is nothing left that binds us to the world in a meaningful way, something has gone horribly wrong with our philosophical worldview. It is at this point, I believe, that Jung stood as the author of the theory of synchronicity, as he was in need of a new worldview that transcended psychology. Gilles Quispel reports that after delivering his landmark lecture on synchronicity at Eranos in 1951, Jung told him that 'now the concept of projection should be revised completely' (quoted in Segal et. al. 1995: 19). Jung had reached the limits of psychology, and the limits of epistemology.

In *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*, he struggles with the notion of a meaning in the world beyond that which may be projected by humans. He calls it variously 'objective', 'transcendental', 'latent', 'a priori', or 'self-subsistent' meaning. 'The great difficulty', he writes, 'is that we have absolutely no scientific means of proving the existence of an objective meaning which is not just a psychic product' (1952: 915), since 'meaning is an anthropomorphic interpretation' (1952: 916). In a letter to Erich Neumann, Jung points out that the fact that we discover meaning generates the impression that

it has been invented by us, and he disagrees with this impression, which is a kind of illusion:

Meaningfulness always appears to be unconscious at first, and can therefore only be discovered *post hoc*; hence there is always the danger that meaning will be read into things where actually there is nothing of the sort. Synchronistic experiences serve our turn here. They point to a latent meaning which is independent of consciousness. (1959: 495).

If meaning is always already present, how can we know this if we are forced to discover it *post hoc* or after the event? The rules of the epistemological game, of how we come to know things, seem to work against the discovery of *a priori* meaning, and in favor of the notion that meaning has been added by us, which gives us the biases of materialistic science and existential philosophy. Jung recognizes that there is meaning in the world beyond that which might be projected into it, but lacks the science to be able to tackle this problem.

## 8. The Post-Rational Vision

This epistemological problem, that meaning appears as a projection of content rather than a revelation of what is already there, is what makes it difficult for us to leave stage two thinking and to enter stage three. To rational scientists, stage three thinking is merely a regression to stage one, and they can see no difference between a post-rational vision which finds spiritual meaning in the world to a pre-rational superstition that projects unconscious human contents onto the world, thereby changing it into a likeness of our own unknown face. It is true that stages one and three are both advocating the animation of the earth and the presence of spirit in matter. But in stage one such animation is wholly 'contaminated' with human contents, whereas in stage three we have begun to separate the strands of what is projected and what is already there.

Because we need to move to stage three, and because it is so difficult for science to take us there, the New Age movement has

arisen, which forces the issue and asserts the existence of animation in nature and world (Tacey 2001). The New Age is an inevitable social movement and something that had to happen, because if our science proves unable to take us to a new stage of thinking then popular mysticism has to assert the existence of what science cannot see or understand. However, the New Age is only a parody of the new science that is to come, since it confuses stage three with stage one, and, lacking the resources of science or philosophy, it often returns us to superstition and magical thinking. The New Age rightly senses that we need to return animation to the world, but it adopts the position of least resistance, and chooses going back above going forward. This, in turn, confirms the prejudices of stage two scientists, who look with horror and disdain at the assertions made by popular mysticism, which reinforce their suspicions that spirit is a projection, not a discovery.

Such, for instance, is the predicament of Richard Dawkins the Oxford evolutionary biologist, who finds in much popular spiritual concern a regression to a superstitious and implausible worldview. In part, the horror and disdain of such scientists is justified, since Dawkins sees society returning to a pre-scientific worldview which sends alarm bells ringing in the ears of concerned scientists. But at the same time, their resistance to mythopoetic or non-rational modes of thought is what is stopping society from moving out of the sterility of stage two to a more enchanted view of the world. We live 'in between' the times in this regard, and in an unstable transition period, where everything seems slightly chaotic and without order. But this transitional period is inevitable, if our consciousness is to achieve a holistic thinking that makes a higher unity possible between subject and object, mind and earth, spirit and matter.

All too often, the New Age movement is in fact a return to the esoteric spiritual enchantments of the ancient and premodern past. It is a cultural 'symptom' of our time, and a testimony to the fact that if new metaphors cannot be found, old ones will be made to suffice. Although the New Age claims Jung as its mentor and inspiration, Jung would be embarrassed by what it is advocating, which is a return to magical thinking. For Jung, it is important that we move

on, respecting the old metaphors but not adopting them as our own. Our forward movement has to be with eyes opened to science and reason. Jung predicted that science (he singled out theoretical physics) would help us discover the new forms of enchantment, and he believed we could embrace the animation of the earth without succumbing to the superstitions of unreason.

### *9. Rationalism Fends Off The Future*

It is evident that what I am calling stage two thinking, where we explode the myths of the past and reveal them as mere illusions, continues to dominate our universities and educational systems. This intellectual enlightenment, which has produced the secular world, rationalism and secular humanism, is evidently only a stage on our way to a truer and more complete enlightenment.

First there is spirit, then there is no spirit, then there is: that's the history of Western civilization. Stage two thinking feels besieged on either side, protecting itself from a past it continues to debunk, and a future it attempts to fend off. Any genuine attempts to provide a post-rational, post-modern enchantment are quickly dismissed as regressions to the past, illusions, or escapes from reality. Hence Jung continues to be berated and undermined by the university system, since his post-rational thinking is seen as archaic, pre-rational or escapist. Ironically, Jung is championed by the New Age and reviled by the university for exactly the same reason – namely, he is viewed by both as a champion of unreason.

Jung is definitely *not* saying that the chthonic powers of the earth are mere figments of the disturbed mind. But since stage two thinking cannot conceive of chthonic powers except as vestiges of archaic or disturbed minds, he will be seen as a throwback to former times, rather than a visionary who is trying to shape our future. The movement from stage two to three consists largely of a re-evaluation of fantasy, imagination and projection. While many of our 'projections' are as stage two imagines – personal, neurotic, escapist and superimposed – we have a lot of work to do to sort

out the personal from the archetypal and to investigate the nature of reality. A true mythic or symbolic content reveals the real and does not conceal it. This difficult task is already underway in Jungian and post-Freudian discourses, where illusions are being separated from myths, pathologies from cosmic visions, and atavistic regressions from genuine prophesies of the future.

Changes will take place in the universities and educational systems, and changes can be detected already in certain quarters. However, rationalism will cling to power as long as possible. Until recently, the topic of mind and earth in academic discourses has been configured almost entirely at the level of the psychology of consciousness. Discussions have been confined to the way in which the mind *constructs* landscape in art, literature, national identity and social patterning. The typical academic commentary consists of a kind of one-way traffic, in which the mind *inscribes* its life upon the land, which is viewed as neutral or inert, an empty slate or *tabula rasa* upon which mind imposes its projections.

If the land is taken into account at all, it is only in terms of its physical geography and climate. Commentators often refer to the way the land 'moulds' its inhabitants by natural elements, conditions of the soil, productivity, and so on. But few dare to suggest that the land might be influencing us at more subtle levels. However, changes to our point of view are beginning to take place where the views of indigenous peoples are being respected by historians and anthropologists, that is, in new world countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States. My concern is not to validate every wild assertion that 'spirits' inhabit earthly places. I simply wish to open our minds to the possibility that earth breathes its own *pneuma* upon us, and that at least some of what cultural critics refer to as the 'personification of land' or 'anthropomorphism' could be a sensitive and intuitive response to what is emanating from the land. I want to suggest the possibility of two-way traffic between mind and earth.

## Chapter 2

### *The Primitive Within: Colonization in Reverse*

#### *1. Colonization in Reverse*

Jung was interested in the phenomenon that is popularly called 'going native' and in more intellectual terms might be called 'colonization-in-reverse'. After several trips to North America, during which he observed the ways in which former Europeans had adapted to American conditions, he intuited that the land itself had somehow *claimed* its new inhabitants. The colonizers had in turn been colonized, even indigenized. This appealed to Jung's understanding of the psychological process, given that the colonizing project was the work of the heroic ego, and the opposite process, colonization-in-reverse or indigenization, was operating at an unconscious level, and was not even on the horizon of awareness. As a depth psychologist, Jung was alert to the ways in which unconscious dynamics could overturn, subvert or replace the goals and aspirations of the ego.

The colonizing ego thinks that the 'New World' nation is *new*, that it is virgin territory, which the ego is able to conquer and control. But while the *nation* is new, the *land* itself is ancient and powerful. In Australia, for instance, the British colonists referred to the land as *terra nullius*, the 'empty land', possessed by no-one and available for appropriation. This proved to be a disastrous illusion in terms of the destiny and wellbeing of the Aboriginal cultures.

For the colonizing powers had overlooked the fact that the land, vast in size and without visible monuments, was already imagined and possessed by Aboriginal Dreaming traditions that the colonists failed to understand. Moreover, the Aboriginal tradition is the oldest continuous cultural tradition in the world, and recent estimations suggest that the indigenous people have lived on the land for more than fifty thousand years. The Australian national anthem claims that the country is 'young and free', but the continuing Aboriginal presence looks on with scorn and derision at the hubristic colonizing project.

Numerous works of Australian literature and visual art have exploited this opposition between an ego that is unaware of the land, and the ancient indigenous culture that has been ignored, forgotten or misunderstood. There can be no more perfect example of a psychic system at war with itself, with the ego seizing control and the ancient, underlying reality having little or no regard for the ego's designs. Eventually, the earth makes its presence felt through various cultural disturbances and psychological complications. The film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* is a cinematic masterpiece which makes use of this grinding tension between the colonial overlay of society and the unconscious substratum of ancient and denied realities. Needless to say, the ego's ignorance of prior and deeper realities leads to tragedy, as the society finds itself at the mercy of the earth which claims living sacrifices in the spirit of vengeance and retribution.

Just as depth psychology became aware of a *collective* unconscious through symptoms that disturbed the conscious sphere, so the New World nations have become aware of prior, deeper, ancient realities by disturbances in the social field. The society is new, and thinks of itself as in control of its own destiny, but it has to reckon with a prior and deeper claim on its life, which only gradually begins to surface from the depths of its experience. In time, the land has to be respected as having a life and will of its own, quite independent of the designs of the colonizing ego. This kind of maturity and insight is hard won, and does not come easily to a new nation full of its own dreams and aspirations. Gradually, a second or alien will begins

to impress itself upon the society, and make its presence felt with peculiar and unerring force.

## 2. The Psychology of Going Native in America

Jung was fascinated by the sense of conflict between ego and unconscious in new nations. He did not visit Australia, which would have given him ample material to develop his depth psychology of nations, but his eye was fixed firmly upon what he called 'the American experiment'. He wrote, 'The greatest experiment in the transplantation of a race in modern times was the colonization of the North American continent by a predominantly Germanic population' (1927/31: 94). Jung said that we could expect 'all sorts of variations of the original racial type'. How this had come about was mysterious. There were climatic and environmental conditions which would have an impact, but Jung was not thinking of 'external' factors such as climate or physical environment. He wrote:

At all events the 'Yankee' type is formed, and this is so similar to the Indian type that on my first visit to the Middle West [*sic*; he means upstate New York], while watching a stream of workers coming out of a factory, I remarked to my companion that I should never have thought there was such a high percentage of Indian blood. He answered, laughing, that he was willing to bet that in all these hundreds of men there would not be found a drop of Indian blood. That was many years ago when I had no notion of the mysterious Indianization of the American people. (1927/31: 94)

Such discussions about blood and soil were very attractive to the Nazi propagandists some years after Jung's reflections, since *blut und boden* (blood and soil) was a slogan of the National Socialist Party. Hitler believed that the people of German descent had the right to live on German soil, but those without this blood-line did not (Patterson 1982). Jung's intuitions about land and people had placed him in a dangerous and sensitive area, especially because he kept using the term *race* in these reflections on psyche and place.

Understandably, after the death of Jung, and subsequent to the horrific consequences of ideologies based on blood and soil, the Jungian tradition has been reluctant to move into these areas of enquiry. Jung's theme of 'mind and earth' has only just begun to be re-opened by serious scholarship in recent years (Samuels 1993; Singer and Kimbles 2004). Jung's reflections, however, arising as they did some years before the Nazis, have an air of innocence, as he was genuinely fascinated by the way in which land could make its claim upon the mind.

Jung was astonished by the way in which North Americans of European descent seemed to demonstrate in their demeanor and appearance certain traits of the Indian peoples. 'The remarkable thing', he went on, 'is that [no-one seems to] notice the Indian influence' (1927/31: 98). Jung claims that he 'got to know of this mystery only when I had to treat many American patients analytically' (1927/31: 94). This is a tantalizing remark, but Jung gives no clinical information, leaving us to guess what he might mean by this statement. Presumably, Amerindian culture appeared in significant ways in the inner lives of his North American clients, perhaps in a similar way to the role of the Hiawatha motif in the dreams and fantasies of his classic study of Miss Miller (Jung 1912/52).

Jung was intrigued by the early research of the American anthropologist Franz Boas (1858-1942), who sought to scientifically demonstrate the reality of an indigenization process. Boas believed that anatomical changes could be found in the second generation of New York immigrants, 'chiefly in the measurements of the skull' (1927/31: 94). Jung had already referred to this research in his earlier essay, 'The Role of the Unconscious' (1918). In his work, *The History of the American Race* (1912), Boas claimed that the skull measurements of North Americans of European descent had begun to resemble those of the Indian people. This highly controversial hypothesis, which anthropologists have alternatively sought to discredit, revalidate, and disprove again, is still somewhat shaky in the history of anthropology, but Jung found in it a confirmation of his hunch that mind was impacted by place.

### 3. Unconscious Primitivity

Jung noted the way in which Americans of African descent, or as he called them, 'the Negro', had influenced Americans of European descent, but felt that this influence, while significant, was confined to behavior, social attitudes and cultural activities such as music, dancing, talking, partying and laughter. This influence could be accounted for by theories about the migration and dissemination of cultural styles that did not necessitate a theory of influence through the earth or the 'chthonic portion of the psyche'. 'Only the outward behavior is influenced by the Negro, but what goes on in the psyche must be the subject of further investigation' (1927/31: 98). Jung was convinced that the North Americans were becoming indianized or 'going native', and in psychodynamic terms he felt that this was because the unconscious life of the migrants moved 'downwards', or sank roots into the native soil of America:

Thus the American presents a strange picture: a European with Negro behavior and an Indian soul. Everywhere the virgin earth causes at least the unconscious of the conqueror to sink to the level of its indigenous inhabitants. (1930: 103)

It is a pity that Jung's metaphor of the psyche sinking its roots 'downward' into native soil is fused with the racial idea that indigenous peoples are inferior to, or 'below' the level of the European. I like the image of the psyche *sinking* its roots into the earth, as that accords with the developmental process in a culture that has imposed itself from above, but the fact that this is used to support a white supremacist ideology is distinctly unpalatable. Alongside Jung's *spiritual* discourse about the mystery of psychic life is a *moral* discourse about racial inequality and inferiority. He speaks of 'the infection of the European by the primitive' (1927/30: 97), of 'the heavy downward pull of primitive life', and he asks: 'What is more contagious than to live side by side with a rather primitive people?' (1930: 962).

Jung delivers a backhanded compliment to indigenous people, by suggesting that migrants gain vitality, energy and closeness to

nature from their 'proximity' to Amerindian people, but at the same time Europeans have to guard against moral collapse and a lowering of ethical standards: 'The inferior man has a tremendous pull because he fascinates the inferior layers of our psyche, which has lived through untold ages of similar conditions' (1930: 962). Hence the 'growing down' into new lands activates ancient levels of the psyche, levels that Europeans have presumably dealt with and put to rest in their unconscious. What has been put to sleep in the European comes to new life in the American, and according to Jung this creates internal tension within the New World psyche:

Thus, in the American, there is a discrepancy between conscious and unconscious that is not found in the European, a tension between an extremely high conscious level of culture and an unconscious primitivity. This tension forms a psychic potential which endows the American with an indomitable spirit of enterprise and an enviable enthusiasm which we in Europe do not know. (1927/31: 103)

The European in America tries to resist the process of 'going native', and hence in colonial America moral standards were often more rigidly puritanical than back home in Europe. But underneath the pietistic colonial surface, the European in new lands seeks to merge with primal nature. The 'indomitable spirit of enterprise' is found not only in the rapid emergence of the North East as a center of culture and industry, but also in the great enthusiasm with which the Americans pursued their westward expansion.

The American Wild West presents us with a complex picture of the American psyche throughout this classic early period. The conscious aim of the westward project was to expand European civilization into the remote and wild parts of the continent, but underneath the surface there were other forces at work. These included the notion that the Americans actually sought to return to the earth and to become native and indigenous to the place, despite the ambivalent relationship with the Indian peoples, who were of course the original custodians of these lands. In the American mythologization of the Wild West, in the countless novels, romances, stories and movies which were inspired by the westward expansion, we con-

stantly note the tension that Jung described, between 'an extremely high conscious level of culture and an unconscious primitivity'. In the stories of the West, we often see extremely noble figures, men and women, who do their best for civilized morality and culture, but this stance is always cut across by the rebel or defector, the outlaws or bad cowboys, who allow their instincts to run amok in these wild places. Or sometimes the Deputy Sheriff himself hands in his badge and joins the bad boys of the township.

According to Jung, American women often carried 'the more conservative element' (1930: 970), while men often yielded to 'laxity' and the call of the wild. We often see this pattern in Western movies, where the woman on the ranch or in the remote village battles to maintain the civilized codes of morality, while the men in her life abandon all decorum and fall foul of the law. Hence 'nature versus culture' was often enacted as a battle of the sexes in colonial America. However, it must be said that returning to the wild is by no means always synonymous with breaking the law or becoming immoral. Sometimes it means that American characters of unusual caliber discover a new moral integrity in their relationship with the land and primal conditions, as in, for instance, *Dances with Wolves*. Such characters are not only highly sensitive to the American land but deeply respectful of Indian cultures and values. In this new, chthonic kind of moral balance, there is often a note of cosmic spirituality, since becoming at one with the land means becoming at one with the forces that govern the cosmos and the deep unconscious.

#### 4. Germanic People and The Barbarian Within

Jung maintains that what he calls the 'Germanic population' – and he includes Britain along with all of Northern Europe in this category – is more likely to fall under the sway of primal energies than their counterparts in Southern Europe. In 1918 he had said: 'This chthonic quality is found in dangerous concentration in the Germanic peoples' (1918: 18). His argument is that the Germanic northern peoples have come more 'recently' to civilization and to



Christianity than have their counterparts in the south, and thus are closer to the pagan and pre-Christian barbarian. In his view, the 'uncivilized' parts of the northern psyche are more easily activated when the social controls of the conscious life are weakened:

The primitive man ... reminds us of our prehistory, which would take us back not more than about twelve hundred years so far as the Germanic races are concerned. The barbarian in us is still wonderfully strong and he yields easily to the lure of his youthful memories. Therefore he needs very definite defenses. The Latin peoples being older don't need to be so much on their guard, hence their approach to the colored man is different. (1930: 962)

It is difficult to find evidence for Jung's intuitions, but they are suggestive of differences between national psychologies in Europe. I have noticed in my Australian experience that so-called 'Latin peoples' relate differently to the indigenous people of Australia than do people of northern European or Anglo-Saxon origin. Somehow, relations with the indigenous people are easier, more relaxed and less defended than those of the Anglo-Saxons. I had never seen this difference pointed out until I came across Jung's essays on America. He certainly has a point, although as in so much of his work it is difficult to imagine finding hard evidence to support his hunches.

But Jung's intuitions about national differences and types were entirely prescient and prophetic, given the fact that he was making these observations in the late 1920s and early 30s. He had loudly warned that the Germanic type had a problematic and dangerously close relation to the barbarian within, and less than a decade after his pronouncements the world witnessed the horrifying spectacle of the 'barbarian' let loose in the Germanic psyche, personified by the 'blond beast' of National Socialism. In 1918 Jung had given a description of the Germanic psyche which was almost a prophetic snapshot of the Nazi character which emerged in the late 1930s and early 40s:

Christianity split the Germanic barbarian into an upper and a lower half, and enabled him, by repressing the dark side, to domesticate the brighter half and fit it for civilization. But the lower, darker half still awaits redemption and a second spell of domestication.

Until then, it will remain associated with the vestiges of the pre-historic age, with the collective unconscious, which is subject to a peculiar and ever-increasing activation. As the Christian view of the world loses its authority, the more menacingly will the 'blond beast' be heard prowling about in its underground prison, ready at any moment to burst out with devastating consequences. When this happens in the individual it brings about a psychological revolution, but it can also take a social form. (1918: 17)

Jung's prescience here seems almost unnervingly uncanny, suggesting he had some kind of intuitive foreknowledge of the devastation about to happen in Europe. He says here that the activation of the lower layers of the psyche is 'ever-increasing' in our time, due to the collapse of the Christian view of the world, and to the collapse of the inhibitions and restraints that had formerly been placed on the archaic psyche by the superego, which had in fact been formed by Judeo-Christian culture.

Many people are relieved by the collapse of the Christian superego and its hold upon the lower instincts, and are happy to give an extra shove to the superego in its state of collapse. Most of the so-called progressive revolutions of the last hundred years, including the sexual and love revolutions, have targeted Christian restraint and piety as a source of oppression. We are happy to 'shed the inhibitions' of the past, but as Jung says, this is often done without any awareness of the consequences that might follow, and what might be unleashed by such moral deconstruction. The fact is that, as he puts it, 'the lower, darker half [of the psyche] still awaits redemption and a second spell of domestication'. Although we are keen to shed our inhibitions, we don't seem to have too many ideas about how we might tame the beast that is let loose by such 'progressive' liberation.

Jung seems to think that the breaking of rigid Christian ethics was inevitable in the West, but that as we move to a less inhibited form of culture and behavior – which after all, had been indicated by Freudian psychoanalysis from the very beginning – we need to become more aware of and responsible for the evil within the psyche which is let loose as our sexual and instinctual libido is unleashed.

I have long felt this to be a particular burden of our time – we sing the praises of our new-found liberation, failing to take into account the enormous moral shadow and human evil that trails behind the freedom that the modern condition allows. A permissive attitude toward instinctual life comes at a considerable price, and not least is the challenge to civilized conduct and ethics that is part of the general relaxation of moral control.

#### *5. Jung's Ambivalence About America*

Returning now to our exploration of the chthonic power of the earth, one is not sure whether Jung admires or abhors the American psyche by the end of his analysis. Certainly, there is considerable ambivalence in his depiction of the grinding opposition in Americans between 'an extremely high level of culture' and 'an unconscious primitivity'. The positive element of this clash is that great energy is created in the American psyche, and Jung concedes that 'there are many Europeans who are infected by feelings of inferiority when they contact America' (1930: 977).

But the dominant feeling of Jung's analysis is that America represents a human experiment that could go horribly wrong, for the clash of opposites may not be transformed or its energies contained, and this could lead to pathologies on a huge scale. For instance, America's desire to control the whole world, and to act as an unchecked and unregulated superpower could be seen as a symptomatic expression of its desire to gain control over itself, to submit its own unbounded energy to some countervailing force. Jung does not spell out his particular unease over America, but simply comments ominously: 'A nation in the making is naturally a big risk, to itself as well as others' (1930: 980).

#### *6. Jung's Frustration With His Own 'Primitive' Intuitions*

Jung is forever trying to imagine why the unconscious life of the migrant 'sinks' to the level of the indigenous earth. In addition to his metaphor of the psyche needing to set down roots, he is intrigued by a notion that comes from Australia. Jung had read the anthropological writings of Baldwin Spencer and Francis Gillen (1912), who recorded their encounters with the indigenous peoples of the central Australian desert. Drawing on Aboriginal beliefs about the fate of foreign peoples, Jung wrote:

Certain Australian Aborigines assert that one cannot conquer foreign soil, because in it there dwell strange ancestor-spirits who reincarnate themselves in the new-born. There is a great psychological truth in this. The foreign land assimilates its conqueror. (1927/1931: 103)

Jung is clearly impressed by this idea, but not able to translate it into a concept or idea that might make it convincing to modern reason.

In 'The Complications of American Psychology', he addresses the topic again in a 'poetic' or metaphorical fashion, suggesting that 'the foreign country somehow gets under the skin of those born in it' (1930: 969). Jung's reliance on the word 'somehow' does not strengthen his case, but again he narrates the Aboriginal belief he found in the anthropology of Spencer and Gillen:

Certain very primitive tribes are convinced that it is not possible to usurp foreign territory, because the children born there would inherit the wrong ancestor-spirits who dwell in the trees, the rocks, and the water of that country. There seems to be some subtle truth in this primitive intuition. (1930: 969)

Here it is as if Jung is speaking about himself. He has 'primitive' intuitions about the earth and its powers, but cannot find a language that might make them credible, let alone scientific. The 'very primitive tribes' are in this sense personifications of Jung's own intuitive thoughts, and he remains frustrated by his primitivity, since it prevents him from communicating with a scientific and critical audience.

For many of Jung's followers, it is the power of his intuitions that remain useful and suggestive, even if he cannot express them in a convincing way.

As Jung became aware of the gap between his intuitions and his ability to justify them, we find him back peddling and adopting a defensive attitude. After discussing the 'indianization' of the Americans, he adds this apology:

This is not just a joke. There is something in it that can hardly be denied. It may seem mysterious and unbelievable, yet it is a fact that can be observed in other countries just as well. Man can be assimilated by a country. (1930: 968)

Twelve years earlier, in 'The Role of the Unconscious', Jung used a similar kind of defensive language, with almost identical expressions:

The mystery of the earth is no joke and no paradox. One only needs to see how, in America, the skull and pelvis measurements of all the European races begin to indianize themselves in the second generation of immigrants. That is the mystery of the American earth. (1918: 18)

In his essay on America, Jung attempts to suspend the reader's disbelief by commenting:

There is nothing miraculous about this. It always has been so: the conqueror overcomes the old inhabitant in the body, but succumbs to his spirit. The conqueror gets the wrong ancestor-spirits, the primitives would say: I like this picturesque way of putting it. It is pithy and expresses every conceivable implication. (1930: 979)

Jung tries to justify his intuition by saying there is 'nothing miraculous' about it; 'it always has been so'. By employing forthright rhetoric, he is trying to make the indigenization process, which is quite miraculous, seem entirely natural. 'It may seem mysterious', he writes, 'yet it is a fact'. But what kind of fact? He cannot find the science to account for it, so he hopes to rely on the tacit agreement of the reader, a kind of secret agreement between him and us.

What enters Jung's discourse at this point is a distancing attitude toward so-called 'primitives' and their 'picturesque way' of putting

things. Jung is backing away from the mystical domain and from animistic thinking. He is struck by the idea of the reincarnation of spirits, but it exerts such a profound hold on him that he feels impelled, by way of compensation, to put it down. This ironically mirrors his critique that Americans have to resist the 'suggestive pull' of the primal mind by erecting barricades to protect themselves. There are moments in his thought where Jung tries to extricate himself from archaic thinking, by asserting his European supremacy and scientific persona, or by patronizing indigenous patterns of thought, even while clearly identified with and spellbound by them.

We must not forget that this essay was first published in *Forum* in New York, and appeared under the title, 'Your Negroid and Indian Behavior'. It could be that Jung's need to extricate himself from archaic thinking was intensified by his desire to protect his reputation in the eyes of his influential American readers and sponsors. He did not want to be written off as a fool. He found himself in a double-bind: he wanted to tell Americans that they had a great asset in the activation of primal inner force, but in explaining this process he had to resort to ideas that seemed oddly unconvincing and unscientific. Hence the desire, I believe, to distance himself from the archaic mode he was trying to uncover.

I know this double-act well, and I often find myself in a similar position when I am relating to indigenous people in the deserts of Australia. Because the tug toward the indigenous way of seeing the world is strong in me, I often have to pull back, and emphasize my own 'European' detachment from the Aboriginal Dreaming. I want to make a connection with it, but something else wants to make a disconnection, to draw a line, to say 'I am not part of this magical worldview'.

### 7. Jung as Scientist, Jung as Intuitive

Sometimes in his writings about spirit of place, Jung withdraws entirely from the mystical side of his speculations, and speaks more colloquially about the spirit of place. He speaks, like any tourist,

about external forces such as weather, climate, landscape and human geography, and how these have impacted upon the people. Although in his first essay on this topic, he said he was not interested in 'the banal facts of sense-perception and conscious adaptation to the environment' (1927/31: 52), he nevertheless occasionally retreats to this more banal level, in a bid to convey the influence of the earth on the mind:

Almost every great country has its collective attitude, which one might call its genius or *spiritus loci*. Sometimes you can catch it in a formula, sometimes it is more elusive, yet nonetheless it is indescribably present as a sort of atmosphere that permeates everything, the look of the people, their speech, behavior, clothing, smell, their interests, ideals, politics, philosophy, art, and even their religion. (1930: 972)

Jung notes the atmosphere, cultural tone and social manners that give any place its distinctive character. This is how 'spirit of place' is used by travel agencies and tourist bureaus, as a way of enticing people out of their familiar surrounds to experience something new and different in exotic locations. But this 'spirit of place' is not mystical; it is social and geo-political. It is an entirely rational *spirit*, with no sense of mystery, apart from the 'mystique' of cultural difference.

It is as if Jung sometimes moves from one personality to another, in trying to come to terms with the mystery of the spirit of place. His number two personality is spellbound and enchanted by the indigenous view that spirits of the land can reincarnate themselves in the newborn, and influence the psyche of foreigners from within. That is his principal attraction, and he tries to rework this theme at the archetypal level, speaking about archetypal forces in land and place, rather than resorting to the superstitious idea of reincarnated spirits. But occasionally his number one personality intervenes, and it provides a far more rational and acceptable interpretation, in terms of national types, flavors, cultural atmosphere and such things. In his more public writings and speeches, where he is addressing large crowds of people who might be terrified by his more esoteric aspect, Jung puts a lid on his interest in stage one or magical think-

ing, and speaks like a tour director about the exotic lure of new and foreign lands.

It has to be admitted that Jung does not always get far with his main interest in the influence of earth and place. For instance, although his first essay in this genre is called 'Mind and Earth', this essay is disappointing to those of us who seek enlightenment on this topic. Jung only makes a few suggestive remarks about the influence of earth, and then abandons the main topic to write a lengthy treatise about the psychology of anima and animus (1927/31: 61-92). In other words, his initial impulse is genuine, but he quickly runs out of things to say, and returns to a topic that he knows much more about. He wants to write more about the earth and place, but is easily drawn back to the psychological study of human nature, rather than of nature itself. Jung's predicament is expressed in a letter to Emil Egli of 15 September 1943, in which he writes:

Many thanks for kindly sending me your book, *The Swiss in their Landscape*. I entirely agree with the pages you have marked. The more so as my thoughts have often moved along similar lines. At one time I related the idiosyncrasies of Paracelsus to his early environment and also dropped similar hints in my answer to Keyserling's expose of Switzerland. I am deeply convinced of the – unfortunately – still very mysterious relation between man and landscape, but hesitate to say anything about it because I could not substantiate it rationally. (*Letters*, Vol. I, 338)

As so often happens, Jung's letters reveal the inside story, far more than his published and professional essays. He is attracted to a theme that frustrates him in the sense that it seems so palpable and real, the impact of earth on psyche, and yet as one reaches out to touch it, it bobs away and resists being known in our direct or rational consciousness. It can be felt, but not reasoned. Nevertheless, Jung's powerful intuitions have been expressed and shared, even if he has not yet found the science to make them convincing. At the end of reading Jung's essays on this subject, the reader can say of Jung what he says of indigenous Australians: 'There seems to be some subtle truth in this primitive intuition'.

# Going Native in Africa and Australia

## Chapter 3

### *Going Native in Islamic North Africa: Danger and Opportunity*

The past is not dead; in fact, it's not even past.  
— William Faulkner (1951: 36)

#### *1. Journey to An Antique Land*

These reflections on Jung, psyche and earth would not be complete without referring to Jung's personal experience of the phenomenon of 'going native'. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung narrates a story about his journey to Islamic North Africa in 1920. This story is one in which he finds himself to be involuntarily going native under the influence of an antique land and an ancient people who seem to him to be still living in the 'middle ages' (1963: 268). This journey was experienced by Jung as a movement into the past:

The deeper we penetrated into the Sahara, the more time slowed down for me; it even threatened to move backwards. The shimmering heat waves rising up contributed a good deal to my dreamy state. (1963: 268)

In retrospect, Jung felt that, 'without wishing [it to be so]', he had 'fallen under the spell of the primitive' and 'had been psychically infected' (1963: 270). In this narrative, Jung keeps emphasizing that the 'spell of the primitive' had come upon him unbidden and without his awareness:

#### *Going Native in Islamic North Africa: Danger and Opportunity*

Consciously, I was not a bit aware ... that my European consciousness would be overwhelmed by an unexpectedly violent assault of the unconscious psyche. On the contrary, I could not help feeling superior because I was reminded at every step of my European nature.... But I was not prepared for the existence of unconscious forces within myself which would take the part of these strangers with such intensity, so that a violent conflict ensued. (1963: 273)

The notion at the heart of this episode is that places and peoples, especially of an antique nature, have an autonomous psychic power. This power can make its claim on the psyche unawares, drawing us into an archetypal state that we have to learn to deal with, often as a matter of urgency.

#### *2. The Presence of The Past: Archetypal Memory*

In some ways, this idea is identical to the Aboriginal idea we have already looked at, in which 'spirits of the place' can seize hold of us as we walk through certain kinds of country. According to Aboriginal beliefs, such spirits can take possession of us and coordinate us to their secret or occult purposes. The only difference between this idea and Jung's is that whereas indigenous people link these spirits to ancestral presences or ghosts, Jung seeks to make a psychological connection to ancestral 'deposits' in the psyche which we 'carry around' with us and which can be activated when certain environmental conditions are encountered. Jung felt that the Arabian landscape activated elements of the psyche that most of us have completely forgotten about:

These seemingly alien and wholly different Arab surroundings awaken an archetypal memory of an only too well known prehistoric past which apparently we have entirely forgotten. We are remembering a potentiality of life which has been overgrown by civilization, but which in certain places is still existent. (1963: 274)

So while for Aboriginal people the active forces are supernatural and external agents, or ghosts of ancestral spirits, for Jung they are

deeply *natural*, internal, forgotten agents that are activated by suggestion. He agrees with the archaic mentality that these forces are *real* and make claims on us, but he disputes the idea that they have a metaphysical source. For Jung, the forces are psychological, not in the sense of being 'personal', but in the sense of being transpersonal. The psyche of the modern person has a lineage which goes back to the mists of the past, and unknowingly, we carry that lineage even as we walk in the clear light of the secular present. It is as if an invisible realm of forces and energies surrounds us, or bathes the psyche in an otherworldly glow.

Or to put it another way: we have a *memory* of the entire human species, and this memory can be spontaneously activated in certain conditions. Plato's notion of *memoria*, of the primal mind that is able to remember the beginning of time and creation, comes close to Jung's understanding of the collective unconscious. In 'The Role of the Unconscious', Jung wrote:

The unconscious is, first and foremost, the world of the past, which is activated by the one-sidedness of the conscious attitude. (1918: 20)

However, in his writings on place and earth, Jung would seem to want to revise this notion that the inheritance of the psyche is activated by deficiencies of the conscious attitude. He is extending this theory, to incorporate the idea that certain kinds of landscape, physical surrounds and groups of people can trigger elements of the collective unconscious that are so dormant or lost that we assume they are dead. The physical world can trigger memories of the past that are not personal. This is most likely what 'psychics' and 'occultists' interpret as the remembrance of past lives, or 'past life regression'. This esoteric view is not quite correct, for there is every chance that the 'memory' is not a personal one of a previous egoic existence, but a transpersonal memory of the archetypal mind. There are times when we cross the threshold from personal to archetypal, and enter into a different world. Different times can be activated by different places, such that we have the feeling that we have been in this time-place before.

For Jung, the psychic reality is as mysterious and uncanny as the archaic mentality reports, but we need a new language to understand these processes, otherwise we are prone to view the archaic worldview as absurd:

We laugh at primitive superstitions, thinking ourselves superior, but we completely forget that we are influenced in just as uncanny a fashion as the primitive by this background, which we are wont to scoff at as a museum of stupidities. Primitive man simply has a different theory – the theory of witchcraft and spirits. I find this theory very interesting and very sensible – actually more sensible than the academic views of modern science. (1918: 14)

The only 'laughable' feature of the archaic worldview is that we no longer understand the language used or the cosmology employed. While the forms of ancient superstitions are outdated and seem far-fetched, the contents at the heart of such superstitions may well be true today, if only we can find a new kind of understanding. 'Primitive man has a different theory', which Jung believes is 'more sensible than academic science' – and that is because academic science leaves the depths of the psyche out of the picture of reality because they are not obvious and not apparent to common sight. Hence Jung's analytical psychology is an attempt to restore to our knowledge what has been rejected as mere superstitions of the past. He translates ancient theories into a modern language about complexes and archetypes which are semi-autonomous and can be activated by environment and suggestion. Jung's science is an apology for, and a new translation of, ancient ways of knowing.

### 3. Wrestling With The Dark Angel

In Jung's view, while traveling the Sahara he was going back into a time-space that was far removed from his present psychic reality. This process was taking place subliminally, and it was only in a dream that the process became fully apparent. He said that the 'unconscious ... wanted to express something and could not for-

multate it any better than by a dream' (1963: 270). This dream, he felt, 'summed up the whole experience' of being overwhelmed and possessed by an alien spirit:

I dreamt that I was in an Arab city, and as in most such cities there was a citadel, a casbah.... A handsome, dark Arab of aristocratic, almost royal bearing came towards me from the gate. I knew that this youth in the white burnous was the resident prince of the citadel. When he came up to me, he attacked me and tried to knock me down. We wrestled. In the struggle we crashed against the railing; it gave way and both of us fell into the moat, where he tried to push my head under water to drown me. No, I thought, this is going too far. And in turn I pushed his head under water. I did so although I felt great admiration for him; but I did not want to let myself be killed. I had no intention of killing him; I wanted only to make him unconscious and incapable of fighting. (1963: 271)

Those with a knowledge of Jungian psychology might be tempted to interpret this dream as one in which the 'shadow' leaps out of the unconscious and attempts to murder the ego that has crossed its path. However, Jung argues that this is no ordinary shadow figure, nor is it an entirely personal figure. Jung explains the situation this way:

The Arab's dusky complexion marks him as a 'shadow', but not the personal shadow, rather an ethnic one associated not with my persona but with the totality of my personality, that is, with the self. As master of the casbah, he must be regarded as a kind of shadow of the self. (1963: 273)

In another passage, Jung compares the struggle with the Arab Prince with the Biblical motif of Jacob's struggle with the angel of God at the ford Jabbok (Genesis 32: 22-31):

As an inhabitant of the casbah he was a figuration of the self, or rather, a messenger or emissary of the self. For the casbah from which he came was a perfect mandala: a citadel surrounded by a square wall with four gates. His attempt to kill me was an echo of the motif of Jacob's struggle with the angel; he was – to use the

language of the Bible – like an angel of the Lord, a messenger of God who wished to kill men because he did not know them. (1963: 272)

The Arab Prince is regarded as a royal personage of the psyche, a transpersonal figure and a shadowy prefiguration of the Self. Despite its aggressive approach, this is not a figure to trifle with, because the shadow of the Self is the herald of the image of psychic totality. As such, it is rightly regarded as a sacred figure, an image of the God within or the *imago dei*.

#### 4. Entry Into The Sacred Temenos

The encounter between the ego and the indigenous person within is often a tragic and violent one, because in this meeting the finite person is encountered by the infinity of the divine, and it can readily be destroyed by the divine. The task of the finite ego is to hold its own against the onslaught of the greater personality; it must not allow the *imago dei* to overpower it. In the Genesis story, Jacob wrestles with the angel until daybreak, until both are exhausted. Jacob's resilience seems essential in this encounter, and as a result of his efforts, Jacob is rewarded by God, who renames him *Israel*, meaning, 'one who struggles with God'. God seems to require that his prophets and envoys have to be tough and resilient, and they can only properly serve the divine once they prove they are worthy opponents to what is more than human. If the human being capitulates too easily to the power of the infinite, it paradoxically cannot carry the meaning of the infinite into the finite realm.

The human has to prove itself by initiatory trials, such as that endured by Jacob at the ford. The finite is blessed but also wounded by this encounter: Jacob limps away from the fight with an injured hip, which the angel of God inflicted during the night-long encounter. At the climax of the fight, Jacob cries out: 'I will not let you go unless you bless me'. The ego knows that it can only be redeemed from this deadlock if the divine recognizes its identity in the holy scheme of things. The ego seeks to be *known* and loved by the divine, and

as Jung says, one of the reasons why the initial encounter is violent is because the messenger of God 'did not know men'. There has to be a conscious rapprochement, a meeting between two worlds, and the initial meeting is often an unfortunate collision.

In the second part of the dream, Jung is 'blessed' by the royal figure, and he participates in the wisdom which this figure seems to hold. After the initiatory ritual of the fight, and holding his own against the Prince, Jung finds himself in the center of the citadel with the Prince. Together they read and study 'an open book with block letters written in magnificent calligraphy on milky-white parchment' (1963: 271). He said he did not know the exact contents, which were written in an archaic language, but he had the impression that this was *his* book and he was meant to be reading it. It seems that the second part of the dream speaks of the good fortune that comes to the ego after it has proved itself worthy of the divine by maintaining its integrity and refusing to be extinguished. The individuating ego is allowed into the holy temple and is able to study the sacred scriptures of the ages. It is able to read from the Book of Life and sit down with the Prince in a sacred temenos.

##### 5. *The Two Ways: More Than Human, Less Than Human*

If the ego can stand up for itself it wins the respect of the holy, and is vouchsafed a glimpse of eternity. Jung's dream follows the archetypal story of Jacob and displays all its essential features: initiatory trial, endurance and resilience, a longing to be blessed by the holy, and just reward at the end. Such dreams show that the patterns of ancient times live on in the psyche, never lose their relevance, and continue to plot the course of the ego as it moves into the trials and mysteries of individuation.

We can see that the danger of 'going native', of succumbing to the archaic image of the Self, is not that one is possessed by an alien spirit that comes from outside, but one is forced to encounter one's own greater personality in a critical and sudden manner. The solution to this crisis is for the ego and Self to get to 'know' each other.

This can only be achieved by increased consciousness, and the word *consciousness* actually means 'knowing with or seeing with an other' (Edinger 1984: 36). Edinger points out that the word *science*, which, like consciousness, derives from the Latin *scire*, means simple knowing, or knowing without 'withness'. The point of consciousness is that it is 'the experience of knowing together with an other' (1984: 36). In consciousness, it is not only that one becomes the knowing subject, but one becomes the known object. The experience is as much of being known, as it is of knowing. The ego needs to make itself known to the Self, so that its name, as it were, is written in the Book of Life. In this way, the ego becomes intimate with the divine, and becomes a partner of God in the task of incarnation and coming-into-being.

The fateful encounter with the archaic psyche, which Jung calls 'going black under the skin' (1963: 274) is at once a psychological crisis and a spiritual opportunity. If consciousness can be brought to bear on the situation and the ego can begin to form a relationship with an 'alien other' who is also 'part of who I am', then a new life can be discovered. The outcome of the crisis hinges on how the personality deals with paradox and whether or not it can integrate the existential encounter in which something is greeted as both other and same, I and not-I. If this paradox can be grasped, the way is opened to a genuine spiritual experience, whose insignia is the formation of an I-Thou relationship between human and divine. Jung closes his autobiographical narrative about North Africa with these cautionary remarks:

If we were to relive it [the primordial self] naively, it would constitute a relapse into barbarism. Therefore we prefer to forget it. But should it appear to us again in the form of a conflict, then we should keep it in our consciousness and test the two possibilities against each other – the life we live and the one we have forgotten. For what has apparently been lost does not come to the fore again without sufficient reason. (1963: 274)

If we have been forced to encounter the indigenous person within, we have to take up a dialogue with it because it has 'not



come to the fore without sufficient reason'. It comes to the fore because it demands to be lived and made known to our conscious awareness. However if we surrender to it without a heroic battle, without struggling all night like Jacob with the angel, we will likely be destroyed in an instant by its greater might, or else 'relapse into barbarism'. The primordial psyche makes a claim upon us, and the claim is that we keep ourselves grounded in the ego personality, and maintain the moral conduct and ethical positioning that is appropriate for our society and personal development. Only then can the encounter be deemed to be creative, and not a dreadful regression into immorality, bestiality and arrogance.

If we allow the angel to overpower us, it turns into a demon or monster. This is because, if unregulated by the ego and its discernment, the shadowy prefiguration of the Self merely regresses into the archaic stage of its own development, and is not allowed to express itself humanly or in a civilized manner. Instead of leading us to the Self, it merely leads down into more shadow, and into the dark and regressive levels of the human psyche. This suggests that the God element in the psyche needs the ego to participate in its incarnation, otherwise everything goes horribly wrong, and instead of leading us to God we lapse into a demonic state and Lucifer is born in our interior life.

Joseph Conrad was preoccupied with this process in many of his novels. Most famously, in his *Heart of Darkness* (1902), his character Kurtz almost touches the face of the divine and approaches the numinous dimensions of interior being. However, Kurtz capitulates to the archaic psyche and becomes a monster of human arrogance and evil. Instead of breaking through to the other side and becoming more-than-human, he breaks down under the psychic pressures he encounters in the African Congo, and becomes less-than-human. He emerges as a modern-day Lucifer and a kind of Nietzschean criminal of the dark side. As if writing about Kurtz, Jung speaks of the dangers that await some in 'tropical Africa', and of the 'spiritual peril which threatens the uprooted European in Africa' (1963: 274).

The fact remains that the primordial psyche is capable of destroying civilization and eroding our humanity if we give in to its seductive

power and archaic attraction. It is like a wild beast that requires taming, humanizing and development. We might imagine it as a wild horse that requires the mastery and direction of an intelligent rider. Without a rider, it will run riot through the human world and trample upon everything in its path. This going native presents us with the possibility of becoming barbaric and destructive, or achieving our fullest and most civilized potential. If we fall into unconsciousness, our dignity is stripped and humanity lost. In that case the archetypal shadow becomes a demon of darkness, as imagined in medieval paintings. If we bring awareness to the situation and engage in a conscious struggle, the shadow introduces us to the Self and we are allowed to sit in the holy citadel and read the wisdom of the ages in the company of a divine figure.

## Chapter 4

### *Towards the Dreaming Place: A Memoir*

My soul is a strange country.

— Randolph Stow (1958: 208)

Before exploring the soul of my country, I would like to explore the country of my soul. This is the only autobiographical chapter in the book; it is a memoir about my years in the central desert region and my ongoing imaginal relation to this place.

#### *I. From Edge To Center*

I often dream about Alice Springs in central Australia. I grew up there in the 1960s and early 70s. In my dreams, I am frequently revisiting this place, exploring the rocky formations and the dry desert plains. I am not looking for anything in particular, but I am trying to rediscover my connection to the place, to re-establish links with its spirit. It has become for me a 'dreaming place', a country where my soul belongs, even though I no longer live there.

I was born in Melbourne, a huge European-style city on the coastal fringe of Australia, but my family and I left Melbourne in 1966 to 'emigrate' (or so it felt) to the central deserts. It was a movement from edge to center, and later, when I wanted to attend universities and further my education, I had to leave the center and return to the 'edge'. The notion of moving from edge to center has occupied

my imagination all my life, and my dreams play on this metaphorical movement, privileging the center to the edge, as if life in the depths is being contrasted to life on the surface.

Moving from Melbourne to Alice Springs brought with it a painful separation from the extended family network and friendship group, and it separated me from my eldest sister, who remained in the coastal metropolis. The move brought geographical displacement: it was to move from the green world of south-eastern Australia to the red world of the center. Everything was different: clear, blue, vast skies of the desert instead of the cloudy canopy of Melbourne; rock, sand and red earth instead of grasses, meadows, parks and gardens; desert oaks and straggly eucalypts instead of the imported symmetrical trees of Europe; dry river beds that filled only occasionally instead of rivers and streams; sunsets of pink, red and purple skies instead of the dull grays and yellows of Melbourne.

Probably the most dramatic change of all was to live in the presence of Aboriginal people, whom I had never seen before. Melbourne was like a large slice of Europe which had been transplanted to the southern hemisphere, and the indigenous Australians were nowhere to be seen. In Alice Springs, 'Mparntwe' to its traditional inhabitants, Aboriginal communities from at least three tribal nations, the Pitjantjatjara, the Aranda, and the Warlpiri, lived side-by-side white people from the cities of Australia and countries of Europe. This change was to have a huge impact on my life, and especially on the life of my soul.

When it was first suggested that our family would move from Melbourne to Alice Springs there was a good deal of fear and dread in all of us. The coastal fringe represented safety, the known, the civilized parts, and the interior was viewed as barren, scary, unknown. It was either not spoken about at all, and an area of cultural silence, or it was viewed with some distaste as a place of death and disintegration. The center was variously called the Dead Center, the Empty Center, the Desert Heart. As James McAuley put it, the outback was regarded as 'A futile heart within a fair periphery' (1938: 65), and A. D. Hope mythologized the continent as 'A woman beyond her change of life, a breast / Still tender but

within the womb is dry' (1939: 13). Moving from edge to center was a movement from life to near-death, from richness to poverty, from society to solitude. It was to enter what Patrick White called the 'Great Australian Emptiness'. The idea at first scared hell out of me, and I knew nothing of the sacred symbolism of the Center, nothing of the traditional notion of finding renewal in the desert. Nor was I aware that for a long period of time the idea of paradise and an 'inland sea' had been projected by poets, writers and explorers upon inland Australia.

## *2. Homecoming to The Otherworld*

As a child, I was slightly terrified of the idea of not seeing my extended family again, but just as bewildering was the idea of life without television and the mass media. There was no television in the interior, and I never saw TV during my years in the center. The town had no cinema, no university, no senior secondary education, just the basics of life lived in the presence of natural elements: desert, sky, mountain ranges. It forced me to become attuned to nature because, quite literally, there was nothing else. In the absence of culture, high or low, we turn more attentively to nature. As we traveled from Melbourne by car, in our eggshell blue EJ Holden sedan, it was not just a long trip or epic journey, but an emigration. The silence and remoteness of the land, the enormity of the stony gibber plains, the strangeness of the desert landscape, and the occasional glimpses of kangaroos, emus, wild horses and camels, scared and fascinated me. I felt like an alien, yet a more ancient part of me resonated with the place.

It was odd to feel this sense of homecoming in the strangest of places. I was unable to articulate this until years later, because I did not have the language to express these feelings at the time. But it felt as if I had entered the country of the spirit, so alien to my conscious ego, yet well known to my heart. It is fascinating that a geographical move can be experienced as a psychological and spiritual shift. One is dislodged in one's settled egohood, only to come home to a dif-

ferent place in the personality. This new place is a forgotten, lost, or never-realized part of the psyche, and although one sees it for the first time there is a sense of remembering something one has always known. One feels a sense of recollection, as if one has been here before. I continue to have this sensation whenever I return to the center for short periods of time. Of course, now it is a recollection of past experiences of my youth, but in addition to that there is the additional archetypal or metaphysical layer of having 'come home' to an otherworld.

## *3. The Healing Place*

We moved to Alice Springs for health reasons. Asthma was in the family, and my sister Heather was unable to breathe the humid, moist air of coastal Australia. By the time she was sixteen her asthma was so bad that medical opinion warned she had only a few months to live. My parents asked the surgeons at St Vincent's Hospital in Fitzroy what could be done. One suggestion, which they admitted was a long shot, and based on hearsay rather than scientific evidence, was to take her to a drier climate, in the hope that this would heal the disorder, or at least extend her life-span beyond the projected few months. Mildura in north-western Victoria was the first place mentioned; then, as her condition worsened, they seemed to agree that Alice Springs was the place to go. Within a few weeks, preparations were under way and my mother and sister were to fly on a TAA 727 Whispering T-Jet to central Australia. For a couple of months, my father, my other sister and I remained in Melbourne and we drove up later in the car.

When we pulled out of our suburban East Preston driveway on a chilly morning in September, I had no idea that I would never return to that house, my school or friends. I had told my class at the Preston East Technical College that I was making a short visit to central Australia, and the English teacher asked me to keep a travel diary and report on the trip to the class upon my return. I cannot have been bright in those days, as I literally thought I was going on

a brief holiday. Perhaps my parents told me we were moving to the Center permanently, but it was not something I could conceptualize and so I decided not to retain or process the thought.

I kept a flock of pigeons in a loft in the backyard of the house, and I had asked a friend to feed my birds while I was away. Thus it was with a certain amount of distress that I discovered I would never see my birds again. They were homing pigeons, and I had trained them over several years to fly home to their loft after taking them for short trips in the car. They were put in a cage and I would explain to them that they were to circle in the sky upon being released and find their way home. But now I was the one going home, although this was only made clear in hindsight. Luckily, I was able to convince my friend to adopt my birds into his flock. I missed them terribly in Alice Springs, although the wings of my spirit were about to find a different kind of expression.

Miraculously, my sister was healed of her condition within a couple of months of breathing the dry desert air. My parents rejoiced at this blessing, even though they mourned the social displacement and permanent disruption to family life. At the same time, I began to be healed of a condition I did not even know I had: isolation in the human ego. I had thought this was the normal state of being, and the only time I felt the wings of my spirit was when I let my pigeons loose and watched them circle above me in the sky. I had never anticipated finding a different state of consciousness from the one I habitually knew.

But two agents worked on my soul to release me at times from the Western condition: the spirit of the land and the spirit of the Aboriginal people. This was subtle at first, and I had not even realized that I was partly 'going native' or 'going black', terms that were often used in a derogatory sense. Mostly going native referred to drunks in the park or derelicts who could not hold down a job. Rarely was it seen in the positive sense of seeing the world as native people see it. But the landscape seemed to work on me, drawing me out of the shrunken ego and into a mystical participation with land, earth and sky. The Aboriginal people of the town were the first ones to notice this change in my nature. Several told me that they

had noticed I had an 'Aboriginal soul' and that I had 'begun to think like a blackfella'.

#### *4. Walking Through The Soul of The World*

To think like a blackfella meant to think in vast terms, across eons of time and space. It meant being able to experience the land as alive, as a living subject, instead of the typical Western habit of experiencing the land as a dead object. It was to experience the soul as vast and wide, and not to see the soul merely as a pea-sized organ in the brain. Rather than the soul being inside us, the indigenous view was that we were inside the soul. I slipped into this mysticism rather easily. It appealed to me to think of the whole world as ensouled, and I had not yet been conditioned by a university education that would argue otherwise.

It was odd to notice that people such as myself were referred to as 'Europeans' by the indigenous people. I had seen myself as 'Australian' before moving to Alice Springs, but now I was not so sure. The indigenous people saw themselves as 'Aboriginals' and white people were 'Europeans'. In that part of the world, no-one was classified as 'Australian'. It seemed like an identity that had not yet come into being. Perhaps the idea of 'Australian' was an empty signifier that had yet to be filled with meaning. But those white people who call themselves Australians probably have no idea what the term means, and no-one can be an Australian before they have come to terms with the indigenous spirit of this place. For the time being, 'Europeans' is probably the best term, and a subtle ploy on the part of Aboriginal people, a way of keeping white people in their place.

Europeans live on the land and see nature as a backdrop to human affairs. Europeans take nature for granted and do not ask nature what it wants or what it hopes to achieve. We Europeans are ego-centric and appear to have been that way for hundreds of years. We see ourselves as the crowning glory of evolution, and yet we are ignorant with regard to the nature of reality. We regard Aboriginal

people as 'primitive' because they are not full of the demonic energy of progress and development. Aboriginal people seek to relate to the unseen spirits of the land. They spend an enormous amount of their time in states of attunement and receptivity. They realize that the greater part of reality is invisible, and that human lives are best spent trying to adjust to invisible forces. Aboriginal culture is based on wisdom, whereas European culture is based on knowledge and information. Wisdom seeks to attune itself to spiritual forces, and knowledge seeks to gain mastery and control over the physical world. I must have had some 'Aboriginal' element in me, because as soon as I came into contact with this culture, it made enormous sense to me.

Perhaps this resonance with land is from my Celtic background, because not too long ago, my Celtic ancestors experienced a similar rapport with the environment to that experienced by Aboriginal people. They too felt the invisible forces, recognized the spirits of the land, and adjusted their lives accordingly. They too walked not only through the world, but through the soul of the world. I am never sure why we lost this cosmic vision, because without it we inhabit a spiritual wasteland and feel ourselves to be empty and lost. Whenever I visit the northwest of Ireland, the land where my grandfather came from, I can feel a regard for the invisible forces in nature and human nature that is not dissimilar from that which is found in Aboriginal cultures. We all had this spiritual sense once, and I was determined to recover it for my own life. I did not want to live in the European reality which saw nature as dead and inanimate.

But I did not, and could not, take on the Aboriginal cosmology as my own. I was always interested in learning about the sacred Dreamings of Aboriginal people, but I recognized that I could not take them into myself. This would be to steal intellectual property that did not belong to me. It would be theft of an unforgivable sort, the theft of the spirit. After my culture had stolen Aboriginal land and dislocated their culture and religion, I had no desire to add insult to these crimes by asking for their Dreaming as well.

### 5. The Mystical Body of The Earth Mother

But it was the Aboriginal Dreaming that inspired me to find some answering image within myself. I found out much about Aboriginal cosmology from a local white woman who seemed intensely alive and interesting to me, but who had been deemed 'eccentric' by the town. Elsa Corbet managed a sculpture-farm just south of Alice Springs, which featured the works of the sculptor of Aboriginal forms and figures, William Ricketts. Ricketts had told me, at his Melbourne 'Lyre-Bird Sanctuary' in the Dandenong Ranges, that he was 'Aboriginal inside'. He said he had a white-man's body and an Aboriginal soul. My aunt, who had taken me to see him, was shocked. 'Did he believe he was a reincarnated Aboriginal man?' she asked. I could not tell if he was inspired or mad, and I never did settle the case.

But I recognized what he was saying, as I felt something similar within myself. If he was mad, then perhaps I shared his particular kind of madness. But there were so few people with whom one could discuss these matters. The township of Alice Springs seemed full of hyper-masculine men who could only drink beer, grunt and fart. Only artists and eccentrics seemed to know the subtle psychological terrain. And if artists or eccentrics were male, they were dismissed as 'poofters'. This was, after all, the homophobic town that provided the memorable setting for the gay classic *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. Only women seemed able to find access to the subtle psychological world without fear of accusation or prejudice.

Elsa Corbet lived alone on Pitchi Richi, a thirty acre property teeming with Aboriginal faces and forms made by Ricketts. She taught me a great deal about Aboriginal myth, legend and tribal custom. After being fired from my job as a trainee accountant with the accountancy firm Wilson, Bishop, Bowes and Craig, she employed me, along with two Aboriginal men, to help maintain her extensive orange orchard. She took me around the MacDonnell Ranges and Mt Gillen district in a collapsing, near-derelict four-wheel drive, stopping to point out the significant geological features and telling me the Aboriginal stories which surrounded them.

Elsa helped me explore what she called the 'rocky body of the Aranda earth mother'. She would indicate to which Dreaming, lizard, caterpillar, wild dog, or euro, a certain pile of stones, waterless creek, or rocky ridge belonged. The whole of the earth, she said, told stories about the wanderings of the earth mother and her animals and children. And who was I to question her authority? Some of it may have been invented on the spot, although she claimed to have been informed by traditional sources. But I suppose what mattered to me was that I was being exposed to a completely different mode of perception. The world was not just a static world of rocks, sticks and earth, but a fluid world of imagination, capable of assuming a variety of shapes and many meanings. This budding mysticism, pantheism, or desert-romanticism moved me and had a lasting impact. It may not have been the anthropologically precise Dreaming to which Elsa Corbet introduced me, but it was, at least, the psychologically satisfying white man's dreaming, and landscape was never the same for me again.

My experience in Alice Springs taught me to love and respect the earth mother in ways that I could not have achieved while living in Melbourne. In all Aboriginal mythologies, the earth is experienced as a feminine power, and that made sense to me. It was the earth mother and her stony landscape which broke the encasement of my rational ego and which drew me into a larger sense of identity, and opened up a dialogue between myself and the archetypal other. Naturally the vast expanse and sheer weight of all this rock terrified me at times, and one can sometimes feel crushed by it. But Australian landscape is like the unconscious in psychology: if you respect it and realize the ego can never assimilate, conquer, or transform it, you are allowed to survive. That is and must be our way, a humble aboriginal way.

Les Murray has said that the sheer space and size of this country is 'one of the great, poorly explored spiritual resources of Australia', since 'in the huge spaces of the outback, ordinary souls expand into splendid [forms]' (1982:116). Randolph Stow has pointed out that 'when one is alone with [the country], one feels in one way very small, in another gigantic'. The ego is dwarfed and made to

feel small and puny, but the soul leaps out of its human encasement and ecstatically unites with the greater world. 'Alone in the bush, with maybe a single crow ... a phrase like 'liberation of the spirit' may begin to sound meaningful' (Stow 1961: 314). The sense that the landscape, with its plains, chasms and ranges, pointed to an otherworld is expressed well by the novelist Martin Boyd:

There is no country where it is easier to imagine some lost pattern of life, a mythology of vanished gods, than this most ancient of lands. (1952: 16)

#### 6. Racism and The Fear of Going Native

In Alice Springs the Aboriginal spirit of place is strongly felt. However, I do not think this is a conscious experience for white people. It is more often a gut feeling or an instinctual response, a sense that we are puny in the larger scheme of things, and this can profoundly irritate us. For many Euro-Australians, this feeling of being puny in the vast desert landscape is overwhelming and makes us feel threatened. Many of the whites I grew up with were passionate racists. Retrospectively, I can see that their racism was a futile defense against the sheer power of the spirit of place. In the outback there is an almost South African sense of siege. Even though the numbers of Aboriginals are not great, the very landscape, the environment, the dirt sidewalk, tells the white man that he is an intruder and that his European culture and expectations are out of place.

Urban Australians, especially those now rushing to consume Aboriginal artifacts and cosmology, do not understand the psychic pressures exerted upon white people in the outback. The 'redneck' racism in the outback, which I grew tired of and was pleased to leave behind when I moved south to Adelaide, is not the result of a conscious decision to hate a different people, but is an automatic and unconscious cultural defense against the power of the other. It is what Adler would call a 'masculine protest' against our sense of

insignificance (1912). Racism is not excusable for this reason, but it is comprehensible in this context, and any attempt by governments to eradicate it must deal with the psychodynamic forces that generate it.

The spirit of place which challenges the Euro-Australian is an almost physical sensation in central Australia. I was fortunate in that, unlike some, I felt this sensation as a liberating, not threatening force. Nor do I believe that my experience is unique. I noticed that a great many young people in Alice had a similar response to Aboriginality as myself, heralding a new era in race relations as well as in cultural identity. But the only way I can describe the effect of red earth and black people on my life is to say that these had a 'shamanizing' effect. I was 'shamanized' beyond the realm of the ego and Aboriginalized in my sleep. I fell in love with the landscape, and spent much of my time exploring aspects of it, and visiting my favorite places. Whenever I could, I found myself climbing hills and rocks, exploring quartzite fields and stony gorges.

I joined the Alice Springs Rock and Mineral Club, which met every second Sunday, and we would go out in four-wheel drive jeeps looking for precious metals and gems. Especially west of Alice, when confronted with a glittering field of quartz and mica, I would sometimes imagine that I had discovered Lasseter's fabulous reef (Marshall-Stoneking 1985). But the reality was that I had already begun to find the treasure I was looking for. It was not to do with precious or colorful stones, but with a state of consciousness which one could describe as expansive and soulful. Later, it made sense to me to read in Jung that the alchemists were not looking for the 'common' gold in their experiments with matter. Instead, they were searching for the 'philosopher's stone' which I now see is the condition of living with the beauty and truth of soul.

I kept most of my teenage experiences quiet and to myself. I did not want others to destroy my state of reverie. I recognized that others might want to destroy my experience if they did not share it themselves. Part of the evil in men's hearts is a desire to destroy other states of consciousness that are not understood. Aboriginal people had suffered most from this evil capacity in the character of

Europeans. As I shed aspects of my ego-bound state, I shed my fear and racial prejudice as well. In fact, I started to feel a reverse kind of prejudice, which I had to fight against. I felt prejudiced against the white world and its destructive rationality and materialism. My parents worried a great deal about my 'going black'. They sat down with me one night and told me that I was never to marry a black woman. I was to stay as white as possible.

When my mother left Melbourne for the first time, I recall her own mother's words of warning: 'Please don't go brown, Vera'. I remember she wrote it in a follow-up letter: 'Don't turn brown'. My father used to repeat this, over and over, like a chant, as if it were funny. My grandmother was referring to the tanning of the skin under the desert sun, and I am sure she had nothing in mind apart from this. But unconsciously, there is much else in this statement, and my father picked up on it. There was the secret fear that civilization ('as we knew it') would melt away and the ego-state of white culture would be shed like an unwanted skin. Although my mother feared that I would go black and marry an Aboriginal girl, she seemed to have less strict rulings for herself.

After a few years in Alice, she mixed freely with Aboriginal people and even took Aboriginal babies into foster care while their sick mothers were in hospital recovering from alcoholism, diabetes or addiction. She also took up landscape painting and began to express in oils and acrylics her spiritual feelings for the land. She maintained a representational style, and never ventured into the abstract modes or 'dot paintings' of Aboriginal artists. But she did imitate the European-influenced Aboriginal styles of Albert Namatjira, Rex Batterby and the Hermannsburg school. Her paintings were so close to this school that some Aboriginal people used to buy up her works, scratch out her signature and replace it with their own. They would sell her paintings as 'genuine' indigenous works to visiting American tourists, and do this at a considerable financial profit. I used to smile to myself whenever I saw tourists devouring my mother's art works, believing they were taking home to New York or Los Angeles a genuine indigenous painting.

My father softened too in his relationship to red earth and black people. He began to see the beauty of the country and the spiritual value of indigenous traits, such as sitting in silence and walking the land. On first arriving in Alice, he would often curse the indigenous people and wish they 'would stop wandering around the place, become useful to society and get real jobs', but this prejudice faded in time. As a product of his time and place, I think he felt a duty to represent the reality principle and the ideals of the male ego with its fantasy of endless work and advancement. He was alarmed by my mother's turn to visual arts and Aboriginal culture, and he kept saying she had shown no proclivity or 'leaning' for artistic endeavor in Melbourne. This was true, but the land and its people had spoken to her, and she had to respond in some way. But they began to love the land as much as I did, although their language suggested they were still 'looking at' the land as an object out there. My father would drive us to what he called 'beauty spots' or 'nice places' for family picnics. The language used to admire the desert country and stony ranges was always the touristic one of a white alienated consciousness.

Perhaps, under the surface, this external vision was dissolving, and I do remember one Sunday morning my mother said she felt the land was speaking to her. Suddenly, I felt embarrassed, as if she were encroaching on 'my' territory. I did not want this to be discussed in the house and went outside into the garden. But as I went outside I heard my father accuse my mother of being 'menopausal and beside herself'. He told her to 'pull herself together' and 'stop being silly'. My mother protested that this was not silliness, and she only wished he would listen. I felt guilty that I could not help my mother defend against my father's attack, because I lacked the words and concepts to make this happen. I can only support her now, through my writings, long after both of them have died.

I can only support my father now, too, by offering him a language and the concepts of depth psychology, which act as a bridge between our world and that of indigenous people. We were trapped in a logic that was not allowing us to live properly. Years ago, my father did not want to venture beyond the simple logic of 'beauty spots' and

'picnic grounds'. Anything outside this external love of nature was forbidden, as if a form of pagan or Aboriginal religion that might challenge our commitment to mainline Christianity.

At the time, I did not realize that it might be possible to see the divine in nature and be Christian at the same time, a theme I will explore in Chapter 10. If one allows one's defenses to soften, the land is able to change us and expose us to a wider spiritual universe. However, if the ego contracts and hardens against the infinity of the desert, the archetypal forces are not able to speak to us and the greater reality is shut off. I saw signs of contraction in my father and in my sister. I will write her story in another book. But it is difficult to submit to a transformative mental process when our culture has neither the language nor the practical wisdom to understand this process.

## *7. Towards The Center*

It seems that for my dream life, Alice Springs and its environs has become a geographical symbol of the Jungian Self. This might seem like a technical diagnosis superimposed from above, but it is an idea that has come to me only after decades of reflection and experience. The Self is said by Jung to be the *center* of the psyche, the archetype that gathers the conflicting opposites of psychic life into a working relationship. Alice Springs, as the center of the continent, brings white and black cultures into a creative, and at times tense, relationship. It also brings several black cultures together, to deal with their tribal and regional differences, and it brings many white and Asian cultures together. The Self is not an easy place to be, and is not some mythological paradise where all opposition ceases and the lion lies down with the lamb. It is the place where conflict is contained and held by a 'transcendent function' which attempts to resolve differences and to keep warring opposites in check. The transcendent function brings thesis and antithesis together and creates a synthesis, usually a symbol of integration and wholeness.

For central Australians, the chief natural symbol is Uluru, referred



to locally as 'the Rock'. It is the largest free-standing monolith in the world. Its sacred significance is obvious even to the casual observer. Uluru, previously called Ayers Rock before 1985, is an awesome and spectacular phenomenon, and it changes color dramatically during the course of the day. It is an ancient ritual place for Aboriginal religions, and when the local Anangu people request that visitors no longer climb the rock to respect its sacredness, the majority of visitors accept this restriction. In this way, the tourists become pilgrims, witnesses at a holy shrine. Many find the nearby Kata Tjuta to be just as awesome and even more inspiring. The Rock and Kata Tjuta attract and hold the respect and religious feeling of white and black people alike, tourists and locals, indigenous and 'blow-ins'. All look to the Rock as if to the center of the world, a monolith that separates the sky and the earth, that keeps the order of the world in place, a veritable *axis mundi* on the horizon. Together with the Rock, the symbols of the Center and the Desert, and the meeting of a finite human settlement with the infinite expanse of landscape, fills this place with a sense of the numinous like no other place for me.

The homecoming to the Self is for Jung a displacement of the ego. It was certainly that for my immediate family, a wrenching away from the extended family and from established friendship groups. It was an alienation from the known, social world and a forced encounter with the infinity of natural elements and the strangeness of the world's oldest living sacred tradition. It is said that Aboriginal people have been in central Australia and its environs for over fifty thousand years, while in Europe we tend to count time in single years, decades, or hundreds of years. The Middle Ages feels like an eon ago, but not so for Aboriginal people, for whom it is but a recent time. The Aboriginal people live in an 'eternal now', a sense of time in which eternity is present, and there is no hurry to achieve anything in the white, Western sense. Fifty thousand years is incomprehensible to the European imagination, but to Aboriginal people it is comprehensible within the context of their ancestral belonging. Time is a wave on the sands of eternity, and eternity is more compelling to them than the passage of time.

It is little wonder that I regularly dream of Alice Springs, even

though I have not lived there for any length of time since 1972. As a symbol of the Self, it remains a potent reality for me and a crucial element of my psychic landscape. Over the last 35 years I have probably spent more time in central Australia in my dreams than in reality. Now, living again in Melbourne, back at the edge, I continually dream of the center. I most often dream of a journey into the continental interior and of arriving at a settlement which is characterized by its striking harmony with the natural world. This could be any non-coastal town, settlement or outpost, but usually something in the dream is suggestive of Alice Springs. There are always Aboriginal people in the dream, and sometimes I have journeyed long distances to meet them. In one dream I journeyed to Alice Springs to visit an unknown Aboriginal woman, whose face I could not make out as she was sitting in the shade under an enormous flowering gum tree. I felt frustrated sitting beside her, as she did not say anything, but she just sat there, with some mysterious aura about her. Why had I come here? I asked. The conscious self is often frustrated in my dreams. Why the psyche takes me to this imaginal place has little or nothing to do with the demands of the ego.

In another dream I was welcomed at the entrance of a bush settlement by the poet Les Murray, whose work I have long associated with the spirit of place. Although singing the praises of his ancestral Celtic places, Murray is profoundly at home in Australia, and his poetry gives us perhaps the best clue yet as to what a genuinely Euro-Australian spirituality would look like. Murray has crossed the geopsychical barrier that separates town and country, surface and depth, European and Aboriginal, and yet some literary critics dislike him precisely because he 'transgresses' those barriers. He appears to inhabit a free mental space that many Australians want to disallow. 'Ah, you have come at last', he said in the dream, at the shady entrance to a bush place. This was, apparently, my home, or it would become so. It is the home of my poetic self, that part of me which could be personified in the dream by Murray. He stands at the entrance, welcoming me back from the conscious edge of my existence to the unconscious center from which poesis and creativity spring.

8. *The Center Is Everywhere*

Le centre du monde est partout et chez nous  
The center of the world is everywhere and with us  
— Paul Eluard (1946: 25)

It is important not to think too literally about the center, or the edge for that matter. Whenever I become overwhelmed by a terrible nostalgia for Alice Springs I will often have a dream which indicates that it is not necessarily the town itself which is my goal or center. The dreams are far more intelligent than the ego and when the ego becomes too literal about its attachments the dreams will cut across it and spring something new on the ego, to shock it out of literal thinking and toward the metaphorical. The psyche strives to encourage not literal attachments or fixations, but fluid and changing metaphorical awareness. In one dream, I journey to Alice Springs and realize, upon arrival, that it is not the town that I want. Instead, I travel west of Alice toward the sandstone ridges and the rounded granite boulders. I leave the bitumen road and walk toward a landscape of rocks. I study the light and contour of the rocks, looking deeply into their crevices, searching for some code or secret. I go off looking for deepening, not for a literal place.

Whenever I dream of the center it means that I am too much at the 'edge' or on the surface of my experience. There is a need for a deepening, for finding a central core or fiber to the fabric of daily life. It seems to mean I am too caught up in the ego and enmeshed in its strivings. This is why the journey to the interior can often be unpleasant, or why the personal self can feel frustrated when it actually arrives. The journey is not conducted for the sake of ego but for soul, which is often blocked out by the daytime self. In the night, when the ego's life is suspended, the soul enters its own territory and is free to express its longing. These recurring dreams indicate that there is not enough sacred space in my life and at the first opportunity psyche flees the edge in search of a cosmos.

The ego's tendency to flee the center and rush to the edge is the subject of another dream. On the main south road which leads to

Adelaide there is an impromptu gathering of local people. A young man is giving a public talk and he is agitated. He is asking everyone why they leave Alice Springs when they get time off work. He says he is tired of the way people run off to Adelaide and other places as soon as they get the chance. 'Why can't we stay here? What's wrong with this place? Okay, I know it can get rough here from time to time, and people do not like the violence. But we should make an effort to improve the place and want to be here'. At the end the crowd applaud him, and I for one feel the sting of his words. This dream shows what happens every morning when I wake up from the dream. At the earliest opportunity, I desert the center and head for the edge. It is how we live in the modern world. The ego's desires take over as the day comes into focus. Often I do not have the time to record my dream, let alone allow sacred space to enter my routine. The violence mentioned is intriguing. Alice Springs is a violent place, or I experienced it as such as a youth. But the violence may refer to the 'violation' of the ego at the center. It hurts the ego to remain in sacred space; it cuts across its wishes and is — apparently — detrimental to its goals. Even though, in my lectures on Jungian psychology, I teach the importance of psyche, soul, depth, I know from my dreams that I walk out on that depth whenever I can, and my ego needs continually to be counseled, as if by the figure in this dream, to stay with interior space and not abandon it.

9. *Going Native, To Some Extent*

I have spoken at length about my experience of 'going native' in Australia. Jung worried about the European 'going native' in black lands. He wrote: 'Going black under the skin is a spiritual peril which threatens the uprooted European in Africa to an extent not fully appreciated' (1963: 274). It seems that, for visitors such as himself, such concerns were well founded (1963: 266-74). However, what about those of us who live in black lands and call them home? I am not a visitor and Jung's cautions are not entirely relevant to me. I intuitively sense that I have to go native to some extent. Otherwise

I am not truly here or rooted in the soil. That the spirit of Australia is indigenous and black is an important fact that I live with on a daily basis. When I first went into Jungian analysis in America, I began to dream of the first contact with Australia by British sailors and explorers. In one dream, Captain Cook's 'Endeavour' sailed into Botany Bay and those who came ashore were massacred by the natives who had observed their arrival. This worried me. Did it foreshadow an imminent psychosis? Did this indicate that the white Western self was being annihilated and the primal forces were on a destructive rampage?

No, it indicated that the *kind* of ego that arrived here from Britain was not the kind that could withstand a creative contact with the place. Lawrence had made that point clear in his *Kangaroo* (see Chapter 7). The colonizing ego, heroic, rational, secular, progressive, humanist, patriarchal, would have to be sacrificed before an Australian individuation could take place. In another of my dreams, Aboriginal people approach me in an underground car park and ask to be admitted into my life. I could not see them, because there was not enough light in that dark place. But they came forward and spoke: 'Please take us into your life', 'Please don't forget us'. I awoke, determined not to forget about the spirits of Aboriginal people, and to work on developing the equivalent forces or qualities in my own soul.

I have taken this on as a spiritual discipline, to allow myself to experience the invisible forces in nature, to sensitize myself to the hidden reality beneath this one, to experience myself as part of the cosmos and not only as part of society. All of these, if you will, are gifts that Aboriginal people bring to the consciousness and spirit of this place. But the art of receiving these gifts is to allow them to activate 'equivalent' capacities and energies in the Western psyche, and not to steal the forms and intellectual properties of Aboriginal cultures. The challenge for Euro-Australians and for all those from other lands is to awaken the soul from its slumber and to release the personality from the tyranny of absolute rationality.

## The Psyche Down Below

### Chapter 5

#### *Descent into the Unconscious*

I knew that Australia was the country of the Upside-downers. A hole, bored straight through the earth from England, would burst out under their feet.

— Bruce Chatwin (1987: 6)

In what follows, I use poetry, fiction, painting, folklore and cinema in much the same way as a psychotherapist uses dreams and visions. To me, these cultural productions are symbolic pointers to what is taking place in the psyche. However, I use art not to analyze the artist, but to explore unconscious processes in the psyche of society. The artist, consciously or not, is the interpreter of the spirit of his or her time. I turn artworks outward to face the world, in the hope of showing the world its unknown face.

#### *1. The Disturbed Ecology of The Psyche*

Depth psychological factors are involved in the construction of new societies, but they are difficult to detect and often the last ones to be subjected to scrutiny. Transplanted colonial societies experience destabilization in the psychological and spiritual sphere. As a society transplants itself from the old to the new land, the carefully maintained balance between the two systems, consciousness and the unconscious, is disturbed. Ego-consciousness, which in the parent culture had achieved a high degree of autonomy, is reigned in by the unconscious, which becomes stronger and more demanding

in the new situation. It is as if the internal ecology of the psyche is upset and a new balance has to be struck between conscious and unconscious.

In early Australian experience, consciousness is weighed down by the sheer demands of colonial life, by the impact of the pioneer setting and life lived in the raw. Not only refined manners and tastes go out the window, but many values, principles and directions are sacrificed in the struggle to survive, to build a new material culture and to cope with the new conditions. In Jungian archetypal terms, there is less emphasis on the onward and upward spirit, and more emphasis on instinct, biological demands, and the dictates of mere survival.

This reorientation is entirely normal and is experienced not only by colonial or post-colonial societies such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States, but also by individuals and families who emigrate to new countries and adapt to different social and geographical conditions. In *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile* (1984) Leon and Rebeca Grinberg explore the case histories of several migrants and migrant families, examining the psychodynamic changes and emotional traumas that are characteristic of any experience of migration. They found that in almost every case unconscious processes were intensified, which led to a disruption of consciousness. Either a neurotic condition or a breakdown ensued, or else, after a temporary upheaval, there was a creative restructuring and a transformation of personality.

In any event, the experience of migration is decisive, and what occurs in this process cannot be adequately explained by resorting to the usual statements about culture shock and geographical displacement. The depth psychological perspective can throw more light on this cultural phenomenon, and the study of Australian society in particular can be illuminated by viewing it as a migrant society which is still involved in the ongoing psychodynamic problems wrought by migration. As the Grinbergs have eloquently written, 'Migration is such a long process that perhaps it never really ends' (1984: 74).

## 2. The Fortunate Fall: Down To Earth and Democratic

There are several ways to evaluate the impact of the activation of the unconscious in early Australian experience. In positive terms, we could say the transplanted consciousness has become more natural, robust, down-to-earth, enterprising and practical. There is much that is reassuring and authentic about the changed environment. On the other hand, critics of early and present Australian society can argue that it has fallen in moral worth, has become dominated by mere instinct, and has become rough and crude, insensitive to spiritual values, materialistic, brazenly physical and so forth. The spirit archetype, or at least that form of the spirit which was known to the parent culture, 'dies' in the new setting, descends into matter, and is temporarily eclipsed by natural demands. In Freudian terms, the superego gives ground to the id.

In all colonial societies there is a counter-response to this lowering of consciousness. Frontier societies are typically inflexible and puritanical bastions of moral culture. There is a strong conservative element that defends the values of the old country against those of the new. Very often, however, the colonial culture is far more reactionary, oppressive, and dictatorial than the conservative element in the parent culture. This problem is sensitively explored in Catherine Helen Spence's colonial novel, *Clara Morison* (1854). The new moralism is worse than the old, insofar as it is established in reaction to the powerful activation of the primordial unconscious. The stronger the upsurge of instinct in colonial consciousness, the more severe is the resistance erected to defeat it. This new puritanism will appear quite bizarre, almost a mock-parody of conservatism and, as such, it loses credibility in the eyes of many people. The will of the folk triumphs over the colonial high culture, and the new nation is born, along with a nationalistic spirit which asserts its difference with a sense of pride.

In Australian cultural history this marks the end of the neo-classical colonial period and the start of the new national phase, which lasted roughly from the late nineteenth century to the 1940s and was concerned primarily with the definition of so-called authen-

tic Australian values. These values are celebrated and championed in such classic nationalist works as Joseph Furphy's *Such is Life* (1903) and Henry Lawson's *While the Billy Boils* (1896). The former British high culture is relegated to the scrap heap or turned into a laughing stock and a source of ironic humor and scorn. The national period in Australia, as in Mark Twain's frontier America, was marked by a relaxation of colonial defenses, increased instinctuality and eros and a sense of having come 'down to earth'. In Australia the national phase manifests as a celebration of the common man, as a cultural revolution championing working-class values and ordinariness.

Some historians, such as Russel Ward in *The Australian Legend* (1958), have argued that the impassioned turn toward social democracy and egalitarianism in Australia was due largely to our convict heritage, to the hatred and fear that emancipist convicts felt toward hierarchical authority, and their noble desire to see a 'fair go' for all. Social background is crucial, but so too is the depth psychological situation which to date has not been taken into account.

In my reading of our democratic spirit, the former ego-consciousness, as well as the imported British superego, collapses, exposing the lower levels of the psyche and allowing what Jung calls the 'shadow' to come into view. It would seem logical, given the highly structured, class-conscious and hierarchical nature of eighteenth century British society, to assume that the shadow-personality, which acts in a compensatory way to consciousness, would be anti-authoritarian, democratic and egalitarian. In this sense, the achievement of Australian society is perhaps less spectacular or glorious than it is inevitable. As the old consciousness disintegrated, the egalitarian and democratic shadow – or what is sometimes called the 'golden shadow' (Johnson 1993: 42-7), containing positive traits excluded from consciousness – came to the fore, becoming the new dominant of Australian consciousness.

It was especially apt that the emancipated convict should personify and carry the new set of values. The shadow is very much the prisoner of consciousness, mistreated and abused by the superego, and pushed into the dungeons of the unconscious, into British prisons, hulls of ships and expelled to Australia. Many have argued against

Russel Ward's convict-based view of Australian democracy, but even if it lacks historical credence, one can see how suggestible the idea is from an archetypal standpoint. The idea of the unfairly treated convict, the man abused by society but with a heart of gold, is one of the foundation myths of Australian culture. If this myth were treated as a psychological narrative, and not only as a sociological hypothesis based on fact, we might gain a deeper understanding of the psychological structure of Australian society.

But it was not political or social forces alone which ushered in the new democratic era, making Australia one of the most advanced political democracies in the world. It was the case that the psyche set out on a new course, since the trauma and disruption of migration allowed the positive shadow to be released into consciousness. Although written in a different context, James Hillman's words can serve as a credo for Australian experience: 'Integration of the shadow is an emigration. Not him to us; we to him. His incursion is barbarism, our descent is culture' (1975: 225). Even the geographical journey to Australia from Britain, the fact that it involved a descent to the Deep South, to 'Down Under', adds to the metaphor that in founding Australian society Britain unwittingly initiated an undoing of its own consciousness and a development of its imprisoned shadow (Hughes 1987).

Australia is in a number of ways the scorned or reviled offspring of the parent culture, thus explaining the inferiority that Australia has suffered throughout its history, but also explaining the boastful arrogance of nationalist Australians. It is not only the convict origins that stain our past, but the ever-present awareness that we were born out of darkness in an archetypal sense. We were the children of darkness who were archetypally charged with the mission of bringing a new light into the world – hence the boastful assertions of superiority, when underneath we continue to be plagued by inferiority.

3. *The Not-So-Fortunate Fall: Despair, Violence and Oedipal Rage*

So much horror in the clear Australian sunlight!

— Douglas Stewart, *Ned Kelly* (1943: 64)

The descent to the shadow is nevertheless a cultural decline as well as a *felix culpa* or fortunate fall to a new state of political grace. The Australian experience is not as clear-cut as Hillman's saying suggests. We experience *both* an increase in culture and a certain degree of barbarism. Many things were lost by the descent: high culture, the stable, if static and restrictive, superego, the civilized restraint on instinctual life, the certainties and structures of the past, the heroic thrust of the ego and the life of the spirit and appreciation of the non-material.

The things lost, as well as gained, have been articulated in the prose stories and other works of Henry Lawson, the most famous and accomplished figure of the nationalist period. Lawson's stories depict the grandeur of a new political order, a vision based on solidarity, mateship, human feeling and egalitarianism, if at times he questions the actuality of this new vision. But his work reveals a sense of nostalgia for a lost past, which is associated with civilization, high culture and refinement. This nostalgia is not, as some have suggested, Lawson's personal hankering after a lost ideal, but the expression through him of the new nation's awareness of the loss that its new consciousness has entailed. In Lawson there is a perception that Australian society is perched on the edge of an abyss. This abyss is projected upon the land, which is experienced as threatening, a malign force which would destroy its Euro-Australian inhabitants.

This is the disintegrative aspect of the archetypal descent expressed as a negative 'spirit of place' or disturbing quality of the landscape. Lawson sees Australians in a state of existential danger, a people without meaning other than the social and political meaning which the helpful shadow is able to provide. The shadow's political message of solidarity and unity is not enough: it makes for a good society but not for culture in the fullest sense of the term. Keith

Hancock put this succinctly: 'For nationality consists not merely in political unity but in spiritual achievement. Regarded from this point of view the Australian people have not yet come of age' (1930: 284).

There is desperation and despair in Lawson, making him all the more deserving of his legendary status. Yet he has most often been celebrated for only one part of his achievement: for his recognition of the social progress of the Australian people. But his perception that we have at the same time fallen into a spiritual depression, that we lack purpose other than the cheery workaday purpose of social democracy, has not been noticed, or only grudgingly. Lawson has been hailed as an 'apostle of mateship' but not as the prophet of our existential plight. He is too often read, especially in our school system, with no regard for the existential doubt and gloom which can be found even in his lightest sketches. Where noted, his darker side is felt to be the product of his personal quirkiness, or of an inherited melancholia and depressiveness, as in Colin Roderick's biography of Lawson (1991). Australians will take full regard of the positive aspect of Lawson as a reflection of their national character — and declare this 'truly Australian' — but the despairing side, the nostalgia for what has been lost, the spiritual malaise, is regarded as his personal problem and subjective weakness.

Lawson's contemporary, Barbara Baynton, paints a bleak and sometimes demonic picture of Australian society. Hers is a human world that has fallen to a level below that of the animal. Dogs, sheep and cattle show signs of faithfulness and moments of warm affection, but not so the human figures who are found in her *Bush Studies* (1902). They are crude, raw and impulse-driven creatures capable of appalling aggression and violence. Baynton's Australia shows the incursion of, or descent to, the shadow as barbarism. Her portrait is extreme and ought to be regarded not as social realism but as psychological realism, as fiction which expresses what lies below the social veneer. But her work is nonetheless 'Australian' and represents a significant aspect of the national psyche. With Baynton too, critics have tried to argue that her morbidity is personal, a result of her psychic instability and mental illness, which she has 'projected' on the Australian scene. In some quarters there is indignation: how

dare she inflict her private neurosis upon a healthy and growing society. It is wrong to pretend that her darkness is un-Australian and misleading to contrast – as is often done in studies of the 1890s – her 'darkness' with Lawson's 'light', especially when there is unacknowledged darkness in Lawson.

While the positive or helpful shadow is personified in the figure of the nation-building emancipist convict, the blacker and more violent side of the Australian shadow is personified in the bushranger, highwayman or robber. This familiar figure in Australian writing and folklore is crude, coarse, all male and angry. He believes he has been wronged by society and feels licensed to 'let the bastards have it', to transgress the law and hack away at the establishment. Here the interaction between the old superego and the uprising shadow assumes the form of an Oedipal conflict between the symbolic father and the struggling and unfairly treated son. Australian literature is littered with instances where the rebellious youth or *puer aeternus* attempts to fight off the negative father or *senex*, who appears as hardline police, merciless magistrates, self-serving squatters or simply as 'the system'. As bushranger, the youthful shadow is not nation building but immoral and destructive. He is the unsavory and not-so-golden shadow, the shadow which British consciousness felt justified in punishing. But it is *through* the archetypal perspective of the malign shadow that British consciousness looked upon Australia and its 'currency lads' as a whole, finding the South Land repugnant and not noticing the social experiment that was taking place here.

Although the bushranger, and to a lesser extent the larrikin or prankster, was a menace to law and order, the 'folk' could not condemn him because he embodied qualities of the Australian psyche. He 'acted out' on the social stage the release of Oedipal rage, primal narcissism and the attempted defeat of an apparently repressive, paternalistic system. The bushranger, who often acted gratuitously and for mere self-gain, was sometimes idealized as a people's hero, a Robin Hood driven by a higher morality to depose the system on behalf of the majority. In the 1870s Ned Kelly emerged as a living legend because he embodied this archetypal pattern which was so fundamental to Australian psychology. He was angry, young, rebel-

lious and said to have had a just cause. Police had mistreated him and patriarchal law had imprisoned his mother, and the system seemed corrupt. Kelly was authorized by the folk and the shadow to wage a guerrilla war on the establishment.

It is significant that Kelly, his gang, family and many of his sympathizers were Irish or Irish-descended, and the troopers were English or *constructed* as English even when they were not. Englishness in Australia was equated with the repressive superego and the father to be overthrown, while Irishness then, and still today, represented the maligned Oedipus or *youth* who would come into his own in a land removed from British injustice. It is true that Australian society inherited the political debacle between England and Ireland, which was concretized in the fact that many of the convicts were Irish while their jailers were English. But this conflict between nations is based on archetypal factors and it is the psychological aspect of this ongoing *senex-puer* rivalry which concerns us here. There is a wealth of literary, filmic, artistic and other works on the Kelly gang and bushranging, but only Douglas Stewart's play *Ned Kelly* (1943), Sidney Nolan's series of Kelly paintings (1946-55) and Robert Drewe's *Our Sunshine* (1991) have begun to unravel the psychological structures within this popular legend.

We have seen how difficult it is to separate the negative from the positive shadow in Australian experience. In practice these psychological aspects are so closely related that Australian experience can only be comprehended in paradoxical terms. The shadow is liberator and destroyer. It liberates the repressed life, brings on the democratic spirit and it lowers the level of consciousness and releases the primal forces of the psyche. Its mission is double-sided and Janus-faced. Yet official Australian culture and the national sentiment of the folk want to emphasize the good and to skew the shadow archetype toward the positive. Hence in Australian folk culture, the shadow-figures are basically 'good boys'. The convict is viewed as unfairly punished for small misdemeanors, more sinned against than sinning, and the bushranger is viewed as a working-class hero. Lawson's writings are read in terms of their promotion of mateship and defense of democracy, and Baynton's contorted,

gothic shadow-world is read as the reflection of a disturbed mind. In these ways the national shadow is removed from the national self-image.

#### 4. Jung and Lawrence: *The Old-World Critique of New-World Democracy*

The instinct of the place was absolutely and flatly democratic, a *terre* democratic. Demos was here his own master, undisputed, and therefore quite calm about it.... It was a granted condition of Australia, that Demos was his own master. D. H. Lawrence (1923c: 18)

C. G. Jung and D. H. Lawrence provided penetrating critiques of new world democracy. Jung felt that in American cultural experience there had been a certain primitivization of the American mind, brought on by a sudden contact with the energies of the deep unconscious. In 'The Complications of American Psychology' (1930) Jung argues that colonial societies are forced into new and dangerous encounters with the primordial psyche, since the transplanting of a culture tends to weaken consciousness while the unconscious is stirred to new activity. Colonial societies tend toward democracy and egalitarianism, Jung felt, not because of any high-minded philosophy or spiritual principles, but because the *collective* layers of the psyche have been strengthened, giving rise to collectivist values.

Lawrence felt the same about the fiercely democratic spirit in Australia. For him it was an essentially regressive phenomenon because Australian democracy seemed not so much to champion the people as to diminish the individual. Jung and Lawrence feared new-world democracies for their anti-individualist tempers, and both favored old-world European individualism, seeing democracy as the result of a descent rather than an ascent of the human spirit. Lawrence felt that the 'aggressive familiarity' which the Australian democratic temper promotes is antithetical to the spiritual life, since the spirit demands a sense of otherness from the mundane, and any culture that values spirit must grant or recognize something 'innate,

sacred, and separate' (1923c: 321). It is not that Jung or Lawrence were opposed to democracy *per se*, but that the equalitarianism that new-world societies generated had a leveling influence, and the lowest common denominator held sway.

Jung wrote that in America:

The overwhelming influence of collective emotions spreads into everything. If it were possible, everything would be done collectively, because there seems to be an astonishingly feeble resistance to collective influences. (1930: 506)

This could be dismissed as a right-wing reaction to socialism, but it is unfair to treat these comments in this way. Although many think of Americans as individualists, it is true that they are tremendously swayed by public opinion, the mass media, fashion, trends and are 'suggestible' to the collective. In colloquial language we might say they are 'doing their own thing together'. To an old-fashioned Swiss-German individualist, the American social experiment seemed alarming. Every private emotion and personal ambition seemed to have its origin in public opinion and the media. 'You are simply reduced to a particle in a mass, with no other hope or expectation than the illusory goals of an eager and excited collectivity', Jung argues, and concludes:

You feel free – that the queerest thing – yet the collective movement grips you faster than any old gnarled roots in European soil would have done. (1930: 505-6)

'You feel free in Australia', writes D.H. Lawrence in *Kangaroo* (1923c), and here the great contemporaries converge in expression as well as in thought (Jung's essay was written in English): 'You feel free in Australia. And so you do. There is a great relief in the atmosphere, a relief from tension, from pressure. But what then?' (1923c: 24). Lawrence points out that boastful Australians love to tell foreigners and visitors that theirs is a 'free country', but he questions the meaning of this 'freedom' in a country given over to what he calls 'herd-unity, equality, domestication' (1923c: 324). Like Jung, Lawrence records with condescending humor the antics



of new-world mass-mindedness: 'They all rushed from where they were to somewhere else, on holidays' (1923c: 24). Jung claimed that the individual is reduced to a 'particle in a mass' in America, and for Lawrence the individual in Australia is turned into a 'bit of the collective':

The people of this terrestrial sphere are all bits. Isolate one of them, and he is still only a bit. Isolate your man in the street, and he is just a rudimentary fragment.... He's only a bit, and he's only got a minute share of the collective soul.... Never a thing by himself. (1923c: 326)

Lawrence's novel *Kangaroo* is hated by many Australians because of stinging attacks such as this on the national character and way of life. But once you get over the insult, Lawrence has a point. Australians valorize and celebrate democracy without thinking of its shadow. We are taught to believe that democracy is an ultimate value, a veritable god, before which we might lay down and die. Those who dare to criticize democracy are viewed as fascists, snobs or elitists.

But the leveling influence that has taken place in Australia under the banner of democracy cannot be denied. The downward tug of the shadow has linked us to instinct, collectivity and each other, but the cost to individuality and to the individual spirit has been considerable. To assert one's individuality in Australia is, as Lawrence knew, one of the cardinal sins. The disadvantaged person is the exceptional person, the talented individual. Anyone who stands out above the crowd is a threat to the clan and to the 'herd-unity' or frail stability of the young nation. Any tall poppy in this garden of equality is liable to incur the wrath of the collective and to be lopped. We have characterized this behavior as the 'tall poppy syndrome', and although Australians are capable of making fun of their capacity to 'lop the big ones', they keep lopping just the same. It must be seen not as an isolated sport in its own right, but as part of the democratic complex. The negative face of *demos* is conformity, collectivity, standardized behavior and hatred of what rises above the norm. Jung wrote that collectivization is responsible for 'a flattening

influence on people's psychology' (1930: 506), and this too finds an echo in Lawrence's phrase that Australia is 'flatly democratic').

It should be pointed out that Americans and Australians have enjoyed opposite and antithetical kinds of mass-mindedness. The upbeat, heroic American temper has led to a different kind of collectivity to the downbeat, antiheroic Australian sensibility. Americans adore being successful, collectively, together. If it were possible, every American would be a star, a hero, or a millionaire. Every boy in the schoolyard grows up believing he can be president. Australians prefer it if everyone is as undistinguished as everyone else. The maxim in this country appears to be: 'There are no stars in our team'.

We see this clearly in Australian sporting life: highly talented players cannot afford to draw too much attention to themselves, but must submerge their talent in the team. Heroism and individual achievement are frowned upon and cause for embarrassment; teamsmanship or 'mateship' is the national ideal. Those who dare to challenge these assumptions readily experience the stifling side of this code of conduct. Alienation and ostracism are found all too frequently in this democratic and fair nation, since the finer print reads: you can only be my mate so long as you act the same as I do.

##### 5. The Australian Masculinist Character as National Defense

For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro'  
narrow chinks of his cavern.

— William Blake (on Ned Kelly?) (1793: 258)

It could be argued that the Australian character is based on a series of denials and the promotion of the golden aspect of the shadow. There is little room in the nationalist ethos for Baynton's violence, Lawson's despair, Ned Kelly's rage, or Lawrence's perception of the flattening influence of the Australian temper. The nationalist character wants to emphasize the egalitarian shadow and lay claim to such traits as earthiness, unpretentiousness and

pragmatism, but refuses to acknowledge the dangers and problems wrought by this lowered threshold of consciousness.

If consciousness is situated, metaphorically, below sea level, and is subject to flooding by the unconscious, the nationalist character sets about to erect barricades to keep the unconscious at bay. Hence the 'typical' national style comes to construct itself as strong, tough and stoical. Enormous energy is exerted in the construction of barriers against emotion, feeling and any kind of inwardness, since what is 'inner' comes to be associated with what is dangerous and makes us feel weak. So the classic Australian type becomes stoical and resistant to feelings.

Australian consciousness – and I am referring to men and women – has constructed itself as masculine. But the masculinity is exaggerated, a kind of parody of masculinity, since the archetype that produces authentic masculinity – the archetype of spirit, associated with the father – is missing. Australian men develop a sort of forced or extreme masculinity, and this serves to mask their sense of weakness and vulnerability (Colling 1992). They are sons of the mother, due to their proximity to the maternal unconscious and their continual attempt to kill off the father. The typical Australian male, whether we talk about the bushman, the battler, the larrikin, or suburban ocker, understands masculinity as machismo and thinks that 'being masculine' means being tough, forceful and aggressively defensive (Tacey 1997). It is a forced style, one which desires to prove itself in rituals of combat and battle, locally in pubs and sports fields, and overseas in exotic theatres of war such as Turkey, New Guinea and Vietnam.

Australia became a so-called 'real man's' country, and women were forced to adopt defensive strategies and a 'tough' consciousness. Here is where the Jungian reading of Australian cultural experience departs from feminist readings. The feminist viewpoint contends that women have been programmed by a male-dominated society, which determines the political messages of the culture, to abdicate their feminine values and sensibilities to serve the patriarchy. The depth psychological viewpoint, however, shifts the perspective to another level. Women have been conditioned by the internal

psychological forces of a national psyche obsessed with masculinity rather than by external forces of political propaganda. There are, however, ways in which feminist and depth psychological readings can be brought together, so that political and archetypal factors can be seen to play determining roles in women's experience.

One fascinating feature of Australian cultural history is the phenomenon of women dressing up as men and wishing to be seen as men by society. Examples of such cross-dressing can be found in Furphy's *Such is Life* and Eve Langley's *The Pea-Pickers* (1942). The typical reading of this is that woman is underprivileged and discriminated against. If she presents as a male these oppressions might be avoided and a freedom attained. However another reading might be that she is responding unconsciously to the intensified masculinity of the cultural ethos. By cross-dressing she is entering more fully into the psychosocial condition of her time. I use this example simply as an indication of the masculinization of Australian society, a process which appeared to coincide with the development of the nationalist character.

It appears that femininity in society, in men and some women, was given a negative evaluation, a situation which is only now changing as Australia moves into a new phase. As the national psyche matures, macho-masculinity will be outgrown and the culture will turn to, and look for direction from, femininity. This turn toward the feminine is already underway, at least among educated Australians, and the macho-style is being parodied and made the subject of social satire. As the conventional style becomes self-conscious, it will be sensed as inauthentic, as restraining rather than expressing life.

In a sense, neither true femininity nor masculinity was experienced because what was in the ascendant was an exaggerated masculinity. The experience of complex masculinity and femininity was eclipsed by the need to create barriers of defense and a siege mentality. A pioneer society defends not only against the assault of the elements, famine, flood, heat, drought, fire and natives, but against the unconscious forces that it has unleashed. The defensive habit has much in common with what Adler called 'the masculine protest' (1912), an exaggerated attitude of strength adopted by a

vulnerable part of the psyche to ensure its survival. Adler noted that, although the masculine protest sometimes served short-term needs, it could not be long sustained before exhaustion and collapse set in. Such a 'protest' idealizes the masculine, because the feminine is felt to be inherently inferior.

As well as defending against disruptive emotions there is also the spontaneous activity of projecting negative contents upon other things and other people. In Australian experience, Aboriginals, women, individualists, foreigners and landscape are all carriers of negative images. They often carry the harmful or threatening contents which are not recognized as aspects of the Australian psyche. Hence side by side the nationalist ethos, which is espousedly so generous, fair-minded and democratic, are racism and racial violence, xenophobia, homophobia, misogyny and other forms of projective paranoia. There is always something 'out there' which seems to threaten the ego's freedom, whether the Chinese ('the invading yellow peril'), women ('conniving to trap a man and bring him down'), Aboriginals ('untrustworthy and animalistic savages'), Americans ('they'll take us over if we let them'), or the landscape, depicted in our early literature, and especially in Lawson, as a malign force bent on ruining the ego's dreams and aspirations. The confidence and self-satisfaction that the nationalist ego and its 'bush culture' espouse is a fool's paradise which is undermined from within by all that is repressed and denied.

As Freud and his followers discovered, the defensive personality thrives on projective paranoia and dissociative strategies to force outside the self the disruptive elements which attack it from within. Thus in Australia, negative projections, scapegoating, acts of emotional or physical violence, are frequently indulged, while all the while the nationalist ego thinks it is living in 'the workingman's paradise', in the best of possible worlds.

## 6. *The Psychological Uses of Landscape*

A defensive cultural consciousness can do remarkable things with landscape. The landscape can act, as in Henry Lawson, as a field for negative projections, where the land becomes constructed as an 'Outback Hell' against which the enfeebled ego must defend itself. But we can also find a completely different psychological use of landscape in Australian culture, with roots going back to Henry Kingsley's colonial romance *Geoffrey Hamlyn* (1859) and beyond. This involved the representation of Australian landscape as a rural paradise or arcadia. In this second tradition, the ego does not project the unconscious outward upon the land, but rather converts the land into an image of an ego ideal. A utopian construct is formed which serves the ego's growth, meets its needs and reflects an image of peace and security. The motto of this arcadian tradition might well be Freud's famous dictum: 'Where id was, there ego shall be' (1930: 80).

The nationalist folk-image of the 'Bush' is a comforting and familiar construct in which Euro-Australians feel at home and with which they identify. This is the world of Adam Lindsay Gordon and the so-called Bush School of writers. The emphasis in Gordon's poetry, for instance in 'The Sick Stockrider', is on naming the landscape, on converting the unknown into familiar properties, selections and cattle-runs, each with friendly-sounding and often familiarly English titles. The message was clear: this land is our land, we live in it, and have taken possession of it in the name of Euro-Australian society.

The master of this art of cultural appropriation was A. B. (Banjo) Paterson, whose works are central to the production of the nationalist character (1982). His legendary 'The Man from Snowy River', 'Clancy of the Overflow' and 'The Man from Iron Bark' constructed the landscape as a glorious backdrop to the activities and achievements of rugged and resourceful men. His portrait of the Bush as an ego-syntonic field so completely met the needs of a vulnerable, nascent consciousness that the folk quickly adopted Paterson as their hero and enshrined him as the 'Banjo of the Bush'. On the other side of the spectrum was Henry Lawson, similarly revered,

not for his dystopian landscapes but for his cheery expression of national ideals, new social values and humorous sketches of Bush life.

The conflict between utopian and dystopian images of landscape came to an interesting climax in the *Bulletin* literary debate or verse-argument between Paterson and Lawson in 1892-93. Lawson started the debate with 'Up the Country', a refutation of Paterson's Arcadian Australia and targeted against the idyllic world of 'Clancy of the Overflow'. Paterson countered with 'In Defence of the Bush', Lawson rejoined with 'The City Bushman', where he argued that the romantic image of the Bush was a product of the city, invented by those who do not venture into the Outback and who are unaware of its real nature. 'We wish to Heaven', Lawson wrote in 'Some Popular Australian Mistakes' (1893), 'that Australian writers would leave off trying to make a paradise out of the Out Back Hell; if only out of consideration for ... the lost souls [who live] there' (1893: 130).

We have to do with two psychological scenarios, both arising from the same defensive consciousness but leading to opposite cultural outlooks and different relations to the environment. Is the unconscious to be made visible, to be represented as a 'foreign' landscape, and to be battled against by a siege mentality? This is the style of Lawson, and a profitable mode for artists since so many inner conflicts can be given expression by emotive representations of landscape. Or is the unconscious to be denied, and the land declared free of alien spirits; the country converted into a land of industry and human commerce? This is the confident, optimistic style of Banjo Paterson, creator of the 'jolly swagman', and a profitable mode for nationalists and politicians, since social development is more readily encouraged where the spirit of place is perceived as congenial. In Joseph Furphy's *Such is Life* (1903), the nationalistic Tom Collins boasts that Australia is a free and 'recordless land'. It is a country of the future with great potential for growth since it is devoid of spirits, presences, and the past, or as Collins puts it, 'is clogged by no fealty to shadowy idols' (1903: 66).

Nationalism waved a wand over the landscape of the Aboriginal Dreaming and turned it into real estate and natural resource. A good example of this is W. C. Wentworth's long poem 'Australasia' (1823), in which he celebrates how 'the mournful genius of the plain' is 'Driv'n from his primal solitary reign', and in place of the *genius loci* he saw 'The cheerful villas 'midst their well-cropp'd land' (1823: 5). A few years earlier, in prose, Wentworth had performed the same cultural exorcism in favor of the hegemonic ego: 'What a cheering prospect for the philanthropist to behold what is now one vast and mournful wilderness, becoming the smiling seat of industry and the social arts; ... to hear the joyful notes of the shepherd ... instead of the appalling yell of the savage, and the plaintive howl of the wolf' (1819: 15). Always the nationalist temperament constructs the *otherness* of the landscape as appalling, mournful, and replaces it with a 'cheerful', 'smiling' world based on ego values. The fact that the new social order is entirely oppositional to the spirit of place is revealing of the defensive nature of the nationalist program. It goes without saying that the civilizing project, and its aggressive attack on the 'genius of the plain', gave the colonizing ego the same authority to banish the indigenous people and to 'drive' them from the land. Where Aboriginality was, there Europe-in-Australia shall be.

A. G. Stephens of the *Bulletin* developed an ingenious strategy on the eve of Australian federation. He decided that the strangeness of the Australian landscape never existed, and that the perception of these qualities was part of 'the grotesque English prejudice against things Australian'. He was so infused with the utopian temper, and with the ego's colonization of place, that he believed seeing the land 'through clear Australian eyes' would reveal a country of immense beauty and cheerful demeanor. Stephens averred that there was one 'honest Englishman', and that was Henry Kingsley, who demonstrated his 'honesty' by portraying Australia as a magnificent arcady, a place covered in flowers, filled with 'aromatic perfume' and containing many delights and surprises (1899: 394). The archetypal image parading as reality here, and putting itself forward as the 'commonsensical' view, was undoubtedly that of the earthly paradise, the desired setting, or background, for the birth of the most

advanced social democracy. The so-called Bush tradition was not especially interested in the 'bush' at all, not as a natural world in its own right, but merely as a sort of heraldic or emblematic context for major political transformations.

Paterson's arcadian landscape was perhaps the 'real bush' for many Australians a hundred years ago, when the vulnerable ego needed to be bolstered and made secure. But Lawson's Australia resonates more for us today, not because it provides a negative view of place, but because it treats the land as a mysterious and irreducible other. A century after the defensive of high nationalism, we are today in a more expansive mode, and are looking to the landscape, and to Aboriginals, as sources of mystery and otherness. We look for hints and clues about the Australian unconscious, about other histories and realities, not for consolidation of the ego.

### *7. Imminent Cultural Change*

The beginning of the twenty-first century is a time of enormous change and upheaval within Australian society. The masculine protest, so contrived, and, as Adler noted, ultimately so fragile, has begun to break down, and with it the aggressively defensive persona that it gave rise to. This crumbling of our psychological stockade has been in evidence for some time, at least since the end of the Second World War and certainly since the time of the Vietnam War. Contemporary Australian literature has been tearing away at conventional attitudes and subverting local values since the 1960s and 70s. It would be wrong to see this writing as merely a protest literature, because the destructuring that is now taking place is occurring at the very center of our culture and cannot be confined to the margins.

Many Australians today are bored with their self-imposed confinement and defensiveness, and are eager to explore what lies beyond our barricades. Many are alert to the false unity imposed on the country by nationalist sentiment and are keen to explore ruptures and gaps, both within society and the self. There is a new receptiv-

ity to plurality and otherness, especially as these are embodied in women, Aboriginality, multiculturalism and Asia-Pacific neighbors. These changes will be further discussed in chapter 8. Meanwhile, a good many other Australians, especially in our folk- or low-culture, want to continue as before, nationalistic, contracted, suspicious of foreigners, masculinist, devoted to closure, unity, certainty.

This situation is ironic because in the nineteenth century it was the colonial high-culture which was felt to be moribund and obsolete, whereas the egalitarian low-culture was progressive and forward-looking. The new postcolonial ethos in Australia is being brought in as it were from above. With these changes taking place at a furious rate, with people from the city and country being exposed to a post-masculinist consciousness which encourages openness and is suspicious of closure, the old nationalism is under threat. But then, threat is what it has come to expect because the siege mentality is its forte.

## Chapter 6

### *The Need for Sacrifice*

Out on the wastes of the Never Never –  
That's where the dead men lie! ....  
That's where the Earth's loved sons are keeping  
Endless tryst.... – Barcroft Boake (1897: 225)

#### *1. The Unsettlement of Australia*

Contemporary white Australians feel profoundly unsettled and unsure of themselves. Today we find little of the bumptious and self-promoting nationalism which has been strong in the past and which once provided a foundation for national and personal identity. In sports arenas we still shout 'Come on Aussies, Come on!' but not with the same gusto as before. The car bumper stickers announce: 'White Australia has a Black History'. A formal Apology was issued to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in 2008, but most of us are aware that this is not enough, that much more has to be done. 'Actions speak louder than words' many of us are saying about the destitute and appalling conditions of Aboriginal lives. A brooding, depressive and critical phase has been ushered in, to replace the hype of our former nationalistic fervor. Abroad, in the United States or Asia, Australians still seem brash, confident, assertive, even boastful, but this is an outward and worn-out persona which fails to do justice to the new cultural attitude.

Australians are engaged in a further psychological descent, and in an ego-based Western society 'descent' is always resisted. Australians try to make light of their dilemmas: we are suffering from an identity-crisis that we must decide to overcome, announce the newspaper editorials, almost as if our crisis could be resolved by an act of will. Our slump, both moral and socio-economic, is seen as typical of a young country on the verge of breaking constitutional ties with parental Britain and embarking on a new phase as a republic. Other commentators take a different line: Australians are crippled by the self-loathing and guilt arising from their historical mistreatment of Aboriginals. These political, social and racial points of view have a good deal of validity and in their contexts are true enough. But we can also explore the contemporary *unsettlement* of Australia through an archetypal perspective and read this cultural depression as a psychological crisis.

#### *2. The Gap Between Society and Nature*

As indicated in the previous chapter, white Australian consciousness is only superficially part of the Australian scene, and only apparently linked with the Aboriginal earth upon which it lives and moves. There is a chasm between society and nature – a chasm which can be conceptualized as a psychological gap between consciousness and the unconscious. White consciousness is defensive and heavily armored: the landscape is seen as threatening and malign, and the job of heroic society has been to deny the strangeness of the place and to pretend that we are actually in Britain.

In Australian experience the landscape is coterminous with the unconscious: it is vast, ancient, mythological and wholly other. We have denied the true spirit of the land, and its indigenous inhabitants, for two hundred years of white settlement, and now the repressed is coming back to haunt us. We are not merely caught up in what is popularly dismissed as white-guilt. The Western ego senses that it is not authentic, and its former pretence at belonging is no longer

adequate. White Australians have a black history, and that history is now the urgent and demanding present.

No one likes to be told that depression is good for him or her. But in Australian society a bout of depression is what is required to lower the threshold of consciousness and link it with the unconscious. Only from this depression can the connections be made that will revivify the nation and restore integrity to its citizens. We are slowly *dissolving into landscape*, but it is a necessary dissolution that ought not be resisted or willed away by resorting to the heroics of the past. We are experiencing what Freud might call a regression for the sake of advancement.

When the personality is spurious or false, the unconscious will often present itself as a devouring maw which undermines, threatens and endangers consciousness. In Australian literature and popular culture, we find images of landscape as an archetypal field which would destroy the white intruders. We wage an ongoing war against the natural elements, bushfires, drought, floods, winds. In the nineteenth century, the classic motif in Australian stories was that of the young child lost in the bush. Nature was a malevolent force claiming human lives for itself. What took place in Australian culture was the reverse of English Romanticism: the Earth Mother did not care for her children in gentle Wordsworthian fashion, rather the Terrible Mother impressed herself on us and scared the colonial society.

In some Australian writing, nature is portrayed as a demonic primordial lover, whose erotic embrace leads to death and disintegration. In Barcroft Boake's 'Where the Dead Men Lie' (1897), the 'Earth's loved sons' find that their bond with mother nature leads to the 'endless tryst' of death. In the *Proem* to Henry Handel Richardson's *Australia Felix* (1917), nature is mythologized as a sorceress who 'held captive, without chains' those who had 'so lightly invaded [this] ancient country'. Nature is imaged as

A primeval monster in the sun, her breasts freely bared, [watching] with a malignant eye the efforts made by these puny mortals to tear their lips away. (1917: 13)

Although such a force may crush our adolescent spirit, a genuine relationship with nature and earth must be forged. This is the challenge confronting Australian society. Living behind masculinist barriers and rational defenses is only a half-life. Anyway, these barriers seem to be falling down of their own accord, and we will be forced sooner or later into a new encounter with the unconscious. Already we see the collapse of imported European farming methods, which have undermined the ecological integrity of the land. For our ecological survival, we will need to speak to the land and ask what it wants of us, not what we want to do with it. We can only hope that our spirit will not be broken by this encounter. Or maybe, our particular *kind* of masculinist-defensive spirit will have to be sacrificed to nature. Perhaps only then a new kind of human spirit, more connected with this country and not imposed on it by a colonialist order, will emerge from the death of the old.

Lacking an organic connection to the earth beneath it, Australian society can appear shadowy, unreal, lifeless. In 1939 Patrick White noted that society and nature were at odds: 'The country existed in spite of the town. It was not aware of it. There was no connecting link'. White compared Australian society with 'an ugly scab on the body of the earth'. 'It was so ephemeral. Some day it would drop off, leaving a pink, clean place underneath' (White 1939: 28). This hideous image was used in the same year by A. D. Hope, who wrote, in his poem 'Australia':

And her five cities, like five teeming sores,  
Each drains her, a vast parasite robber-state  
Where second-hand Europeans pullulate  
Timidly on the edge of alien shores. (Hope 1939: 13)

These are intensely disturbing, shocking images of society, a testimony to the emotional impact of our cultural dissociation on creative writers.

### 3. The Problem of Unconscious and Involuntary Sacrifice

To be suspended above the ground invites disaster and ruin. An unsupported social structure is forever precarious, and in our literature we find images of society poised over a dreadful abyss. The opening image of Richardson's ironically titled *Australia Felix* is of a digger on the Victorian goldfields falling headlong to his death in a deep gravel pit:

The digger fell forward on his face ... nose and mouth pressed into the sticky mud as into a mask; and over his defenceless body, with a roar that burst his ear-drums, broke stupendous masses of earth. (1917: 7)

Here we have a memorable representation of the human spirit's fatal marriage with the earth in death. An eerie, mythic quality is found in the image of the death mask, reminding us of the earthen masks or personae worn in ancient festivals. This digger's experience symbolizes what could be a modern Australian symbolic rite: the transformation of spirit suspended arrogantly above earth, to spirit suddenly crushed by earth and wedded to it. It is interesting that the moment he becomes defenseless – the moment he loses his human mask – he is made to take on the sticky earthen mask supplied by nature. In other words, as soon as we fall out of our normal workaday persona, nature is ready to supply us with a mask of her own. Nature, disturbed at being shunned by our arrogant spirit, is quick to immobilize and petrify the 'puny mortals'.

In historical fact, many of our early explorers were conquered by the land, and they found that, when the second-hand European settlements were left behind, nature seemed keen to devour them. This is especially the experience found in Patrick White's *Voss* (1957), whose central character is based in part upon the historical figures of Leichhardt and Eyre. The newly arrived German explorer was appalled at the way Australians 'huddled' together in coastal settlements, apparently denying the grandeur and magnificence of the land. But although *Voss* set out to conquer the land it quickly conquered him, and his journey into death and disintegration was

presided over, and inspired by, a demon-lover or seductive enchantress called 'Laura'. White's novel appears to show that Australians huddle from elemental nature for good reason, and that to embrace nature in Australia is indeed to become one of the Earth's ill fated 'loved sons' (Tacey 1988).

Randolph Stow's poem 'The Singing Bones' explores this theme with acute sensitivity and insight. He sees the seductiveness of death-by-nature in Australia, and argues that the explorers Leichhardt and Gibson, and 'Lawson's tramps', were 'by choice made mummia and air'. There is something in the Australian psyche which predisposes the human being to go off the rails, to abort reality, to turn renegade and dissolve into landscape. We huddle and cling to the persona, the surface, the coastline, because the urge to run amok is so powerful and strong. Stow deftly psychologizes the foreboding terrain:

Out there their place is, where the charts are gapped,  
unreachable, unmapped, and mainly in the mind. (1966: 207)

The natural world is without and yet also *within*. The nature which claims lives is not only the remote outback, but the remote places in the Australian unconscious. Is it the Australian unconscious or the landscape that is peculiarly vicious and malign? Or is it, as I suspect, that the *distance* between spirit and nature, conscious and unconscious, has a destructive and enervating effect on human life? When there is no organic connection between spirit and earth, earth rips spirit out of its human context and gives it an earthen death mask. If Australians do not build a connection between mind and earth in life, a connection will be forced upon them destructively, in death. Those who 'die of landscape' (Stow) are involved in a kind of negative or unconscious cultural sacrifice.

Poet Judith Wright understood these deaths-by-landscape in meaningful cultural terms. In the essay, 'The Upside-down Hut', she wrote:

Are all these dead men in our literature, then, a kind of ritual sacrifice? And just what is being sacrificed? Is it perhaps the European consciousness – dominating, puritanical, analytical (Richard Mahony was a doctor, Voss a botanist), that Lawrence saw as negated by this



landscape? ... Reconciliation, then, is a matter of death – the death of the European mind, its absorption into the soil it has struggled against. (1961: 335)

This is an important essay, and it needs to be studied in schools and universities. Our country clearly needs a new kind of spirit, one which cultural development will bring to birth. It may still be too early to know what the new spirit will be like. Meanwhile, the destruction of the old – the 'European consciousness' as Wright puts it – continues. The problem is that all this takes place unconsciously. Australian society, so rational, busy, committedly secular, knows little about the sacramental process taking place within its depths. All the signs are there in our literary culture, but the *images* of this psychocultural sacrifice have not yet been translated into *concepts* which might enable us to understand the situation better. We only have poetry, hints, images to go by. We refuse to sacrifice something of ourselves knowingly to the land, but the sacrifices take place anyway, whether or not we are aware of them. Our ritual offerings are involuntarily, as if in a trance or dream. This too is a theme of Australian art, especially our cinema.

There is plenty of sacramental awareness when the *other* is a known public enemy. Witness the enormous amount of national feeling and sentiment invested in Australian war experiences, especially the Gallipoli campaign, which was a massacre of Australian soldiers. We revere those lives lost in sacramental terms and erect public monuments 'Lest we Forget' the human cost. The First World War inspired commitment and support because it tapped into Australia's sacrificial compulsion. Men, boys, women felt the call of the country and responded with courage. We are good at that kind of sacrifice; but bloody, physical deaths against a human foe is not what the Australian psyche needs. What is needed is subtler, more psychologically demanding, and concerned with this land rather than the Dardanelles. The danger to the world and ourselves is that until we understand what is required in this country the sacrificial impulse will continue to be projected in exotic, foreign parts and released in military activity and theatres of war.

A common story in fairytales is of a land beset by a sacrifice-demanding monster who lives in the dark woods just beyond the settled areas. The monster has a voracious appetite and demands human and animal sacrifices, lest it destroy the entire known world. The land lives in constant fear and is depleted by the monster's demands. Jungian psychology would argue that the ruling consciousness, sometimes personified by a king or ruler, has become separated from an instinctual, archetypal source, which has grown 'monstrous' through neglect and repression. This neglected element draws psychic energy to itself, threatening the stability and economy of consciousness.

In the tales, usually the only way to stop this intolerable situation is by heroic activity (slaying the monster), or creating a dialogue with the monster and finding out how to satisfy its needs. Until wisdom or right action intervenes – often personified by a seer, monk, knight or oracle – the monster continues to consume innocent lives. This is where Australian society is caught in archetypal terms: it is feeding the demonic hunger of the unconscious psyche. It exists prior to true heroic activity or conscious intervention. We pour heroic energy into sport, war and military operations, but we don't know how to direct our heroism to the inward source. We have not yet graduated to the point where spirit attempts a dialogue with the unconscious. We have not asked the sacrificial compulsion what it wants.

#### 4. Earth-Sacrifice in Popular Culture

A chilling example of our unconscious compulsion to sacrifice is the well-known folktale *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. Joan Lindsay's novel by the same name (1967), and the internationally successful film by Peter Weir (1975), depicts the uncanny and awful earth-sacrifice of beautiful young women at the archaic monument which is Hanging Rock. This rocky formation is north of the city of Melbourne, and its features are peculiarly awesome. Many report to this day that strange things happen there, and the magnetic power of the rock

affects moods, metal objects and even automobiles. The rock, we are told, erupted from the earth's interior millions of years ago. One of the schoolgirls, Irma, says in a trance-like voice: 'It has been waiting a million years, just for us'.

Irma is under its spell even before she encounters it. No resistance is evident as she is drawn by almost occult attraction toward the rock. Nor is there any resistance from the similarly enchanted Miranda, the central Botticelli-like figure in this bizarre ritual of human sacrifice. The dominant impression of the so-called picnic is one of trance-like unconscious ritual, or acting as if caught in a dream. In the film, the haunting special effects, the high pitched sounds of insects and cicadas, the stylized symbolic photography and the sound track of the resonant organ with shrill notes of the Pan-flute, combine to create a stunning atmosphere of dream, myth and ritual. We do this kind of thing well, but do we know what it means? I don't think so.

Joan Lindsay has performed an important cultural task by showing us how unconscious, entranced and subservient to archetypal forces we are in Australia. In the National Anthem we sing that we are 'Young and Free', believing that we act by our own volition. But the unacknowledged archetypal processes simply grab us from behind, where they perform their lethal enactment of symbolic activities. The schoolgirls of Appleyard College are led to their destruction on the face of the rock because their human society is asleep. It is a sacrifice to the monster at the outskirts of the big city. It is a giving way to the voracious appetite of the demonic earth.

But it is all performed as if a 'strange tale' of folklore or legend, without understanding its psychology, without grasping its meaning for us today. We just do not know how real and actual this 'strange tale' is. It is not just art and aesthetics, or good cinema, but it is our lives. We don't have the symbolic awareness to properly integrate it, because as a secular and humanist society, we do not possess a talent for the sacred. We do not understand the meaning of sacrifice. Nor did Lindsay herself seem to understand the symbolic meaning of her own tale, judging from interviews I have read. We are all

caught up in a mythic situation which is too difficult for us to see. We describe it but do not interpret it.

In recent history and popular culture, we find the same theme of sacrifice in the tragic case of Azaria Chamberlain (1980-1980), narrated in a story by John Bryson (1985) and portrayed in the Fred Schepisi film *Evil Angels* (1988). While the Chamberlain family camped at Uluru or Ayers Rock, baby Azaria, only a few weeks old, was seized at night by a dingo and dragged to her death. The raw, elemental and archetypal nature of this incident immediately gripped the nation. The details are potent: the innocent, sleeping infant is destroyed by a wild dog. As in *Picnic*, the event takes place at an iconic and mysterious earth-monument, Uluru, a place long associated with Aboriginal ceremonies and rites of initiation. As in *Picnic*, no bodily remains were discovered after the tragic disappearance, except for bits of clothing, adding to the mystery and enigma of the case. The human remains are never found, and the human element disappears without a trace.

The cultural need to offer an earth-sacrifice was strongly activated by this incident. As with any unconscious process, the contents of the symbolic drama are literalized and personified. Rumors flash across the country and in newspapers that the name Azaria means 'sacrifice in the wilderness'. There are further rumors of devil worshippers and ritual murderers in central Australia and Queensland, and the Chamberlains are said to belong to this occult group. But it is the mother, Lindy, who becomes the carrier of the image of the death-dealing maternal earth, the womb-matrix which devours its offspring. She murdered Azaria, the nation announces, eager to find a scapegoat. Even a court of law finds her guilty on almost no real evidence. Indeed, what was at that time called evidence was later dismissed as without foundation. In other words, the country was so gripped by the archetype of sacrifice that it could not think straight.

These events can be viewed as a national psychosis, an eruption of irrationality and outrage, with the powerful image of earth-sacrifice at the center of it. Lindy Chamberlain was victimized, jailed, and martyred by an egalitarian, fair-minded, secular Australia, because society cannot attend to its own sacred imperatives, cannot atone

for its distance from the earth and the other. We must find scape-goats because we cannot do our inner work.

5. *An Inconvenient Truth: Insights from Judith Wright*

We do not require literal killings or Aztec-like human sacrifices, but a letting of psychic blood, an offering of some inner part of ourselves to place. A dialogue is needed, with the land and the Aboriginal people, who are the symbolic continuum of the landscape. A conquering people, we are not good at initiating dialogue.

Judith Wright was one of the first to explore this complex problem. She noted that conquerors expect everything to go their way. We plunder, rape and pillage, in the name of civilization, but we do not know how to give back to the land, how to forge a spiritual connection with it. This is because we do not know how to sacrifice to our inner depths, to the nature within ourselves. Always these twin levels of inner and outer reality work together. It is often difficult, as Wright's poetry attests, to differentiate what we need to do on behalf of landscape from what we need to do for the sake of the psyche within each of us.

The spiritual inadequacy of Australian society is the subject of Wright's poetry, especially her later work. Although we have prospered materially on the land, more subtle realities, such as our psychical relation to place, which would grant admission to the country and fellowship with it, are denied us:

The blue crane fishing in Cooloolah's twilight  
has fished there longer than our centuries.  
He is the certain heir of lake and evening,  
and he will wear their colour till he dies;

but I'm a stranger, come of a conquering people.  
I cannot share his calm, who watch his lake,  
being unloved by all my eyes delight in  
and made uneasy, for an old murder's sake.

Those dark-skinned people who once named Cooloolah

knew that no land is lost or won by wars  
for earth is spirit; the invader's feet will tangle  
in nets there and his blood be thinned by fears. (1955: 83)

Conquerors of new lands are conquered by the land, because internally they are racked by self-doubt, plagued by fears, tortured by inadequacies. The natural world within and without seems to turn against them. Their acts of hubris constellate the same consequences that hubris in ancient classic drama brought: the vengeance of nature and the perishing of the soul. Conquerors of land can find no ultimate solace or fulfillment, no deep satisfaction, if they do not embrace the spirit of place, allowing them to connect spiritually, organically, to the world around them. We cannot live a full life shut up inside the sterile, rational confines of the ego. Sooner or later, we must break out of this cocoon and risk the encounter with nature. Wright breaks out of our cocoon and finds that, to her horror, nature will not embrace her.

Some commentators have said that nature in Australia is inherently harsh, and cannot offer any expected romantic experiences. 'In Australian writing Nature endures, rather than protects or nourishes' (Taylor 1987: 35). But Wright's vision goes deeper than a romantic complaint about nature as unmotherly. She understands that, after allowing ourselves to lose our vital connection with nature, we have made nature appear indifferent or even malign. We cannot abuse nature on a grand scale and expect it to nurture and protect us when we turn toward it.

In 'Eroded Hills', she argues that we have not only injured our spiritual pact with nature, but our biological link with the fruits of the earth has been disrupted:

These hills my father's father stripped;  
and, beggars to the winter wind,  
they crouch like shoulders naked and whipped –  
humble, abandoned, out of mind.

Of their scant creeks I drank once  
and ate sour cherries from old trees  
found in their gullies fruiting by chance.

Neither fruit nor water gave my mind ease. (1953: 49)

Wright's poem is not just a protest against patriarchal abuse of landscape, nor can it be categorized as a poem about 'conservation'. It is a poem about the withheld love of nature, about the chasm that exists between the earth and the consciousness of society. Wright is showing the spiritual legacy of a conquering society, which can achieve a great deal in external terms, but which has no sustaining internal link to the bio-psychical life of nature.

Because of this disjunction, Australians remain anxious, restless, unsure. The widespread search for identity in Australia is not merely an intellectual one that ends when we arrive at comforting national images or consensual conventions about who the real Australians are. Identity cannot be achieved in this programmatic way but must arise from within. When society and nature, conscious and unconscious, are organically related there is no more talk about the problem of identity. The emotional depths of existence are filled and a sense of character or personality is assured. 'Alienation and rootlessness', writes Jung, 'are the dangers that lie in wait for the conqueror of foreign lands' (1927/31: 103).

It is important to realize that the nationalist temperament governed Wright's early work, when her aim was to affirm and celebrate the supposed oneness with the land that the early pioneers and settlers had achieved for future generations. In poems such as 'Bullocky', 'Remittance Man', 'South of My Days', and 'For New England', she celebrates early Australian experience by turning ordinary settlers and pioneers into figures of legend. These poems, from the 1946 collection, were pro-establishment and condoned the pioneering mentality: good honest toil builds culture and masculine effort provides a solid foundation for society. The legendary Bullocky is felt to open up the land, to tame a wild landscape, and to make over the country in the likeness of humanity. His efforts render the land sweet and productive:

O vine, grow close upon that bone  
and hold it with your rooted hand.  
The prophet Moses feeds the grape,

and fruitful is the Promised Land. (1946b: 9)

But by the time we get to 'Eroded Hills' (1953) and 'At Cooloolah' (1955) Wright's landscape is different. No more does a sweet and fruitful earth bear witness to a happy alliance between nature and human progress. Now the earth is scorched and abused, and nature and humanity are torn apart. The nationalist myth of the pioneering pact with the land has given way to a contemporary perception of alienation and rootlessness.

Judith Wright's career models the crucial changes that Australian culture will have to undergo. When setting forth upon new land, it is important that the colonizing society believes in its own development, and imagines that honest toil is creating authentic culture. However, postcolonial generations must reconsider this view, acknowledging that social development has occurred at the expense of the indigenous world. The artist's eye, appalled by the shocking gap between society and nature, exposes the nationalist order as a sham and pretence. Nationalists accuse Wright of becoming anti-Australian, whereas she has really moved with the currents of the psyche itself, shifting to a more profound, if less flattering, psychocultural position.

## 6. The Art of Sacrifice

Australian settlers have to feel unsettled, that is the beginning of our maturation process and the seed of wisdom. It is only by feeling unsettled that we begin to feel the gap between society and nature, between rational conscious attitudes and elemental forces. The more we become aware of the gap, the narrower it becomes. Feeling unsettled, unauthentic, doubtful – this is a form of cultural suffering and a conscious sacrifice of the ego's unimpeded growth and development. The contemporary unsettlement of Australia, often dismissed as a white 'guilt trip' or trivialized as an identity crisis, is a way of connecting with the elemental dimension which has been maligned, repressed and kept 'out of mind'.

On the art of sacrifice, the Aboriginal culture has much to teach white Australia. Aboriginal people have long been aware that in order to maintain equilibrium between human and nonhuman worlds, sacrifices must be made to the earth to ensure that humanity remains in harmony with the cosmos. If humanity forgets to pay homage to the archetypal forces and loses an attitude of humility, everything would go awry and the world would fall into chaos. There is a memorable moment in Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines*, where the conflict between Euro-Australian attitudes and Aboriginal practices is poignantly revealed:

The Aboriginals ... never understood why the missionaries forbade their innocent sacrifices. They slaughtered no victims, animal or human. Instead, when they wished to thank the earth for its gifts, they would simply slit a vein in their forearms and let their own blood spatter the ground.

'Not a heavy price to pay', he said. 'The wars of the twentieth century are the price for having taken too much'. (1987: 13-14)

This is a wonderful depiction of our situation. If the Western ego can achieve some degree of humility toward the cosmic forces, it finds its proper place in the order of things. If it does not honor the need for sacrifice, the sacrificial impulse becomes compulsive and unconscious, whence it enacts a terrible toll. The more conscious our sacrifice can be, the less likely we are to fall victim to the sacrificial impulse gone mad.

## Chapter 7

### *On Not Crossing the Gap*

#### *I. Inauthentic Culture*

D. H. Lawrence saw non-Aboriginal Australians perched arrogantly, if rootlessly, upon ancient, archaic, sacred ground. He was wryly amused, when he visited here in the 1920s, by the contrast between the confidently secular, busy, yet spiritually hollow people and the still, silent, yet spiritually powerful landscape. He felt that Australian society was unreal, that it was not an organic thing but it hung as it were in mid-air, above the earth:

There was the vast town of Sydney. And it didn't seem to be real, it seemed to be sprinkled on the surface of a darkness into which it never penetrated. (1923c: 8) (hereafter cited as K)

Elsewhere in *Kangaroo* he writes that, after dark, the spurious white society seemed to disappear into a void as the primal landscape reasserted itself: 'As soon as night came, all the rattle-taggle of amorphous white settlements disappeared, and the continent of the kangaroo reassumed its strange, unvisited glamour, a kind of virgin sensual aloofness' (K: 30).

Lawrence's theme in all his writings, regardless of their setting, is the rootlessness and alienation of modern humanity. For Lawrence, humanity had attempted, in its intellectual arrogance, to cut itself

off from nature and instinct. He felt, as did Freud and Jung, that consciousness had disengaged from the deep unconscious, and it lacked any compensatory connection to the vital, life-sustaining lower realm. Western culture, for modernist writers, had turned into T. S. Eliot's 'unreal city' by virtue of its denial of the archaic ground of existence. Lawrence seized on the evident discontinuity between Australian society and landscape to add further dimension to his universal theme.

However the universality of this theme does not detract in any way from its specifically Australian significance. Far from imposing his vision artificially upon the local scene, it seems to me that Lawrence understood Australia from within, despite his brief visit here. He was no ordinary tourist, but a writer of acute sensibility and intuition, who could rapidly gain a personal understanding of the spirit of the place in which he was living.

## 2. The Need For Nourishment From Below

For Lawrence, human society is nourished and fed by two sources: the spirit of nature (vital energy) and the spirit of culture (tradition). He argues in *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush* (1924) that white Australian society has little access to either source. Australia has been unable to import its spirit from its European origins. Despite what church leaders and promoters of high culture have believed, the spirit of culture and religion is not transportable or moveable. We have the outward trappings of European civilization but the essence of it did not survive the journey. To Lawrence, Australian society seemed like an uninspired imitation of life lived elsewhere:

Even the heart of Sydney itself – an imitation of London and New York – without any core or pith of meaning. Business going on full speed: but only because it is the other end of English and American business.

The absence of any inner meaning: and at the same time the great sense of vacant spaces. (K: 24)

He went on to say that the 'inside soul' of Australians 'just withers and goes into the outside, and they're all just lusty robust hollow stalks of people' (K: 143). As if to compensate for this hollowness, Australians seemed to Lawrence to be hell-bent on the pursuit of material wealth and consumer goods. Australians greedily pursue money and material security, as if transferring their desire for life and spiritual substance into material terms. But for Lawrence, 'even the rush for money has no real pip in it':

When all is said and done, even money is not much good where there is no genuine culture. Money is a means to rising to a higher, subtler, fuller state of consciousness, or nothing. (K: 24)

The other source for nourishment is from 'below', not from the spiritual realm of religion, tradition or culture, but from nature, vital energy and the earth. If we are unable to tap the higher sources of the Christian spirit, which for Lawrence had dried up in Europe itself, there is also the darker, pagan spirit of nature. But the artificial character of Australian society makes it difficult to draw anything from the earth or the natural world. This, nevertheless, was the source which Australians would have to learn to tap, however problematical their current situation.

## 3. The Untouchable Crone

But the land itself resists the society that has been foisted upon it. Not only are Australians unrelated to the land by their own doing, but they are spiritually shunned by the land itself. Most Australians, Lawrence felt, are unaware of this deeper alienation, but they would have to become aware of it in their quest for national identity and spiritual maturity. Lawrence commented on the 'strange *unvisited* glamour' and on the 'virgin sensual *aloofness*' of the landscape. In archetypal terms, Australia is constructed in ways reminiscent of the Greek goddess Artemis, who was virginal, wild, untouchable, remote and resistant to the advances of men. Except that Australia is not youthful like Artemis, but archaic and old, like a virginal or

There is a psychic gap between the consciousness of Europeans and the reality of Australian landscape. The gap is so great that consciousness could be swallowed up if it attempted to cross the gap in search of roots in the local soil. Australian literature has many examples of the fate of those 'poor wretched souls', as Lawson calls them, who fall into the gap and become psychically overwhelmed by place. Literary scholars can always find logical reasons for why these numerous characters go mad or disintegrate. It is said that they suffer from loneliness and deprivation, from extreme isolation, from depression and melancholia, from 'bush-madness'. But the poet Randolph Stow gets it right when he says that such figures 'die of landscape' (1966: 207). Or in my language, they fall into the gap that separates consciousness from the spirit of place. They suffer such an onslaught from the unconscious that the over-civilized and inorganic European consciousness is disintegrated.

European consciousness has not, because of its slow development in European soil and its relative independence from the lower depths of the unconscious, been exposed to such archaic levels for some time. Jung argues that the German nations are the most 'primitive' of all in Europe, as has been discussed in Chapter 2. Lawrence felt that the Australian spirit of place was 'too far back' and he could 'not reach so awfully far'. There is a risk involved in crossing the gap, and Lawrence felt he was not, as artist or man, equal to the task.

But the Australians who live here will have to risk the encounter. Robust poets such as Neilson, Judith Wright and Les Murray have accepted the challenge and survived. More than survived, they have flourished. For once the archaic spirit of the continent is contacted it can act, not only as a force of disintegration, but as A. D. Hope knew, as a 'savage and scarlet' spirit which is capable of bringing psychical rebirth and regeneration. For him, it is a 'savage and scarlet [spirit] as no green hills dare' (1939: 13). It brings about a profound awakening which is not possible in the cultivated mental climate of Europe. One has to dig too far down into European soil to find a similar, or equal, level of primordiality. It is Australia, not Britain, which will give rise to a future profound awakening of the indwell-

ing spirit. Lawrence knew this, and although he felt 'glad to have glimpsed it' (1922: 2550) he did not feel mentally or physically strong enough to participate in it.

##### 5. To Sacrifice or Be Sacrificed: The Australian Dilemma

Lawrence knew that a rapprochement with the spirit of place would necessitate real sacrifice:

'It always seems to me', said Somers, 'that somebody will have to water Australia with their blood before it's a real man's country. The soil, the very plants seem to be waiting for it'. (K: 82)

This is a controversial and much-discussed passage, which often seems to be misunderstood by readers. Lawrence is not necessarily providing a rationale for ritual blood-sacrifices to the earth, either at Uluru, Hanging Rock or elsewhere. He is speaking metaphorically, poetically and mythologically about the sacrifice that is required before contact with the spirit of place is possible. Blood is a key Lawrentian symbol, and it generally means psychic energy, libido, the pulse of life. Something primal, red and living will have to be offered to the earth before we can connect with its 'savage and scarlet' spirit. Like must meet with like, and we will have to reach into ourselves to find something which is parallel to what we have to come to terms with. Encountering the spirit of place is at once an encounter with our lower depths. It necessitates a descent or *nekyia* into the psychic underworld to find there the red primordial wellspring which can meet the genius of this country and heal the dissociation between society and nature.

From this perspective, the sacrifice required of Australians is the sacrifice of their attachment to what Lawrence calls 'cerebral' or 'mental consciousness' (1923a). The contact with the depths requires a certain psychic fluidity, a shift in identity and a loosening of the tie to the rational mind. Not that the rational mind itself has to be sacrificed! Lawrence would have none of that, but would regard this as regression. It is simply the *attachment* to the rational

mind which has to be sacrificed, so that a psychic journey and a deepening can begin, both for the individual and for society. The rational mind and ego need to remain intact as we deepen our lives and culture in the direction of the dark primal ground.

If consciousness is not respected and maintained, we fall into the gap because we are no longer grounded in social reality. We then become what Lawrence elsewhere calls 'primitivists' and 'cultural renegades' (1923b: 145). Ironically, Lawrence himself is constructed as primitivist and renegade by those who fail to appreciate that he advocated a descent to the unconscious *and* a maintaining of social and worldly consciousness. As I have indicated, however, Lawrence chose not to conduct his descent here, but opted for New and Old Mexico, and parts of Europe, to be the locus of his psychic journeying.

But if Australians will not sacrifice for the sake of psychic deepening, they will perforce *be sacrificed* to a deepening gone wrong. This is Lawrence's chilling and cautionary warning to Australian society. If we do not voluntarily attempt to explore the psychic underworld, we will be involuntarily dragged into it, with destructive consequences.

What was the good of trying to be an alert conscious man here? You couldn't. Drift, drift into a sort of obscurity, backwards into a nameless past, hoary as the country is hoary. Strange old feelings wake in the soul: old, non-human feelings. And an old, old indifference, like a torpor, invades the spirit. (K: 198)

If Australians remain unaware of their need to make a spiritual adjustment to the land, the place itself will act like a lead weight on consciousness, drawing it into inertia, indifference and inactivity. This is what psychologist Ronald Conway calls the 'Great Australian Stupor' (1985), and Conway's insights have, in turn, been influenced by Lawrence's writings. When Australians boast about their easy, relaxed, tensionless life-style 'down under', they may be celebrating their regression into a pre-conscious or twilight state. This is why Lawrence felt uneasy about Australian anti-intellectualism.

On the face of it, Lawrence was himself anti-intellectual, advocating a return to eros and 'blood consciousness'. But he was worried by the unconsciousness with which Australians seemed to pursue their downward course. Lawrence wanted to see tension, nervous tension, between the longing for the depths and the desire for a fully alert and mature consciousness. This was his own paradoxical position, which in many ways resembles Jung's concept of individuation as a pathway between psychic opposites, between the demands of the primal unconscious and the claims of consciousness.

Lawrence puts the vital question to Australian society:

Would the people waken this ancient land, or would the land put them to sleep, drift them back into the torpid semi-consciousness of the world of the twilight. (K: 198)

Will we experience an unconscious regression to the ancient past, to inactivity and mental stupor? Or will we make a *conscious connection* with the 'savage and scarlet' spirit of place and awaken ourselves to a new era of spiritual and cultural development? Lawrence got out of Australia, and so it is hard to see his actions as a vote of confidence for the possibility of regeneration. Still, we have the evidence of contemporary Australian poetry (Wright and Murray) and recent fiction (Malouf, Jolley, Murnane, among others) to support the view that regeneration is possible and the construction of a deeper, more profound consciousness is already underway.

## 6. Bailing Out: Too Great a Challenge

In *Kangaroo* Richard Somers felt the great Australian earth drawing him toward it with almost magnetic power. And he is, like Lawrence, at odds with himself. Intellectually he wants to 'give in' to Australia, but emotionally he feels unable to make the descent that is required. Hence he is plagued by negative and morbid symptoms: 'he felt the torpor coming over him' (K: 168), he thinks his mind is 'melting away' (K: 375), that he is being Australianized 'in his



sleep' (K: 159). Somers puts his contrary feelings and impulses to his Welsh friend Jaz:

'I love it, Jaz. I don't love the people. But this place – it goes into my marrow, and makes me feel drunk. I love Australia.... [It] tempts me.... [but] I don't want to give in to the place. It's too strong. It would lure me quite away from myself.... It's too tempting. It's too big a stride, Jaz'. (K: 389)

The similarity between the fictional Somers and Lawrence is strikingly revealed in a letter Lawrence wrote to the Australian Katherine Susannah Prichard (née Throssell), in which he tried to explain to this passionately nationalist writer why he could not remain in Australia.

Don't imagine either that I am bolting as fast as all that from Australia. We're not going till August 10th – and three months in one place isn't so bad. For some things too I love Australia: its weird, far-away natural beauty and its remote, almost coal-age pristine quality. Only it's too far for me. I can't reach so awfully far. Further than Egypt. I feel I slither on the edge of a gulf, reaching to grasp its atmosphere and spirit. It eludes me, and always would. It is too far back ... strains my heart, reaching. But I am very glad to have glimpsed it. (1922: 2550)

For Lawrence, with his consumptive condition and frail body, the gulf between his consciousness and the spirit of place may have been 'too far'. He did not want to risk linking his personal genius with our *genius loci*. Even in the different atmosphere of North America, and later back in 'over-upholstered Europe' (K: 169), he only lived for another eight years before dying of tuberculosis. But we need not begrudge Lawrence his right to bail out, or abuse him for being a 'whingeing Pom' who could not stand up to Aussie reality. We should admire Lawrence for throwing so much psychological light on the spiritual problems confronting Australian society. No writer, English or Australian, before him had made the inside life of the Australian psyche so clear and transparent. No one had expressed the psychic difficulties with such human immediacy and poignant

urgency. At the end of *Kangaroo*, Somers-Lawrence wistfully hears the call of Australia and wonders when it will be answered:

From far off, from down long fern-dark avenues there seemed to be the voice of Australia, calling low.... [He] knew [it] would go on calling for long ages before it got any adequate response, in human beings. (K: 383)

# Spiritual Renewal

## Chapter 8

### *Relaxing Barriers, Admitting the Other*

The numinous presents itself as something 'wholly other' (*ganz andere*), something basically and totally different. – Mircea Eliade (1959: 9)

#### *I. Landscape as a Field of Projections*

In his book on Australian culture, *Intruders in the Bush*, John Carroll observes that 'there are two extremes, either the illusion of a cozy and mysteriously redemptive Bush exorcised of threat, or the intimidating vision of an unthinkable desert land that is pure horror' (1992: 234). Australians construct images of the land that are either paradisaical or demonic. We have traditions of art and literature at both ends of this spectrum. For the bush as heaven (or arcadia, a lesser kind of heaven), we have, among others, 'Banjo' Paterson, Henry Kingsley, Katherine Prichard, and the Heidelberg School of painters. For the bush as hell we have Henry Lawson, Marcus Clarke, D. H. Lawrence, Patrick White, and the paintings, for instance, of Albert Tucker and Sidney Nolan. It is inevitable that these mythological images are projected upon the Australian landscape, since myths always determine and shape our experience of environment, especially our experience of a landscape that is so unfamiliar to European imagination. As Jung has said of the process of projection: 'Whenever man encounters something mysterious he projects his own assumptions into it without the slightest self-criticism' (1938/40: 95).

#### *Relaxing Barriers, Admitting the Other*

My view is that if either extreme gains the ascendancy development cannot take place. Australian culture can only remain stagnant. If we see the psychological interior as arcadia, we are projecting an ego-syntonic ideal and engaging in a Freudian wish-fulfillment, that, as Carroll says, is a cozy illusion, leading to complacency and inertia. When arcadia is projected, the other is 'exorcised of threat' and is not sufficiently *other* to shock the ego into new recognitions or levels of awareness. From this arises what Ronald Conway calls the 'Australian stupor' (1985). I grew up with a resistance to the bush poems of A. B. Paterson, which placed humanity in a comfortable, bourgeois saddle, riding dreamily through a friendly countryside. This did not tally with my experience of landscape and seemed too smug, colonialist, heroic and self-satisfied. It is a form of denial, an attempt to rob the other of its transformative power.

On the other hand, if the bush is 'pure horror', there can be no development either. When the interior is demonic and ego-dystonic, the ego will not venture into it, and cannot be transformed. The ego is frozen in terror and condemns itself to a petty existence at the surface of life – as the explorer Voss says to his Sydney patrons, 'it is a pity that you huddle' (White 1957: 11). Below the paranoid surface, however, dark and anarchistic impulses move in the opposite direction. It is significant that the Sydney huddlers actually sponsor Voss's ritual suicide in the desert (Tacey 1988). The ego is no match for the archetypal other, and when the other is denied it makes itself felt in destructive ways. In spite of the ego's resistance, the other draws energy and life toward itself, as if in a trance or dream (Voss is in a trance-like state, as are the schoolgirls at Hanging Rock). What the demonic and arcadian scenarios have in common is an inability to make true concessions or willing sacrifices to the other. Ego and other, conscious and unconscious, humanity and God, do not relate to each other in creative, redemptive or mutually transforming ways, but operate on different levels, engaging in occasional, and fatal, collision courses.

The Australian ego must learn to recognize that the other – whether the landscape, the divine being or the unconscious – is infinitely greater than itself. It is not simply good or evil and cannot

be caught in stereotypes of heaven and hell. The other is complex, awesome, subtle, many-sided and must be entered into relationship with. All that is required at the outset, in order to break the cycles of stupor and destructivity, is a healthy respect for the other. With that new respect, the necessary sacrifice of the ego's dominion has begun and transformation can occur. All-powerful gods, goddesses, archetypes or complexes cannot make this happen. It has to happen from the human side, and that is why this relationship is called *sacrifice*, because the ego is made to feel that it is giving up part of its life in order to gain a greater life through the sacred. As we negotiate this sacrifice, the demonic face of the Australian interior will disappear, because we will be giving consciously and willingly of ourselves. When we give to place, the mythic interior will not have to devour us. When the ego changes, so does the unconscious, since these forms of psychic reality are organically linked.

## *2. Postmodern Landscape: The Self as Other*

Je est un autre.

I is an other. — Arthur Rimbaud (1873: 305)

Artists are by definition ahead of their time. They are prophets of a psychological condition still to be realized in the community, which strives to protect itself from change and dull the impact of the new. But what we see in contemporary art, literature, music and in progressive social attitudes is an increased sense of openness to the other. Contemporary Australian writing can be summed up as a literature of the other. 'Other', 'abnormal', 'aberrant' types of people are explored, revealing new resonances, depths and insecurities about 'normal' people. Everything taken for granted is unpacked, disassembled and re-explored. Contemporary fictions are about Asians in Australia and Australians in Asia. There is a significant body of writing by and about Aboriginal Australians and there are stories about people who are Aboriginal and Euro-Australian. The once-simple topic of national and personal identity has been

exploded, everything is complex and complicated, refracted, distorted. Otherness has hit us with enormous force. We are awash in the sea of otherness, and that is the best definition I know for the postmodern condition.

In the literary works of Jolley, Murnane, Malouf, Garner, Winton, Carey, and others, even the self is an other. The self is opened, unraveled and its hidden desires and impulses explored. Elizabeth Jolley deconstructs the self, and finds alarming incongruities, absurdities and contradictions at the heart of the most ordinary Australian 'self' (1983, 1986). Helen Garner wanders through the safe and tidy suburbs, finding incredible pain, anguish, hurt in its apparently bland surfaces, and showing also unexpected sources of revelation, mystery and transcendence (1992). Tim Winton reveals that human chaos and disorder can be the very opening through which the Otherworld enters human reality and transforms it from within (1986 and 1991). Gerald Murnane virtually dissolves literal reality into metaphor, more interested in the hidden possibilities lurking in every moment than in the reporting of what actually happens (1988). The unconscious has erupted from the depths and makes unprecedented claims on reality, so that the fantastic and the real are now difficult to separate. The old comforting fiction we called 'the Bush' has disintegrated, leaving mystery, uncertainty, doubt in its wake.

It is not simply that landscape is no longer a theme that interests writers, but that what we once called 'landscape' has gone through a transformation, so that it is no longer recognizable. At the hands of Gerald Murnane, landscape has become internalized, metaphysical, a kind of 'spiritual geography' (1984: 37) where boundaries are fluid and changing. Neither the self nor the landscape are solid, defined objects, as they once were. We have stepped out of the old Newtonian building-block image of reality and entered a world closer to the new physics and quantum science, where 'things' have been dissolved into energies. Even energies are not mechanical, predictable, objective, but changing, mystical and affected by the subject who observes them.

The postmodern condition is not a mere invention of intellectuals. It is an important cultural shift in which the once-solid world has dissolved in the ambiguity of otherness. I am not sure how 'post'-modern this is, because expressionist and abstract artists a hundred years ago were dissolving solidity and form, creating new perceptions of the world and new syntheses of fact and fiction. James Joyce was doing this, in narrative fiction, eighty years ago. But what has been brewing in the arts for some time has expressed itself as a worldwide condition, and it is exciting to find that science has not resisted this trend but has gone with it and has arrived, simultaneously as it were, at the same new premises and findings. I agree with the philosopher Derrida that the new condition should not be cause for complaint or fear, but we should attempt to discover, perhaps perversely, the 'joy' within this confusion and ontological chaos.

Whether it likes it or not, Australia is deeply affected by the postmodern moment, and the fluidity of boundaries that comes with this moment is well timed to coincide with the necessary deconstructing of the heavily defended and fortified Australian consciousness. The national psyche is already involved in significant change and is different to what it was even twenty-five years ago. Some will think this is obvious and no big deal, but those who understand archetypal processes will appreciate that change does not take place rapidly at the deeper levels of the psyche. The surface of life can be riddled with shifts and changes, while underneath the archetypes can be unmoved by what takes place. However, we are going through a genuine reorientation, where surface and depth are changing in Australian culture. It is a crucial moment, the *kairos* or 'right moment', when new foundations for the future can be set in place and old stereotypes laid to rest.

### 3. Admitting Social and Political Otherness

In Australian social life, significant readjustments to various expressions of the other have been occurring for some time. However, we still have to be cautious about these apparent changes

in sociopolitical life. Are Australians gaining real respect for the other, or are we simply being bombarded by otherness, so that we can no longer avoid it? *Otherness* threatens the old structures at every level of postmodern experience. We have been forced into new awareness, however limited, about Aboriginal people, women, gays, ecology and the environment, other cultures, other races and Asia, possibly the most potent symbol of the other at the moment.

We are forced to notice religions and myths other than our own 'myth' of secular materialism, political ideas other than the ones we have long held, football codes we have long ignored, sexual preferences and habits other than 'normal' ones. The new status accorded to the newly arrived migrant is an indicator of cultural change. In the past, the migrant was frowned upon and prejudiced against by an over-defended national ego, whereas today the migrant is highly regarded and in some quarters even idealized as a personification of the otherness which Australia has come to embrace.

Australia has finally given up the myth that it is an homogenous, unified Anglo-Saxon monoculture, a myth that was promoted during the major decades of nationalism. Instead, a new myth has arisen which portrays Australia as a diverse, pluralistic, multicultural society, in which Aboriginal people have a special place as the original inhabitants of the land. Whereas before it was bad to be different and good to conform to prevailing stereotypes, now certain kinds of difference are celebrated and championed by the government and the public alike. Some cynics argue that difference is a fad which is paid lip service only, but I feel it has at least one foot in the door. In political and economic terms, Australia has given up the fantasy of itself as ruggedly independent and materially self-sufficient, 'riding on the sheep's back'. Politicians tell us that Australia must participate fully in the global and Asia-Pacific region, and that it must judge itself not by its own standards but by world economic indicators and multinational standards. Australians have to wake up from their stupor, emerge from their protective cocoon, and face the world of international economic and political forces.

#### 4. The Shifting Values of The Political Scene

In recent times, the Australian political system has passed through different psychological styles. Generally speaking, the conservative, so-called 'Liberal' and National Parties seem to emphasize the need for defensive structures, social barriers and protective devices. The Australian Labor Party appears to adopt a more relaxed style, although in recent years the differences between the parties are less distinguishable, as each rushes to claim the middle ground. When I last wrote about the relaxation of psychological barriers and defenses (Tacey 1995), it was under the influence of Paul Keating's Prime Ministerial leadership (1991-96). Keating had made a deliberate attempt to force Australia out of its psychological bunker and cocoon-mentality. Keating attempted to redesign the economy, deregulate the financial sector and relax trade walls and tariffs so that local manufacturers were forced to compete on a level playing field with international markets.

Keating's style manifested itself in cultural and social domains as well as financial and economic areas. He changed the macho and tough image of the Australian male by showing sensitivity to the arts, to women's rights and aesthetic taste. There was even a rumor that Keating was gay, but this may have been a grassroots protest at his unconventional style. His debonair manner was certainly a challenge to the prevailing homophobic attitude that had been associated with male leadership in Australia. Keating displayed a new, more positive attitude toward Aboriginal people, such as we had never seen at the highest level of governance, although Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser (1975-83) must be credited with the pioneering developments that made Keating's attitudes possible.

Keating's legislative program included establishing 'native title' land rights for indigenous people (or for those who could demonstrate continuous occupations of lands) following the 'Mabo' High Court decision of June 3 1992. The Mabo ruling revolutionized the understanding of the ownership of this land, in that it made null and void the declaration of *terra nullius*, the long-standing British justification for seizing the continent in 1788 by claiming that it

'belonged to no-one'. Keating moved to establish a new understanding of political and legal occupation of land, one that was sensitive to indigenous interests. He also developed close personal and political ties with Indonesia, Australia's largest neighbor to the north. This must have been disturbing to the redneck Aussies or 'Ockers' who feared all non-Anglo Saxon peoples, including Aboriginals and Asians. Indonesia had long been stigmatized as the 'yellow peril' to the north, and the fear of this country was underscored by the fact that it was the world's largest Islamic nation.

It seems that Australians cannot stand the open door policy for long, and they can only handle a 'progressive' political direction for a short time. Then it is back to business as usual. In March 1996, the unhappy electorate, tired of Keating's challenges and eager for the Australia that we once knew, got rid of Keating and voted in John Howard, who led us in an entirely different direction. People such as myself, who had grown familiar with Keating, found it disorienting to be placed in a different world. Howard undid a lot of the Keating policies and closed as many doors as he tried to open. Effectively, most of the Keating reforms were shut down or reversed. Moves were taken to protect the Australian economy from deregulation and strengthen national identity by placing emphasis on the old masculine preoccupations and institutions, such as mateship, Anzac Day, team sports, homophobia, military defense and foreign policy. This was Alfred Adler's 'masculine protest' at work (1912), and it was a protest that lasted for more than a decade.

Under Howard, relations with Aboriginal people went back in time and Keating's emphasis on 'reconciliation' was stopped. Instead, Howard picked up the repressive emphasis on 'assimilating' black Australians to white society, in the belief that the latter was the only social order that Australia could allow. In 1996, in response to the Wik decision of the High Court, Howard's government moved to legislate strict limitations on its implications with his proposed Ten-Point Plan. Effectively, Keating's response to the Mabo ruling had been overturned. Howard strengthened our national borders and controls and tightened regulations concerning the reception of refugees. Notoriously, at the time of the Tampa crisis, Howard

attempted to represent desperate refugees as disorderly 'queue jumpers' and even as subhuman figures who would throw their children overboard in a bid to seek unlawful asylum. The fact that most of the badly treated refugees were Afghans was a sign that 'white Australia' had returned with a vengeance and was reasserting itself. This crisis in 2001 coincided with the September 11 disaster in America, and Australia and the US seemed to share a similar mental attitude based on fear of the other.

#### *5. The Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples*

In December 2007 the pendulum swung back again, as Australians felt stifled by the style of governance they had chosen eleven years earlier. Howard had pulled the reins too tightly, and we were wondering what had become of our morality and fairness. The Labor party was voted back under the leadership of Kevin Rudd. Rudd was outward-looking and had several attributes in common with Keating, including an empathy for Aboriginal people, migrants and refugees. Rudd was also interested in Asia, concerned about locating Australia in the Asia-Pacific region, and even spoke fluent Mandarin, a sign of a new style that was not narrowly nationalistic. The first parliamentary act that Rudd performed was to issue a formal Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, on February 13 2008. The Apology was addressed to the 'stolen generations', those indigenous people who had been taken from their families and homelands, and forcibly placed in white settlements and suburbs in the belief that this would give them a 'better chance' to live decent, clean and prosperous lives. This practice, causing widespread emotional trauma and life-long dislocation among indigenous people, began in 1869 and lasted up to the 1960s and beyond.

Stirring words were spoken in the parliamentary chamber:

Mr Speaker, there comes a time in the history of nations when their peoples must become fully reconciled to their past if they are to go forward with confidence and embrace their future. Our nation, Australia, has reached such a time. That is why the parlia-

ment is today here assembled: to deal with this unfinished business of the nation, to remove a great stain from the nation's soul and, in a true spirit of reconciliation, to open a new chapter in the history of this great land, Australia. (Rudd 2008)

The Apology, with overt references to 'soul' and 'spirit', was a boost to the flagging morale and integrity of the nation, and like so many Australians I greeted this act with jubilation and an upwelling of tears. It was wonderful, after two hundred years of racial tension and after so much denial on the part of white Australia to the existence of the problem, that the 'black history' was finally addressed and acknowledged. Naturally, the public response was overwhelmingly positive: for two centuries we had been choking on unwept tears, and finally they were allowed to flow freely and in public. Importantly, the Aboriginal people accepted this Apology. They did not have to. There had been speculation that the more radical and hardline leaders would be resistant, in the belief that too much harm had been done to allow 'forgiveness' so easily. But remarkably, such bitterness was put to one side as the nation came together to mourn the past and look forward to a brighter future.

Given my background as a person who had grown up in Alice Springs, and who had witnessed first-hand, and as a daily reality, the problem of racism in this country, I experienced the Apology as an act of psychological, moral and spiritual justice. The elephant in the room that Howard had failed to see had been noticed and addressed. Of course, an Apology is one thing, and public action and social justice is another, but at least it is a start. The cynics in the media have been keen to point out that the Apology is a 'symbolic' gesture. As a Jungian and public intellectual, I was called to several radio stations to discuss what 'symbolism' could mean in a desacralized and secular culture like Australia. My view is that symbolism is always important, no matter how secular a society might be. After all, it is only the top layer of human reality that is secular, and underneath, the psyche often presents us with a different story. Although we are too 'modern' to fall for symbolism, the unconscious still responds to symbols and can be changed by them. The positive response of

the Aboriginal people meant that the symbolism of the Apology has been effective, and emotionally received by the victims of injustice and near-genocidal policies.

To me, the cynical journalists who kept attacking the integrity of the Apology were out of touch with the mood of the nation. The mood was for reconciliation, and not for being cynical in the face of a genuine act of goodwill. Symbolic processes can work just as well for atheists, secularists and 'disbelievers', as they can for those who have an 'interest' in symbolic matters. The gist of my contribution to radio discussions was to tell my interviewers that they should not underestimate the power of words and symbolic process. We must not allow our sophisticated education to get in the way of an organic process of the psyche.

I believe that the Rudd Apology was sincere and well intended, and the Aboriginal people responded generously to this act. Australia can learn and move on from this moment, so long as we realize that a true Apology must not stop at words, but must be carried through into social action. But in true Jungian fashion, the potent symbol of reconciliation is able to *generate* the psychic energy that allows the nation to move toward healing and change. Personally, I did not expect to see a formal Apology during my lifetime, so I am delighted to have been able to participate in this healing of a nation's wounded psyche.

#### 6. Nation-Building as a Balancing Act

The art of being a nation appears to consist in balancing the opposing forces of change and stability. A nation needs to discover some kind of equilibrium between left and right wing forces, between the desire to be open and the desire to be closed. If, under progressive governments, we are hit with too much otherness, too much that is foreign to the ego, integration will not take place, and there will be a massive social reaction which could prove damaging to the culture. The social progressives must realize that openness cannot be perpetual, and the longing for stability must come into

play at some stage in the political process. We can only hope that fear of new and open spaces will not keep driving us back to a past which needs to be outgrown. In order to tolerate otherness, we need a certain respect for uncertainty and difference. Australia requires a social ego which respects and admits the other, yet which recognizes the claims of the past, tradition and order.

In this atmosphere, the notion that Australia should become a republic gains momentum. In the past I have supported the republican movement, but I have come to feel ambivalent about it. The republic would appear to satisfy the progressive longing for change and the desire to break away from the parental European culture. However, I suspect that at least some of the energy fuelling this debate arises from the desire to terminate uncertainty and anxiety by inventing a new cultural and personal order. The political idea of a republic may be a good one, but if the idea is premature and inspired by a reactionary psychological need, the radical gesture would be, ironically, to remain with the present monarchical system and the postmodern condition.

#### 7. Social Embarrassment and Spiritual Hunger

There are spiritual corollaries of these sociopolitical changes. As we learn to open ourselves to the other in terms of politics, society, race and landscape, we also allow the opportunity to open ourselves to the *wholly other*, to the numinous realm of the spirit. This side of our transformation is less discussed and not on the social radar. The media are not interested, nor are the universities, which consider the realm of spirit and soul to be an outdated construct of the ancient past. Australia has never felt easy about the realm of spirit, for it was established in the late eighteenth century, when enlightenment rationalism was in the ascendancy and religion was being relegated to the area of superstition. However, if we want to come to terms with the whole personality, and with the psyche at its depths, we need to allow for the realm of the spirit, which is the essence of civilization. Moreover, if white Australia is serious

about its reconciliation with Aboriginal people, it has to learn to appreciate spirit and soul, which are core elements of the indigenous worldview.

Because the spirit is 'foreign' territory to us, and we are almost of the mind that it is unAustralian, our attempts to come to terms with this realm will be plagued by a sense of social embarrassment and awkwardness. Many Australians fear that talking about spirit and soul automatically makes them candidates for being considered insane or unhinged – such is the nature of our social taboos against these areas. In a revealing conversation about the Australian national character, writer Helen Garner and artist Michael Leunig consider certain aspects of our difficult, if also diffident, encounter with the sacred:

Helen Garner: 'I've always thought that embarrassment is a key thing in the Australian consciousness. It's very profound'.

Michael Leunig: 'In a moment of embarrassment there's a truth present.... The embarrassing moments are when control is imperfect, when other people see that there's some big force'. (Leunig and Garner 1992-93: 4)

We will experience collective embarrassment and some guilt as Australians struggle to connect with areas of the psyche that have previously been taboo or relegated to unconsciousness. This is because we have been taught for generations that interiority of any kind is an indulgence and self-reflection is narcissism. Our cultural attitudes have been informed by progressive values that have helped serve the pioneer task of establishing European civilization in Australia. Australians have been instructed, like children harangued by an overzealous authority, to get on with the job, to cheer up, stop brooding; don't be morbid, don't be lazy. All our frequently used social phrases and domestic clichés betray our fear of the psychic depths.

It will hurt the pride of many Australians to have to admit to the existence of another reality – a reality long denied by modern families, institutions and progressive groups. Yet when the unconscious is encountered as defenses fall away, soul and spirit turn out to be

powerfully real, and the values which caused us to deny them will be revealed as prejudices supported by an inadequate ideology. But before we can acknowledge the reality of spirit, embarrassment, guilt and shame will plague us because we will feel that we are letting the side down, not living up to modern expectations. Being fully postmodern means also being post-secular (Caputo 2001).

### *8. Nascent Expressions of Emerging Spirit*

Because soul and spirit will be new territory for us, many Australians will be gullible, innocent, unable to discriminate between spirits, and likely to fall prey to religious cults and exotic sects. We will probably go through a phase where it will appear that new-style spiritual movements and old-style religious fundamentalisms have come to rest in secular Australia. One can catch glimpses of these changes already. Various kinds of literal and sometimes ugly expressions of the religious impulse arise in the wider community. The police and the mass media smell out these religious stirrings and brand them as satanic practices or demonic rituals. The autonomous religious impulse, acting spontaneously and outside the purview of official religion, is always treated by the social superego as lunacy or fraud. A weekend magazine which reviewed local occult groups was headed 'Satan in the Suburbs'. In a television interview, a Salvation Army admiral condemned the 'spiritual lone rangers and mavericks' who 'acted without the blessing of denominational leaders'. Social authorities have little understanding or sympathy for the spontaneous activities of the newly awakened soul and spirit.

Unfortunately the televisual and print media thrives on the inferior expressions of the spontaneous religious impulse. Extreme or bizarre elements in the new cults are sensationalized and used to damn everything that seems odd, unusual or out of the ordinary. This has a regressive effect on the spiritual development of the nation, because every time an unconventional religious expression is exposed this serves to reinforce our former ironic and debunking mode. Like the well-groomed and morally righteous television pre-



senter, the viewing audience can point to outbreaks of the irrational in the community and say: 'Look at how appalling, destructive and inhumane this is'. Yet the archetypal currents will keep disturbing the surface of society, despite the fact that the public conscience and superego, institutionalized in the media, will attempt to discredit them and reinstate the controlling ego.

#### 9. *Spiritual Keynotes: Experience and Ecology*

There is no guarantee that the repressed spiritual life of the community will allow itself to be contained within the existing religious structures. This important problem is further explored in chapter 11, 'Tracking the Sacred'. It is certain that the explosion of the spirit will not lead to an immediate revitalization of the churches, because by definition the newly arising contents are in opposition to the cultural canon, and they will act in a compensatory way to the established religious orthodoxy. The psychological revolution will make spiritual lone rangers and mavericks of many of us, since the new psychic energies cannot be poured into the old moulds. The church will close its doors to the new revelations of the spirit, because its primary task is to defend orthodoxy, rather than chart the course of the wayward spirit. For the church, religious truth is timeless, absolute and unchanging, whereas for the spirit truth is subject to change and must be discovered anew.

If Christianity survives the outbreak of spirit, it will be because individual ministers and priests have realized that the times have changed and a new style of religious life is demanded. The spirit is not concerned with theology, belief or dogma, but is more concerned with experience and transformation. Already congregations are warming to priests who emphasize the *experience* of spirit rather than belief in the statements of scripture. The hunger for experience is the hunger of the spirit, and priests and ministers can maintain their flocks by meeting this hunger, by entering the psychological era and granting people inward access to the mysteries of religion. I see this at work in the communities of faith around me: churches that

preach the old news are losing support, whereas churches which invite an inward experience of spirit are holding their own. However, positive changes within the official structures cannot keep pace with demands, and this is why spiritualistic churches, charismatic born-again groups and revivalist movements are gaining large followings. Hardly an empty seat can be found in those churches which convey occult wisdom and telepathic messages to the starved masses.

As we enter a new era of the spirit, literalism will remain the real and constant danger until a new shared cosmology or religious vision has been achieved. People outside the church will feel impelled to remythologize the self and the world, but some will get caught up in all manner of ugly literalisms and inappropriate expressions. Instead of ritualizing and ensouling daily life, some will act-out the religious impulse by participating in black or white magic circles after work. Instead of seeking to develop soulful connections with each other, some will try to create ecstatic communion through naked rituals or orgiastic practices. A sudden experience of a powerful healing archetype is debased and literalized by joining a 'Born Again' sect and mouthing the clichés of the group.

There are seeds of genuine truth in all of these forms of behavior, and the task of a future high culture, one that is alert to the reality of the spirit, will be to educate the religious impulse by opposing literalisms and restoring the spiritual impulse to its symbolic nature. The soul demands a symbolic life, and when the official culture fails to encourage this, the soul will find covert, pathological and untutored forms of expression. We could say that the prevailing secular canon creates pathology and madness in the community; it puts Satan in the suburbs by failing to provide authentic channels for spirit and soul. When there is no religious structure which meets the needs of the community, one can expect social disruption until the culture has been reorganized around these needs.

Initially, it may be easier for us as a nation to approach the task of resacralizing through environmental and social ecology (further explored in Chapters 9 and 10). After all, ecology almost looks like a pragmatic and secular activity, and devotion to the needs of the environment may not cause the same embarrassment that devotion to

the spirit would generate. Through ecology we attend to the most urgent practical issues in the world, and yet, within the practice of ecology there is the romantic and mythopoetic impulse, eros itself, engaged in its vital task of binding, weaving and connecting us to the other. Through ecology we strive to heal the world and ourselves, to transcend the contemporary condition and link our souls vitally to the soul of the world. Some may denounce this as a primitive longing, but, call it what you will, the fact remains that the human soul, once it has been released from its slumber in the unconscious, demands connection and will make connections.

#### *10. The New Experience of Aboriginality: From Shadow To Shaman*

As non-indigenous Australians awaken to the reality of the spirit, this will have a profound impact on our relations with Aboriginal people. Firstly, it makes possible a spiritual basis for reconciliation between white and black Australians. My own sense is that reconciliation cannot fully take place until non-indigenous Australians discover spirit for themselves, and then, from that newly developed awareness, they may realize at a deeper level (and not just as outsiders) the cultural importance of spirituality for Aboriginal people. Secondly, since Aboriginal people have a profound cosmology of place, a spiritual mythology which binds them to the land (Hiatt 1975, King-Boyes 1977), Euro-Australians will look to Aboriginals with tremendous envy and spiritual longing. The values of the past will be reversed: not we superior and they mere shadowy figures upon the floor of hell, but we spiritually barren and they spiritually rich and well endowed.

One can observe this dramatic shift everywhere at the present time, but one can find it especially in the middle classes of white suburbia. In archetypal terms, Aboriginals have ceased being carriers of the white man's shadow and have become messengers of the sacred. They are now psychopomps, or personifications of what Jung calls the Self. When the early colonial consciousness is menaced by the psychic depths, the indigenous people are seen as negative,

but when the postcolonial ego needs to be transformed and looks to the unconscious for reconciliation and healing, Aboriginals are experienced as spiritual guides. From loathsome savages to carriers of our own shamanic transformation: that is the crucial change now taking place in our mythic apperception of Aboriginal people.

Although this change represents a shift from negative to positive attitudes, there is no reason to suppose that either the shadow or the shamanic perspective affords a real connection with Aboriginal people. We have simply moved from one archetypal projection to another, since Aboriginality itself is not merely a creation derived from psychic contents of the white psyche, i.e. is not merely a white man's fantasy. We need to be alert to the fact that the more positive recent image comes not as a result of a genuine change of heart about indigenous people, but from a response to our own need to befriend the more primal or 'aboriginal' layer in our psychic structure. This spiritual layer in ourselves is now being projected upon Aboriginal people, and this gives rise to several important cultural problems.

The first I have already alluded to: if Aboriginality equals spirituality, then we have not seen the Aboriginal people at all. We continue in our old mode of foisting psychological projections upon them. Rather than understanding Aboriginals as a complex people, we reduce them to a single archetype, which can rapidly turn into an imprisoning stereotype. This means that they are not respected as a real people with real material and developmental needs, but viewed as participants in a desert fairytale. They remain disembodied, outside history and material reality and outside our real concern. Secretly, we may even hope that they remain materially impoverished, because this better accords with our own split-off, disincarnate and otherworldly conception of the sacred. Aboriginals ought to be free to live their Dreaming and move toward political independence and prosperity. Spirituality ought not be regarded as antithetical to worldliness, and in this regard the New Zealand example has much to teach us. The Maori cultural renaissance is working toward a revival of traditional spirituality and the achievement of political power and economic security.

Further, by projecting sacredness upon Aboriginals, white Australians disempower themselves and refuse to accept responsibility for their own souls. Australians have made a national pastime of self-flagellation and self-revilement. For many years it was the British to whom we felt subordinate, and this gave rise to what Arthur Phillips called the '*cultural cringe*' (1966). After the Second World War it was the Americans to whom we felt subordinate. I grew up with the awareness that we were following the American model and doomed to be ten to fifteen years behind them. Now, in another era, the Australian middle classes and the New Age fringe-dwellers join together in the experience of feeling inferior to Aboriginal people. Alongside Aboriginals, many Euro-Australians feel themselves to be merely material, empty and hollow. We have given over to Aboriginals our unconscious soul, and stand bereft, disempowered. We the sad-sack, alienated ego, and they the personification of the sacred, vibrantly connected with nature and bonded with the spirit of the earth.

In his poem 'The Inverse Transports', Les Murray addresses several of these concerns. In particular, he explores the dangers in recent white attitudes:

but fairytale is a reserve, for those rich only  
in that and fifty thousand years here.  
The incomers will acquire those fifty thousand  
years too, though. Thousands of anything  
draw them. They discovered thousands,  
even these. Which they offer now, for settlement. (1990: 20-21)

The popular mind has made Aboriginals the curators of imaginal reality: the mythopoetic world has become a 'fairytale reserve' enjoyed only by those who are poor but rich. No money, but they have thousands of years. The very concept of thousands of years, as Murray says, is a white man's construct. We offer these thousands for settlement. When I was young, the period of Aboriginal occupancy of the land was said to be ten thousand years. Then it jumped to twenty thousand, and then forty, where it remained for some time. Now it is fifty thousand. The period of time offered increases

in proportion to white-man's guilt, and his need to invest spiritual value in the other.

But so long as Euro-Australians project their soul on Aboriginal people we will want it back again. 'The incomers will acquire those fifty thousand / years too, though. Thousands of anything / draw them'. This is the 'catch' to the idealization of Aboriginal people. If the sacred has become embodied in indigenous people, the consumerist mentality will want to consume Aboriginality. We see this around us: in the thriving business spawned by the Aboriginal art and souvenir shops in our cities, in the leafy suburbs and airport lounges. We buy up the works of art and the reproduced symbols and designs, hoping to enrich our souls with Aboriginal experiences of the sacred. It could be said that we have made Aboriginality more 'positive' to make a more delectable meal out of it. By an elaborate process of projective identification, we prettify and adorn what we are about to consume.

The consuming of Aboriginal cosmology is the most recent expression of the imperialist appropriation of the indigenous other. We have not only stolen Aboriginal land, destroyed the tribal culture, raped the women and the environment, but we now ask for their spirituality as well. We ask for the Aboriginal Dreaming because, as W. E. H. Stanner has put it, 'White Man Got No Dreaming' (1979). Given what has transpired so far between whites and blacks it is hardly surprising that our pursuit of Aboriginal cosmology is read by many political commentators as further evidence of our willful destruction of this ancient culture (Hodge and Mishra 1991).

Euro-Australians cannot simply graft onto their souls a fifty thousand-year-old Dreaming stolen from another tradition. Such stolen property would not take root in the white soul, and may inhibit or block a developmental process already taking place. We know we are spiritually bereft, but the way ahead may not be by means of a return to animism and ancestor spirits. For the Western psyche, this may be a regression to a worldview which predates modernity and which would engender enormous tension between the soul and intellect. Our need is to develop spiritual kinship with the land, but the Aboriginal cosmology may best serve as an inspira-

tion to create our own cosmology, rather than as a template upon which to build our own. We need to regard Aboriginal mysteries metaphorically rather than literally, to experience them as cultural dreams which stir our souls to activity, rather than as metaphysical systems to believe in.

What is needed is a spiritual revolution in Australian consciousness. We cannot tack on Aboriginal spirituality to our rational consciousness, but must change our consciousness from within by burrowing down into our feared and walled-in unconscious to find an answering image to Aboriginal spirituality. The direction we need to take is downward, into the depths, to see what could be happening there, rather than appropriate another culture's dreaming. Jung wrote that 'People will do anything, no matter how absurd, in order to avoid facing their own souls' (1944: 126). It is easier, he said, to take on the spirituality of a foreign culture, to wrap our nakedness in the trappings of an exotic cosmology, than to face the poverty of our souls and begin a dialogue with the inner life. We will have to risk an encounter with the other within ourselves, whatever the cost to our rationality and whatever the impact upon consciousness.

## Chapter 9

### *Entering the Dream of Nature*

Our task is to enter into the dream of Nature.

– Grant Watson (1990: 119)

This chapter carries forward the ideas presented in chapter 1, concerning the reanimation of the world. It represents an application of Jungian ideas to the Australian context. In particular, I explore the psychology of James Hillman in relation to the Australian search for soul in the world.

#### *1. Aboriginal Animism Versus Rationality: The Clash of Two Stories*

The Aboriginal Dreaming and Western rationality stand to each other as thesis to antithesis. What the one affirms, the other denies. In Aboriginal cosmology, landscape is a living field of spirits and metaphysical forces. The earth is animated by ancestral creator-beings who engaged in primal rituals at the dawn of time and whose spirits fused with the earth to shape, form and sacralize it. Landscape is a mythopoetic field which acts on human beings from without, causing them to conform to ancient patterns and re-enact the lives and movements of ancestral animals and other beings. Landscape is at the center of everything: at once the source of life, the origin of the tribe, the metamorphosed body of blood-line ancestors and the intelligent force which drives the individual and creates society

(King-Boyes 1977). As Judith Wright has pointed out (1985: 32), our word 'landscape' is completely inadequate to describe the 'earth-sky-water-tree-spirit-human continuum' which is the cosmological and existential ground of the Aboriginal Dreaming.

For Western consciousness landscape is barren, empty, unalive. Far from being animated by ancient spirits of place, landscape is seen as a dead background to our busy, ego-centered and self-propelling lives. For us, human beings are moved not by primordial earth-spirits, but by society, conditioning and subjective impulses. In the Western frame, subjectivity is privileged and regarded as the ruling element. If landscape is felt to possess a certain character or mood, this is said to be created by the perceiving subject and projected upon the land. Freud said that the primal view of an animated natural world 'is nothing but psychology projected into the external world' (1901: 258-9).

Western intellectual tradition has a host of terms and concepts which explain away any attempt to animate the land. We use the term *projection* in psychology, *personification* in literary and cultural studies, *anthropomorphism* in anthropology, and *pathetic fallacy* in the history of art. Each of these terms assumes there is no objective psychic life in nature, and any attempt to attribute life 'out there' is the result of our overactive and fanciful minds. Indeed, the contemporary postmodern view is not even sure if there is a real landscape 'out there' at all, or whether our experience of land is created by our subjectivity (White 1981). All we can know, according to this bleak intellectualist position, are our internal images which we project upon the world.

We are faced with completely different and competing stories about the earth. In the one, objectivity reigns supreme, in the other, subjectivity is all. In the old story, individuals are relatively powerless in the face of archaic spiritual energies which co-ordinate and control reality. In the new story, the individual is invested with god-like powers in the sense that the subject creates the world in the act of apprehending it. As Judith Wright makes clear, the imported Western story has subsumed, engulfed and discredited the indigenous one:

The song is gone ...  
... and the tribal story  
lost in an alien tale. (1946a: 2)

In the past, Australians have viewed the Aboriginal world-picture as weird, bizarre and unrealistic. They can barely suppress a smile as indigenous people tell them of their views of the land. Today, political correctness forces some to act politely toward other cultures, but below the politeness there is often contempt for an utterly alien point of view.

If we look upon both world views from a distance, the animistic Aboriginal view, which focuses on an objective unseen reality, is not a bit more bizarre than the Western subjectivist view, with its grotesque inflation of the perceiving subject and its refusal to grant psychic reality to the universe. Judith Wright is accurate in describing ours as the 'alien' tale. Although our story grants god-like powers to the individual, the individual feels not super-human but sub-human in the postmodern world. A sense of complete unreality and alienation plagues contemporary life. We feel isolated, lonely, rootless, disconnected. Nature is at best a dead background to our human endeavors, at worst a surreal or nightmare projection from our heads. This alienation is hardly a recent phenomenon, but is a culmination of a long historical process in Western cultures.

## 2. The Necessity of Re-Enchantment

Since the beginning of the patriarchal era, humanity has sought to differentiate itself from nature and know itself as distinct from nature. The human spirit has soared above the natural world and at the core of the Judeo-Christian religion is a celebration of the triumph of spirit over nature. This is why, as Christianity attempts to present itself as green in an ecological time, it has to be honest about its past and not pretend that it has been a 'creation' spirituality (Tacey 1992). Christianity has very much emphasized spirit at the expense of matter, and it condemned those rival religions that

were based on the worship of nature. It has been central to the West's attempt to extricate the divine from nature and to idealize a transcendental realm. The cost of our excessive differentiation from the natural world is apparent to everyone and threatens the existence of the human and biological sphere. Our heroic exploits and patriarchal abuses of the maternal earth must be stopped, and humanity must find a new pact or bond with nature.

How can the new bond be forged? I have doubts about the effectiveness of progressive governments and ecology groups telling people to care more about the environment. In the ecological crisis, moral demands and appeals to collective guilt about what we have done to the land may serve short-term goals. We may have to be frightened into some kind of new bond with nature. But for the long-term we will not only have to stir our conscience, but transform our consciousness. The ecological crisis is at bottom a psychological and spiritual crisis. These deeper roots to the problem will have to be explored if there is to be any lasting change (Bishop 1990).

Oodgeroo Noonuccal wrote: 'White fellow, you are the unhappy race. / You alone have left nature and made civilized laws' (1988: 98). We can no longer afford to be so divorced from nature, but nature will have to be experienced in a new way, as part of our larger spiritual being. Aboriginal people have long been an ecologically committed people, not because they labored, like us today, under moral constraints about what they must do or feel about the environment, but because they spontaneously felt the environment to be part of themselves and intrinsically related to their reality. This is the missing dimension in today's discourse about the necessity to be green. The secular and moral approach to the problem will not work, because the issues are deeper than activist programs will allow. The rationalist mindset is part of the problem and cannot be expected to come up with the cure.

Our love moves toward that with which it can identify, that which it sees as part of itself. Affective bonds unite us with family, home and personal connections. There needs to be a fundamental shift in the *locus* of identity, so that what we care about, and what we regard as belonging to ourselves, is broadened to accommodate a greater

span of reality. Put cynically, if humans care only about themselves, then the notion of what constitutes 'ourselves' has to be broadened in the direction of the world. The ecological task is not only to repair our damage in the outer world, but to repair the splits on the inside, to work toward inclusive rather than exclusive concepts of selfhood and identity.

The desired change can come about by way of a re-enchantment of the world. As I have indicated, early man's experience of nature as a field of enchantment and animation was spontaneous and automatic. Anthropologist Levy-Bruhl argued that tribal man is involved in a state of mystical participation (French: *participation mystique*) with the environment (1922). This is the natural state of affairs for early man, and the condition of 'participation mystique' is not unique to Aborigines, but was found throughout the world in pre-modern times, as well as in contemporary tribal societies. We will have to attempt to recover something similar to the early primal vision. We will have to make some kind of return to the past to reanimate the world and ourselves. But we will need to recover the old primal vision in an entirely new way.

D. H. Lawrence put it best when he said that we need to make a 'detour' back to the primal state to revitalize and invigorate civilization:

We must make a great swerve in our onward-going life-course now, to gather up again the savage mysteries. (1923b: 144)

Lawrence insisted that this is not tantamount to a regression but is a return to the primordial in the service of ongoing civilization: 'But this does not mean going back on ourselves. We can't go back' (1923b: 146).

The idea that we need to make a 'great swerve' toward the primal condition makes sense to me. This may look like regression from a rationalistic perspective, but the idea of a swerve suggests a spiralic course rather than a straight regression. At the turn of the cultural spiral we will seem to be throwing away the hard-won benefits of consciousness and civilization, but it will be apparent that this return is for the sake of a more integrated consciousness. We will

not have to renounce intellect and stifle development, but place less emphasis on these elements as we revisit and embrace the primal side of human nature. Not for ordinary ego development do we make this journey, but for spiritual development. For soul resides in the deeper levels of psyche, those same levels that we believe we have left behind.

There are numerous ways in which to construct a theoretical frame for where we are now, how we got here and what we have to do in order to reanimate the world. Lawrence's work provides a theory of culture and a philosophy of life integration. Theology (Griffin and Smith 1989; Fox 1991), new science (Sheldrake 1991), sociology (Thompson 1990), gnosticism (Bamford 1982), cosmology (Thompson and Spangler 1991), Jungian psychology (Roszak et al 1995) – all have begun to develop possibilities for a cultural and spiritual revival, for a process of re-enchantment.

### 3. James Hillman: *The Return of Animation to The World*

Chapter 1 presented Jung's tentative and inconclusive insights into the reanimation of the world. Most of Jung's followers have avoided the topic of the psychic 'interior' of the world presumably because it is not a clinical topic. The study of soul in the world requires imaginative thinking, intellectual risk and knowledge of philosophy. We are fortunate that Jungian scholar James Hillman has dared to enter this field. According to Hillman, the Enlightenment which drained the world of its spiritual content and located psyche within the human was an important step in the history of consciousness. It was the stage in which religion was replaced by humanism, and myth and magic were dislodged by science. But Hillman argues that this process has gone too far. It is a tragedy that the 'outside' world has been reduced to matter, and we now live as alienated subjects in a coldly objective universe.

Hillman claims that we were so attached to the world that we had to kill it off before we could come to ourselves and experience psyche within the human subject. But in killing off the world, we

have killed off a part of ourselves, and we are suffering from this loss of connection. Not only has the natural world been deprived of its sacred heart, but we too have been deprived of the worldly dimension of our souls. As a consequence, we inhabit a prison of our making, and 'the psyche is too narrowly identified with the ego personality'. We live, Hillman says,

In the psychology of Descartes, in which the universe is divided into living subjects and dead objects. There is no space for anything intermediate, ambiguous, and metaphorical.

This is a restrictive perspective and it has led us to believe that entities, other than human beings, taking on interior subjective qualities are merely 'anthropomorphized' or 'personified' objects, not really persons in the accepted meaning of that word. If we find persons elsewhere than in living human bodies, we conclude that these persons have been transferred from 'in here' to 'out there'. We believe we have unconsciously put our experiences into them; they are merely fictional or imaginary. We have made them up. (1975: 1-2)

Here Hillman is critiquing the rational assumption that any psychic life discovered in the world has been put there by us. This is also the standpoint of Jung, but Hillman is a more contemporary voice, and he is clear and fluid in his expression. However, the ideas are not new to Hillman, and sometimes it seems he 'forgets' Jung's contribution to the *unus mundus* and soul in the world to highlight his own originality (1983). To cite one example: in his late essay 'On the Nature of the Psyche', Jung wrote:

Since psyche and matter ... are in continuous contact with one another, it is not only possible but fairly probable that psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing. (1947/54: 215)

In any historical account of the recovery of soul in the world, Jung has to be given his place as the first psychologist to set foot in this territory. Jung's late thought was not stuck in Cartesian dualism, even though it has to be admitted that his early career was enmeshed in Cartesian logic, due to the influence of Freud.

Writing in an ecological era which post-dated Jung's time, Hillman was quick to seize on the connections between Jung's theorizing and the ecological crisis. In 'Anima Mundi: The Return of the Soul to the World' (1982), Hillman puts forward a challenge to all schools of psychoanalysis, arguing that if therapy neglects the soul of the world and concentrates only on soul in the individual, it is contributing to the sum total of neurosis. Hillman's attack on his own therapeutic tradition is put even more dramatically in his book *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and the World's Getting Worse* (1992). Hillman writes as a 'convert' to the world, and like any convert he tends to overstate his case (Tacey 1998). But Hillman writes with an ecological urgency that is befitting of our time, and perhaps no other therapist before him has put the situation in such stark and passionate terms.

Borrowing from the Platonic tradition, Hillman refers to the soul of the world as the *anima mundi*, and in so doing he places his own research, and the Jungian tradition, in league with Neo-Platonic philosophy and the Florentine Renaissance (1983). Hillman argues that 'Man exists in the midst of psyche; it is not the other way around. Therefore, soul is not confined by man, and there is much of psyche that extends beyond the nature of man' (1975: 173). He claims that all things in the world have a mythopoetic dimension. Although soul is associated with innerness, it is wrong to focus this innerness in human persons: 'interiority is a metaphor for the soul's nonvisible and nonliteral inherence' (1975: 173). This interiority is found everywhere, in animate and inanimate things. Hillman extraverts our sense of interiority, so that it becomes a property of the world, just as he extraverts the notion of anima (in Jungian terms, the soul in man), so that it becomes *anima mundi*. Hillman's work has been influential, and has given rise to a school of discourse on the *anima mundi*, a discourse based in philosophy, phenomenology and philosophical psychology (Adams 1997).

#### 4. Soul as the Third Term Between Spirit and Matter

Hillman argues that because our human souls are linked to the world-soul or *anima mundi*, it is hardly surprising that we should feel ourselves to be influenced by the soul's presence or inherence in nature. This school of thought insists that we do not need an animistic theory about spirits of the land to account for our being influenced by landscapes or scenes. In this way, Hillman quite explicitly rejects the model of reality supplied by, for instance, Aboriginal people or any indigenous cosmology. But by the same token, he rejects the Western Cartesian model of reality, in which anything 'outside' was put there by a projecting human mind. What Hillman does is to make it clear that soul represents a third or 'middle' way, which is not dependent on spiritistic nor on subjectivist models of reality (Avens 1984).

If we arrive at the view that we and the universe are enwrapped in a world-soul, a view which approximates to that of theoretical physics (Bohm 1980), the flow and movement of emotional content between ourselves and the world is a consequence of being alive and in the world. Only a spiritually barren society would need to invent intellectual theories about the secret transmission of psychical life from subject to object. An advantage of the *anima mundi* concept over the spiritistic model is that it is open-ended, processual and non-literal. Landscapes, countries, places do not 'have' or 'possess' spirits, but are phenomenological expressions of the world-soul. Different places express different states of soul. And the psychic dimension of nature would not impact on all people in the same way.

The influence of a place – or the *anima loci* – would differ according to the state of the human psyche that is turned toward it. There would be a confluence of person and land in the depths, and this could be envisaged as an alchemical interconnection, leading to any number of permutations and changes. The spirit-based model of land and earth would be far more constricting and mechanical. One or more fixed spirits of a place, or *genius loci*, would rise up from the land like ghosts or banshee, taking hold of human subjects in predetermined ways. There would be hardly any room in this model



for variation and difference, and no accounting for why different people experience landscapes and countries in contradictory ways. *Anima mundi* breaks the literalism and the monocentrism of the spiritistic model, and leads us toward postmodern complexity and diversity, rather than back to premodern determinism.

What this imaginal vision means for the Australian psyche is far reaching. It points to the possibility of finding a middle or *third* way between Western perception and Aboriginal metaphysical perception. That it should be the *soul* that offers this middle position is appropriate, and a time-honored solution to an archetypal dilemma. In Renaissance cosmology, the soul or psyche was the middle or third term between spirit and matter. Psyche is not heavy and inert like the concept of matter, nor transcendental and remote like spirit. Rather, psyche inhabits a middle area known as the *metaxy*, and is represented as subtle, elusive and metaphorical. The soul and its imaginal world may be our way out of the crippling national dilemma between a Western materialism we are tired of and an Aboriginal metaphysics we cannot readily embrace. The Australian temperament would not permit a shift toward a full-blown metaphysical order, regardless of the political obstacles that bar the way. An imaginal consciousness would give Australian society the numinous dimension that it obviously lacks and needs. We can at least aspire to an imagination of place, allowing our psyche and the world-psyche space to move and freedom to imagine.

Australia becomes an ideal place for the birth of a new dreaming, a dreaming which could be an important cultural experiment for the world. The thesis of white rationality is being eroded by the antithesis of Aboriginal Dreaming, but the *synthesis* will combine and transcend both terms in this encounter. My own experience in central Australia bore witness to the erosion and deconstructing of white rationality, but I did not feel that this would be replaced by the indigenous antithesis (see Chapter 4). I always had a distant fascination for the bush hippies or so-called white Aborigines who would take on the indigenous dreaming as their own. As a young adult I enjoyed some of their *ad hoc* rituals, even if at times they looked like parodies of corroborees. But for me there was something else to

do, a different way to discover. The synthesis of white rationality and black animism becomes, I believe, a post-rational vision, very close to the theory that Hillman is articulating. If we take the mystical element from animism and the intellectual element from rationality, we end with a discerning or watchful mysticism, a mysticism on the alert for implausible claims and a capacity to detect nonsense, yet always open to wonder and revelation.

### 5. Art Before Psychology: Expressions of The New Imagining

After studying with Hillman in the United States in the early 1980s, I returned to Australia with a desire to find expressions of this 'third way' in my national culture. I began searching our literature for examples of imaginal vision, for expressions of a dynamic relatedness to land that could provide a new basis for creative and transformative living. I was heartened to discover that there was a great deal of literary evidence to suggest that a new spiritual bond with landscape was developing here. Both Freud and Jung noted that every new idea in psychoanalysis had been anticipated in advance by creative writers and artists. Nothing that Jung or Hillman might come up with about the reanimation of nature would necessarily appear novel or new to Australian writers.

In fiction, Grant Watson stands out as an exponent of the kind of new spirituality that I have in mind. If it were not for Dorothy Green's scholarship and persistence, Watson may have disappeared from our cultural awareness. Obviously, there is a great deal of spiritual experience of the land in Patrick White, especially in *The Tree of Man* and *Voss*, where White makes deliberate connections between Australian 'mystical' experience of nature and the mythopoetic mode of the Aboriginal Dreaming. I have already written a book on White and I will resist the temptation to discuss him further (Tacey 1988). There are significant examples of a new mythopoetic response to landscape in the works of Martin Boyd, Katherine Prichard, Randolph Stow and David Malouf. In recent fiction, Gerald

Murnane comes closest to positing imagination as a way, or imaginal vision as a mode of being in the world.

In popular culture, Michael Leunig's contribution to *anima mundi* or soul in the world has been outstanding (1990, 1991, 1992). For countless Australians, Leunig has disrupted the conventional envelope of the self, and allowed us to wander in a 'third dimension' of the soul – a world that is neither merely material nor elevatedly spiritual. In a secular society which has reduced the popular artist-cartoonist to a satirical commentator on the political events of the day, Leunig has single-handedly won back for popular culture the different and subtler reality of the soul. Leunig is the classic discoverer of the 'inner' side of the outer world. For him, as for Hillman, soul is not a private inwardness, but a public reality. Leunig has helped us to the realization that psyche is not an entity which is confined to the church or clinic, but a dimension of experience in which we all share.

Imaginal vision is the stuff of poetry. It is the act by which things take on meaning and become symbols and metaphors. Poetry is the major cultural carrier of the mythopoetic mode of perception in secular times. It is not surprising to find that the best Australian poetry aspires toward the condition of mythopoesis, and in this poetry an imaginal integration of the perceiving subject (the poet) and perceived object (the landscape) takes place. This kind of integration can be found in the most successful poems of Christopher Brennan, David Campbell, Francis Webb, John Shaw Neilson, Judith Wright and Les Murray. But our 'landscape poets' do not merely describe the land, they *participate* in it. In our greatest poems, the habitual dualism between self and other is undermined and the condition of alienation is subverted. When dualism has been fully subverted, the condition of poetry has been achieved. Great poetry is the achievement of mythopoesis.

The subversive power of our nature poets is often denied in the teaching of this literature in schools and universities. Students of Australian poetry are told that the poets are representing the land, not that they are reaching for a spiritual fusion with the landscape. It is little wonder that some poets have become increasingly cynical toward academics and teachers, and in the case of Les Murray

and Judith Wright actual complaints have been made about the educational use of their creative work. When these arguments flare up, I tend to take the side of the poets, because the literary critical culture is far behind what our poets and prophets are doing. An education system which is based on secular values can never understand poetry or the spiritual mission of the poet. The radical, threatening, challenging dimension in poetry is lost when poetry is taught without reference to its mythopoetic power.

We do not hear mention of Wright's or Murray's encounter with soul in the world, nor do we hear of Neilson's experience of the interiority of nature. There are important exceptions to this rational approach to poetry (Hanna 1990; Walker 1991), but teachers and academics talk about Neilson's 'personification' of nature, or describe how Wright and Murray employ 'pathetic fallacy' or 'anthropomorphism' to poetic effect. Until we learn to respect the reality of soul, and until we can grasp that the world itself has soulful interiority, our poets will be misrepresented as eccentrics supplying adornment or fancy dress to nature. The unexamined assumption is that nature itself is neutral, blank, empty, a premise that poets do not share.

#### 6. Neilson: Listening Like The Orange Tree

Neilson's poem 'The Orange Tree' (1919) is virtually a parable about the crazy dialogue or mis-conversation that takes place between the conscious 'knowing' intellect and the spontaneous 'experiencing' imagination. Neilson personifies this dialogue within himself and within us all as a dialogue between a rational adult male and an intuitive young girl. The poem is narrated from the perspective of the male rational consciousness, which is unable to understand what the young child actually experiences when she says she is able to 'see' the mystical interiority and hidden light of the natural world. The poem begins:

The young girl stood beside me. I

Saw not what her young eyes could see:  
– A light, she said, not of the sky  
Lives somewhere in the Orange Tree. (1919: 82: lines 1-4)

As the poem develops the adult enquirer puts one rational explanation after another to account for or explain away the intuitive experience of the child. He thinks that she may have fallen in love with a young boy, and that she is projecting this new excitement or animation on the natural world.

– Is it, I said, of east or west?  
The heartbeat of a luminous boy  
Who with his faltering flute confessed  
Only the edges of his joy? (ll. 5-8)

This line of enquiry fails to work, and so he attempts other, more maudlin, leads related to the possibility of unrequited love, or to a possible recent bereavement, which may have unsettled or activated the girl. The wonderfully accurate element on Neilson's part is that all probings and postulations from the adult male relate to the feeling-life of the human sphere. The narrator cannot understand how anyone could get worked up about a mere orange tree, or, in Hillman's language, he cannot imagine how nature could be so spiritually animated as to have any passionate or emotive impact upon human apprehension. He is caught in the bubble of rationality and intellectualism, which denies imaginal depth and resonance to the world, and which sees soul as residing only in human subjectivity.

In this poem the girl struggles to describe what she is seeing, or hearing, or feeling. The difficulty about intuitive experience of soul in the world is that it cannot be collapsed into any one category of the five senses. It is not a sensate experience in the normal sense, and hence the girl frequently changes the sense-category of her own descriptions. First her experience is described as a 'light', then as a 'call', then a 'step'. But, in strategies reminiscent of mystical traditions such as Zen, Sufism, and Gnosticism, as she offers a sense-category for her experience she immediately qualifies and even nullifies the category that she offers:

– Listen! the young girl said. There calls  
No voice, no music beats on me;  
But it is almost sound: it falls  
This evening on the Orange Tree. (ll. 13-16)

She hears a call which is not a call, a voice which is not a voice, a sound which is 'almost sound'. She attempts to reveal the truth of her experience by proceeding by negation. Every category offered must be negated, because otherwise the 'otherness' of her experience will be collapsed, and the rational man will be able to nod his head in recognition, and his world will not be challenged. Here we think of the sense of the Chinese saying that the Tao that can be told is not the true Tao. Finally, as the man's relentless and convoluted enquiries become exhausting, the girl puts an end to the charade by telling him to be quiet:

– Silence! the young girl said. Oh, why,  
Why will you talk to weary me?  
Plague me no longer now, for I  
Am listening like the Orange Tree. (ll. 37-40)

There is, in the end, no rational explanation for the soul's powerful inherence in the natural world. There can be no simple description of imaginal vision which will meet the intellect's or the sensing mind's requirements. The girl is right to silence the man's babble, and to reaffirm, in the last line, the *act* of imaginal participation in the life of nature. Imaginal vision can only be achieved when the human barriers that separate us from nature are overcome. It is not that we must listen to the orange tree, but *like* the orange tree. Hillman has argued that it is only when something divine awakens in us that we can respond to the divinity of the world. The mythical interiority of the world will not present itself to our senses until we have awakened our own interiority and attuned our imaginal depths to the those of nature. This will involve not more adult learning but unlearning the ways of rational perception and becoming again like a child, in the sense of being capable of immediate apprehension of the cosmos.

## 7. Les Murray: Dreaming Silence

A tradition of imaginal receptivity to Australia begins fully with John Shaw Neilson, whose reputation has been rising over recent decades. Neilson is, arguably, our most intuitive listener to the voice of things, or in other words, our best poet. However, he is not the last word in Australian mythopoesis. Imaginal vision gains momentum and sophistication in the hands of Judith Wright, and it achieves a certain muscular intensity and mystical power in the writings of Les Murray. I have written elsewhere on Murray, and here I want to concentrate on one of his poems.

Murray's 'Noonday Axeman' is widely anthologized and has earned a place in the *Norton Anthology of Poetry*. It is a Euro-Australian creation myth, a poem that traces with insight the history of white Australian responses to the land. In the early days of white settlement, Murray argues, it was necessary to erect barriers and defenses against the land, to take away its primordial enchantment and bolster our resolve in the face of the potentially disintegrative silences. His own forbears, the early axemen who still spoke in a Scots accent (l. 14), spent a hundred years 'clearing, splitting, sawing' for the sake of creating 'a human breach in the silence' (l. 75).

A hundred years of timbermen, ringbarkers, fencers  
and women in kitchens, stoking loud iron stoves  
year in, year out, and singing old songs to their children  
have made this silence human and familiar.

(1965: 1885: lines 18-21)

Murray sees that it is necessary for an immigrant culture to impose its old songs and stories on the new land: 'men must have legends, else they will die of strangeness' (l. 77). Murray indicates that those who failed to build a cultural defense or personal barricade against the unknown were in danger of insanity and mental disintegration. This is a theme that he might have borrowed from the troubled bush realist, Henry Lawson, who was only too aware of the disintegrative aspects of the spirit of place. There were some, writes Murray, who 'fled to the cities, maddened by this stillness'

(l. 24). This primordial stillness, however, is still present in the land today. Upon experiencing this stillness in what is only apparently 'the twentieth century' (l. 2), Murray is able to write:

And then, I know, of the knowledge that led my forebears  
to drink and black rage and wordlessness, there will be silence.

(l. 31-2)

While sympathetic to the problems of early colonial experience, Murray's disclosure is that we no longer have to protect ourselves in the old manner. Murray believes that we must now embrace the land in a new way. We must learn to 'live in the presence of silence' (l. 55). The old heroic manner of pitting oneself against the natural world will have to give way to a new receptivity and openness to the mystery of place. This will involve a certain negative capability or humility on the part of the personality, as well as a readiness to accept mystery and revelation from the land:

After the tree falls, there will reign the same silence  
as stuns and spurs us, enraptures and defeats us,  
as seems to some a challenge, and seems to others  
to be waiting here for something beyond imagining. (l. 33-6)

Murray has grasped one of the central paradoxes of Australian experience: that what seems a defeat for the ego can be a liberation and release for the soul. The otherness of the land both 'enraptures and defeats us', 'stuns and spurs us'. Our rationality is stunned, but our yearning for contact with soul in the world is spurred onward. Suddenly, after two centuries of huddling and defensiveness, we stand in the presence of mystery, and witness the enigma of a land that seems to be 'waiting here for something beyond imagining'.

The Australian landscape inspires millennial or even apocalyptic fantasies. The vastness of the place and the hopelessness of the ego's desire to humanize, subdue or tame the land, forces us to be mindful of the reality, power and intentions of the nonhuman. No wonder the indigenous inhabitants lived in a state of perpetual mysticism, and by such poetic lines as: 'Axe-fall, echo and silence. Dreaming silence' (l. 69), Murray subtly indicates that we too will

become ensconced in a similar 'dreaming' based on our experience of the land. That this dreaming will always involve robust commitment, physical discomfort and sacrifice is indicated in this poem. An Australian spirituality can never become a sentimental or pallid thing, but will always remain existential, experiential, testing:

Axe-fall, echo and silence. Unhuman silence.

A stone cracks in the heat. Through the still twigs, radiance stings at my eyes. (l. 37-9)

#### 8. Rodney Hall: *Old, New, Black and White Dreamings*

I hope to show you something less simple about the country we are in, something outside the categories you know.... I plan to stand by and wait until this land, which is so near you and so unseen, enters your heart too. – Rodney Hall 1991: 193-4

To close this brief survey of Australian re-enchantment I want to look at a contemporary novel. Rodney Hall has long been concerned, in his poetry and fiction, with the mythopoetic reawakening of consciousness. Hall wants us to discover a new dreaming, to re-enter the dream of nature, not by stealing the Dreaming from the Aboriginal people, but by drawing on the sources of creativity within the psyche itself. Hall has an abiding interest in what has become a taboo topic in Australia: the transformative impact of Aboriginal Dreaming on the white psyche. He has nothing occult or metaphysical in mind, but he seems to feel (as I do) that Aboriginal animism has a psychological impact on Euro-Australians, serving to erode the hardened layers of rationality, which may give rise to a spontaneous spiritual transformation from within. The presence of mythopoetic dynamics in Aboriginals can stir to activity the latent and repressed archetypal layers of the Euro-Australian psyche.

The main character of Hall's *The Second Bridegroom* is an escaped convict, a forger from the Isle of Man, who jumps ship off the coast of New South Wales in 1838 and flees inland to escape the

authorities. After many months in the forests, the convict finds himself momentarily trapped in a storehouse which contains grog and stationery. He resists the alcohol, picks up the stationery, and writes. The story has the benefit of hindsight, and the whole text, we discover, is a long love-letter written to the wife of the 'Master' to whom he is officially assigned as a laborer.

It is significant that the spontaneous mythologizing which is the subject of the book occurs after the loss or sacrifice of the convict's rationality. Culture shock would understate what he experiences as he plunges into the wild and unfamiliar landscape. Reality falls apart as all the conventional signs which constitute the social fabric are left behind. 'I had arrived at a place where all my knowledge was useless' (37). He enters a world of terrifying strangeness, where he has no names to fit what he sees and touches, and where some things are so unfamiliar that he fails to notice them at all. At first, his mind automatically struggles to impose a familiar order: 'My brain ... began to tackle the task of carving the chaos into bite sized meanings' (13). However he soon realizes how futile this undertaking is, and gradually attempts to allow the new-old land to speak for itself. 'When I could, I made a beginning: I promised not to try reading the messages I heard and smelled and touched, tasted and saw. I would respect them as having no use' (21).

As he struggles to place himself in a new reality we see that, ironically, he has already been absorbed into the story of another culture. He finds himself to be the central object of attention in an Aboriginal ceremonial journey. At first he does not even notice the silent, still, painted and feathered men who have surrounded him. It becomes apparent to the reader, but evidently not to the protagonist, that these men are engaged in a ritual Dreaming walkabout, that they are moving from site to site in a bid to follow the songlines and renew the spirit of an ancestor-being. An unbroken human circle is maintained throughout this ritual, and as the white man is discovered he is placed at the center of the circle and becomes for the tribesmen a living incarnation of the spirit-being whom they have called up by their dancing and singing. Handled by a less skilled writer, this sequence could become problematical, perhaps even farcical. Hall

allows a certain wry humor to emerge, but the humor is always contained and never allowed to cut across either the sacredness of the Aboriginal performance nor the bewildered disorientation of the escaped convict.

The astonishing point about this sequence is that the convict's unaware participation in the ceremonial journey works to positive ends. From the Aboriginal point of view, the presence of this being from another world intensifies the Dreaming rituals, and provides a pivot at the center of the magic circle. The convict himself is not only kept physically alive and nurtured by this activity, but he also undergoes a profound spiritual transformation as a direct result of it. For his 'participation' in the Dreaming cycle results in an unexpected activation of his own mythic world. The intense exposure to Aboriginal sacred space has led to the awakening of sacred space within his own psyche. Yeats might say that his *spiritus mundi*, or world memory has been activated. Jung would argue that the collective unconscious has been awakened. Hillman and Corbin would refer to the awakening of the *mundus imaginalis*, which in this case is shaped by the myths of his cultural origin.

Although this man is not consciously religious, we find that he becomes enmeshed in the Celtic mythology and folklore of his Isle of Man ancestry. He 'remembers' Celtic folksongs, myths, stories and fairytales. He is made to recall powerful childhood dreams in which pronounced mythic or archetypal motifs appeared. The Aboriginal emphasis on the bird-totem awakens in him imagery associated with Ylleron, the Celtic bird of fire. 'Here in New South Wales ... the real and the fabulous have not gone their separate ways. There is nothing to prevent our fables taking root here' (17).

The convict from the Isle of Man had a Christian upbringing, but this proves to be a fairly superficial layer of his mind which is overturned by the activation of a deeper, Celtic, pre-Christian layer. One myth in particular takes possession of him. It is the myth of the Celtic Goddess of Kirk Braddon and her doomed husband-lovers. Each year the Goddess took two bridegrooms, one for the winter, one for summer. 'Each had the task of killing the husband who had lain with her for the six months before him' (65). The young man,

dazed and overwhelmed by his encounter with mythic reality, is coordinated by this myth, and increasingly comes to imagine himself the 'second bridegroom' of his Master's wife. He engages in mental and physical battles with the Master, who is subsequently slaughtered during an Aboriginal raid on the white settlement.

This is apparently an ancient myth which was destroyed when a summer-bridegroom refused to allow himself to be subjugated by the new winter king. By refusing to submit to the matriarchal cycle, the doomed lover became a patriarchal king and so the old order was ruined: this prepared the way for patriarchal Christianity. But when this old order went down, there was a rumor that the myth could be revived if a second bridegroom appeared to renew the cycle. So, in a deranged and hallucinated state, in the pristine forests of the 'last foreign shore' and 'newest British colony', a runaway felon is engaged in the revival of an ancient Celtic mythologem. Where else to revive the primordial mythic psyche than in the most ancient and sacred continent on earth?

Rodney Hall has been seen by some commentators as foolhardy for taking up the sensitive topic of Aboriginal spirituality, but he shows a way which is clearly beyond white consumerist appropriations of Aboriginality. His theme is that living side-by-side with Aboriginality can set our own Dreamings going. Hall indicates that the politically responsible way for psychic renewal is the remythologizing of one's own spiritual heritage. In the case of European-descended Australians, this means digging deep, deeper even than our Judeo-Christian tradition, which may be too dried out, too conscious or institutionalized, to foster spiritual renewal. Activating the interior indigenous element may mean activating the lost or repressed Celtic elements within the European traditions. But the challenge is to stimulate the mythic possibilities in one's own psyche, rather than to parasitically draw on others.

## Chapter 10

### *Holy Ground and Creation Spirituality*

'Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground.' Exodus 3: 5

We move from an exploration of the 'dreaming' awareness emerging in the arts, to a consideration of a more public form of spirituality that can be discerned in Australian society. In this chapter, I am interested in the religious possibilities of a secular culture. What happens to the Judeo-Christian tradition at the underside of the globe? Is it eclipsed and forgotten, or is it, as I suspect, transformed and infused with a more worldly spirit?

#### *1. The Puzzling Nature of Australian Spirituality*

'Australian spirituality' is a puzzling creature, perhaps a bit like the mythical Bunyip at the swamp. Sometimes we catch glimpses of this creature, and at other times, in a more sober and rational mood, we think that it never did exist. We were only inventing things or making it up. But there have been several reported sightings of Australian spirituality, and so we had better take these sightings seriously.

I sometimes think 'Australian spirituality' might be the wrong term. It suggests something already formed and fully grown. Perhaps 'spirituality in Australia' would be a more humble term, truer to our

experience. For ours is a work in progress and as a nation we do not yet have an identifiable or self-conscious *spirituality* as such, although it may be present at a less conscious level. In *Across the Great Divide*, David Ranson argues that the main activity of spirituality in Australia is implicit, it is enshrouded in silence and a reverential quietness, and we should not expect it to be too articulate when it leads this sort of underground life (Ranson 2002: 69). He says that to make the implicit spirituality of Australia *explicit* runs the risk of falsifying or distorting our experience. But, in defense of my analysis, I would take a different tack. Although the implicit nature of this spirituality is appropriate some of the time, in a period of crisis such as ours, where we are plagued by a sense of meaninglessness, the need to 'make explicit' a core of meaning is justified. There is no need to keep our guiding lights hidden under a bushel, even though these lights are muted and hard to discern.

In coming to terms with the idea of 'spirituality' in Australia, we have to deal with the problem of cultural identity and account for competing views of our experience. A colleague of mine once said that 'Australian spirituality' is a contradiction in terms, an 'oxymoron', since 'Australia stands for what is rational, practical and commonsensical'. 'And', he added, 'that does not include God'. It is true that numerous accounts of the Australian national character refer to the so-called 'typical Australian' as pragmatic, resourceful, non-intellectual, rational and atheistic (Ward 1958). Studies of our art and literature abound with definitions such as this, including the suggestion that religion finds its nemesis in Australia, because here we only believe in what we can see and touch (Phillips 1966).

If 'God' is constructed as something external to our lives, as distant and remote, most Australians slink away from religion. But if God is imagined as a core dimension in the heart of the person and in our experience of land, we have to think again about our assumptions, even in a secular nation. In *Spirituality and the Secular Quest*, Peter Van Ness defines spirituality as 'the desire to relate oneself as a personal whole to reality as a cosmic whole' (Van Ness 1996: 5). This means that spirituality is making sense of the world we live in and finding our personal relation to the meaning we discover.

Arguably, this kind of spirituality is given with human nature, a part of our anthropology, and is present in our lives regardless of our beliefs. Some of us may even be spiritual by default.

It could be said that a religious belief gives form and direction to the innate desire to make sense of reality, but without religion the spiritual instinct does not shut down. It continues to function in the soul, drawing on other materials for its fulfillment, such as the arts, music, nature, relationships, intimacy, love. I don't think any people anywhere is ultimately bereft of a sense of spirit, no matter how defiantly anti-religious they pretend to be. As Jung wrote above the doorway to his house in Zurich: 'Called or not called, God is present'. In Australia, God is mostly not called, but that does not mean God is not present.

## 2. Spiritual and Practical

The idea that Australians are practical does not rule out a spiritual life, since there is nothing more practical than developing a relationship with the deeper foundations of life. In many ways it seems impractical *not* to attempt such a relationship, given the flow-on effects, the sense of wellbeing and security that can arise from a vibrant spirituality. Part of the problem stems from the word 'spirituality', which carries otherworldly and superstitious connotations, referring to abstractions that have no practical consequence. In the Australian *Macquarie Dictionary*, 'spirituality' is defined as: 'pertaining to the spirit or soul as distinguished from the physical nature; standing in a relationship of the spirit; non-material' (1983: 1231). If we take on board this definition, we would have to conclude that not much spiritual activity takes place in Australia.

But this is *not* how this word is being used in the wider community today. It has lost its former 'otherworldly' or 'disembodied' attributes, and the dictionaries are out of step with contemporary parlance. Defined broadly as a search for meaning in *this* world, as a quest for the integration of body, soul and spirit, spirituality can

co-exist with the practical attitudes that we find in Australia. As theologian Sandra Schneiders has said:

I define spirituality as the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives. It is an effort to bring all of life together in an integrated synthesis of ongoing growth and development. (Schneiders 2000: 4-5)

Schneiders observes that although this term has a background in religion, it has been extracted from that context to refer to a general search for meaning:

The term 'spirituality' no longer refers exclusively or even primarily to prayer and spiritual exercises, much less to an elite state or superior practice of Christianity. Rather, from its original reference to the 'interior life' of the person, usually a cleric or religious, who was 'striving for perfection', for a life of prayer and virtue that exceeded in scope and intensity that of the 'ordinary' believer, the term has broadened to connote the whole of the life of faith and even the life of the person as a whole, including its bodily, psychological, social, and political dimensions. (Schneiders 1989: 679)

The changes in this term took place during the 1960s and 70s, but some have been unaware of the altered meanings, a point argued in Heelas and Woodhead (2005). In advocating 'spirituality', contemporary people are not saying they want to become angelic, perfect, celibate or devout. If they have 'wholeness' on their minds, they realize this must include the instincts and drives, the baser elements of the human self. But in using the word 'spirituality', they are suggesting that some – not all – elements of human nature may have a transcendent dimension, and may be related to a mystery that we can only partially comprehend.



### 3. Personal and Public Domains

One could be excused for having double vision with regard to spirituality in Australia. Through one lens, it looks as if many Australians are interested in spiritual questions, from the way people talk about spirituality in conversations, and from the kinds of books that sell in our stores. But through another lens, the issue of spirituality is almost invisible and not on the public agenda. The journalists in this country seem almost oblivious to spiritual interest, as do public figures, politicians and university lecturers. Many students at high schools and universities profess an interest in spirituality, but educational institutions and policy-makers do not share this interest, and give students little room to express their spiritual desires (Tacey 2003: 58).

There seems to be a fault line in the national psyche, a division between public and private. I meet people who have private interests in spirituality, but never or rarely declare these in public, lest they be regarded as strange, weird or 'unAustralian'. It is as if a taboo operates in the public domain that does not operate in the private arena. When we walk across the line separating the personal from the public, we enter a different reality.

This is a legacy of our secular society, in which matters of spirit and meaning are removed from the public arena and confined to personal reflection. In Australia, we have no national church, faith is a matter of personal choice, and does not rank as a matter of 'national interest'. At the time of our federation, governments were meant to look after our economic and social interests, and churches were deemed to be responsible for our spiritual wellbeing. This handing over of the spiritual side of life to the churches seemed to work in the past, when society was stable and the 'spiritual' was contained within the framework of organized 'religion'.

But increasingly, the spiritual and the religious are separating categories of experience. This has left a gap in society, where 'spirituality' has no support or belonging. This has become a major problem in Australia, where formal religious affiliation and membership is decreasing, but spiritual interest is increasing. The new wine of the

spirit apparently cannot be poured into old wineskins. I believe the onus now falls on governments and educational institutions to take a new interest in spirituality and to recognize it as a vital element of society.

### 4. The Habit of Irony

It seems to be a typical Australian habit to denounce and refuse a religious identity, and yet to go on to demonstrate, in one's values, actions and behavior that one is broadly speaking 'spiritual' after all. This is the impression we receive, for instance, if we tune into the national broadcaster, the ABC.

I have in mind two prominent radio presenters, Phillip Adams and Helen Razer. In opening a meeting on religion in Australia, Adams, author of *Adams vs. God* (2007), announces that he has 'the spirituality of a house brick'. The audience chuckles and laughs, but as the discussion develops, it is clear that Adams has a strong spirituality, a fierce commitment to social justice, community, and a life-long preoccupation with the idea of eternity and the concept of God. The fact that these interests go on beneath his self-description as an 'atheist' should not fool us. He is the kind of atheist who quarrels with God every day. He represents a certain character 'type' in Australian society, and I think the term 'atheist' hides more than it reveals. Such types of people are on quarrelling terms with God, and are certainly not atheists.

On a Christmas Day broadcast, Helen Razer apologizes to the radio audience, saying she does not feel sufficiently 'religious' to be doing a talkback show on an important day in the Christian calendar. She describes herself as having 'all the religious faith and fervor of a clothes-line'. Again, this encourages laughter from the audience. But Razer, like Adams, goes on to reveal that she cares very much about the role of spirit, hope, faith, charity and community in everyday life. The typical Australian gesture is to wipe all 'talk', all 'pretence' of religion away, and then, in an ironic reversal, to demonstrate the same virtues and values that have been denounced. Many people

do indeed have spirit, but they do not want it in its traditional supernatural wrapper. They denounce supernaturalism, but affirm spirituality in its more ordinary aspect. The sacred in Australia is 'ordinarily sacred' (Sexson 1982) and this is a key to tracking our kind of sacredness.

It is difficult for some Australians, and even more for overseas visitors, to understand our national habits and to make sense of them. Americans, in particular, find us hard to read, because the spiritual and the religious do not seem to have become as divided in America as they are in Australia. In America, there is no need to denounce religion in order to prove one's intellectual or spiritual credentials. In Australia, we have an ongoing, mainly negative relationship with organized religion, but spirituality looms large here and yet is often hard to discern (Tacey 2000).

The habit of irony, a term borrowed from Wallace-Crabbe (1974), is central to the Australian style. When friends are greeted they are often subjected to scorn and abuse, sworn at and called names, and all in the spirit of friendship. If you like someone, you heap gentle abuse upon him or her, to show him or her that you care. If you don't like someone, you are polite and affable, because there is no basis on which to launch into friendly banter. In Australia, a lot of things are topsy-turvy: here, the seasons are reversed, and even the Southern Cross hangs upside down in the night sky. Our spiritual style, such as it is, has to be understood in this light.

### 5. Towards a Creation Spirituality

Non-indigenous Australians imported a spirituality into this country that was not earth-based. It was, in fact, primarily heaven-based, and Adelaide theologian Norman Habel has referred to certain excesses of our Judeo-Christian inheritance as *heavenism*. Our religious sights were firmly upward, toward heaven, the future, the afterlife and the company of angels. We did not look too much to the earth, at least, not for the presence of the divine or for spiritual inspiration. In response to the question, 'Where is God?',

Aboriginal people point to the earth, but we whitefellas point up to the sky. The task for Australians today is to ground our spirituality in place and earth. This is especially urgent, because the ecological crisis has forced us to see that we need to bring sacred awareness to the earth, which has been desacralized and profaned for too long.

We need to develop a spirituality of creation, to remind ourselves that creation is sacred, since the secular and humanist awareness has not managed to generate a reverential or loving relationship with the earth, but on the contrary has led to the exploitation and destruction of the environment. This patent failure of secular humanism must be compensated by a strong earth-based approach emerging from our increased sense of cosmic sacrality. Already we have witnessed several important books which have argued that a new spirituality in Australia will need to be earth-based and creational, including works by Catherine Hammond (1991), Eugene Stockton (1995), Denis Edwards (2004) and Aboriginal Rainbow Spirit elders (1997).

Apart from the ecological emergency, there is another reason why spirituality must become a creation spirituality, and that has to do with the crisis of the relevance in religion. In an increasingly secular and disbelieving culture, the majority of Australians are not convinced that heaven or an otherworldly God exists, and there is no point in devoting energy or interest to things that are seen as illusory. Any spiritual practice based on heaven is liable to come to grief in this land, and to be deemed irrelevant to human existence. People say, 'if religion and spirituality are only concerned with the afterlife or heaven, then we can safely ignore them and there is nothing lost'. In 1904, A. G. Stephens, a leading Sydney literary figure and authority on the 1901 federation of the Australian states, wrote:

Our fathers brought with them the religious habit as they brought other habits of elder nations in older lands. And upon religion, as upon everything else, the spirit of Australia has seized; modifying, altering, increasing, or altogether destroying. In the case of religious belief the tendency is clearly to destruction – partly, no doubt, because with the spread of mental enlightenment the tendency is everywhere to decay in faith in outworn creeds; but partly also,

it seems, because there is in the developing Australian character a sceptical and utilitarian spirit that values the present hour and refuses to sacrifice the present for any visionary future lacking a rational guarantee. (quoted in Turner 1968: x)

What Stephens says is true. The Australian outlook is skeptical and disbelieving, our spirit is closer to existentialism than theology. We hover at the edges of nihilism, refusing to take comfort from talk about other worlds, an after life, heaven or hell. To many Australians, these are myths of the past, myths that have been exposed as fraudulent by education and science. Needless to say, the religious traditions and institutions that speak of a God who is far away, interventionist and supernatural, are destined to fade into oblivion and social insignificance. All through the country we see church buildings up for sale, and every time I see this I think that this is a tragic sign in many ways, a symbol of a religion that was unable to ground itself in local experience.

Australians are not sentimental about the demise of religion, and many freely admit that we are better off without it. But what we can say is that Judeo-Christianity remains artificial, colonialist and external to the psyche of this country. It remains an imported religion, not 'indigenous', until such time as we try to ground our experience in earth and place. Theology has been aware of this problem in the past and it is called *enculturation*. A genuinely post-colonial spirituality in Australia would have to come to terms with place, and find its roots in our soil, in our experience of lived reality. But here is where the Judeo-Christian religions hit a real problem. We have been reluctant to focus too much on the earth, because it has not been emphasized by our traditions before now. There is little celebration of the earth in our churches or cathedrals, not many visible signs that religion in Australia is actually based in Australia and on this red desert soil. And if, as the poet Les Murray has written, 'God in Australia is a vast blue and pale-gold and red-brown landscape' (1982: 116), perhaps God is not altogether at home in our sacred dwellings or practices.

## 6. Earth Worship and Panentheism

There is also the historical problem that Judaism, Islam and Christianity are 'sky god' religions, and are deeply ambivalent toward what they decry as 'earth worship'. Earth worship is frowned upon as heathen and pagan, and not representative of a religion that seeks to emphasize the transcendental dimension of the divine. God is not confined to things, but is beyond all things, these religions remind us. But here theology can help us out, by its emphasis on the difference between pantheism and *panentheism*. In pantheism, God is found in all things, but in the panentheist vision, all things are found in God, and this means there is room left over for God to be greater than things. Some feel it might be a 'pagan' regression to focus on the earth, but I doubt this very much, and I believe this to be mere rumor and malicious prejudice. There are constant references to the earth, to its sanctity and goodness, in both the old and new testaments. We can feel God in the here and now, without having to deny the existence of the greatness of the God of the cosmos.

In Catholic tradition, there is a long line of mystics and saints who communed with nature, especially St Francis of Assisi, who found God in the world of animals and plants, in the simple things of the earth. We also have the Celtic background to draw on, which was intensely earth-focused and based on the sanctity of creation, and the spiritual significance of rocks, streams and forests. Moreover, churches are now aware of this moment as a great opportunity to emphasize their relevance in a secular time. They can see that secularism has failed to link us emotionally and spiritually to the earth, and the more progressive souls in the churches are saying, 'Here's an opportunity to show leadership by showing how sanctity can be found in creation'.

Once sanctity is restored to creation, respect is restored to the environment, and one could almost say that the resacralization of nature is the prime foundation on which any ecological program should be based. I do not believe that an ecology without depth, without a spiritual dimension, can ever be effective in bringing about the revolution of attitude that we require. Secular governments

plead with us to be more respectful to the earth, but such pleading is in vain unless we can feel that the earth is sacred.

### 7. The Aboriginal Question and Religious Culture

Another major obstacle to a creation spirituality is the lack of connection between white and black Australia. We know that Aboriginal spirituality is earth-based, and has been so for up to fifty thousand years. While many of us have ignored the spirituality of the earth because our heads have been in the clouds or looking toward heaven, we have bracketed earth-spirituality out of our culture because we have not wanted to enter into conversation with Aboriginal spirituality. Some of this reluctance has been positive and culturally sensitive, and some of it negative. The positive element is that we have often felt that the spirituality of the earth is Aboriginal cultural property, and we have been aware of this fact and reluctant to step upon areas that have not traditionally been ours. The negative side is that we have been reluctant to come to the table to discuss religious matters with those who are not part of the Judeo-Christian traditions. We have not been proactive with regard to cross-cultural religious enquiry, or to what is now called 'interfaith dialogue'.

Perhaps Euro-Australians have felt that our religious tradition is superior and should not be watered down by concessions to another religion, deemed to be somehow inferior or of lesser value. Or perhaps we have been unable to discern the presence of God in other, non-Western religious traditions, and so have been unable to open up a conversation with a culture in which God could not be recognized because he did not bear a European face. But as Norman Habel has correctly surmised, the first question facing theology in Australia ought to be: 'What was God doing in Australia before the white people arrived?' (Habel 1999: 93). The idea that white people brought God to Australia in their ships and boats is utterly preposterous, and an arrogance that ought to be condemned. But until we can ask and answer this question, there is no way that

Judeo-Christian and Aboriginal religions can have a fruitful or creative dialogue.

### 8. The Aboriginal Question and Secular Culture

Beneath and below these theological problems is another social and political problem, and a different pocket of resistance. This problem concerns the presence of white guilt. We know in our hearts that our European forebears appropriated this land illegally and immorally. The taking of Australian land was conducted under the banner of a legal canard called *terra nullius*, which the 1992 Mabo decision of the Australian High Court overturned and found to be baseless. The land was not 'empty' at the time of the first settlement of British colonists. It was very much occupied and inhabited, although the European consciousness was not capable of understanding Aboriginal occupancy. There were no town halls, bridges, libraries or hospitals, and so to an ignorant consciousness it was declared uninhabited. We know better today, but the sense of inauthenticity remains in our hearts and souls. We realize we owe Aboriginal culture a great deal of recompense for our previous failures and misdemeanors, and the official Apology of February 2008 has at least acknowledged this problem in the Australian psyche, and our need to face the facts of the past.

The Rudd government's Apology is an important milestone in the tragic history of race relations in this country, but much more needs to be done. As well as symbolic gestures, we need social action and justice. Nevertheless, Aboriginal people are surprisingly generous in their willingness to accept our Apology, and also to work with us at the spiritual and religious level about the sanctity of the land. This is the phase of race relations that we have not yet reached. It is one thing to acknowledge white guilt, political wrongdoing and injustice, but the next step is to enter into dialogue with Aboriginal people about the sacredness of the land, and what we can learn from their culture about it. Judeo-Christian culture has been shy and slow to embark on this kind of spiritual conversation. It involves courage and

conviction, and also a great sensitivity to the way the spirit moves in another culture, another people.

Many bridges have been built at the local level, and the project of the Rainbow Spirit elders is a major achievement in the resacralization of place (1997). There are many Aboriginal people who have converted to Western religions, and they are in an ideal position to lead the conversation we need to have about the sacredness of land. Although there have been grassroots developments, these have not yet been formally developed by non-indigenous culture as a whole, which still remains slow to move in this direction. Secular authorities are reluctant to take the lead, because secularists are by definition not spiritual in their outlook, and don't know how to begin a conversation about the sacredness of land. Secularists are plagued both by the sense that a conversation about sacredness would be inauthentic if one does not 'believe' in the sacred, and by the lingering presence of white guilt. It is hard to be authentic about land and place if one does not believe that one belongs in the land, due to political and moral injustice.

However, it has to be said that Aboriginal people are eager for us to sit down and discuss the sacredness of the land, and to make this the basis of the reconciliation of black and white Australia. They are astonishingly generous in their readiness to open their sacred business to the white intruder, and the problem is really with us. As Eugene Stockton has argued, Aboriginal people are extending the gift of belonging, but we don't know how to receive their gift (1995). We are shocked into silence by their generosity. The theological obstacles stymie reconciliation for white religious culture, and the wound of inauthenticity and guilt stymie reconciliation for white secular culture. But Aboriginal people are ready for us, when we are ready for them. Just as they generously accepted the official Apology, so they are prepared to wait until such time as the white psyche matures to the point that it can receive the spiritual blessing of the land, which is at the same time an entrance into and belonging to the land. This is the next step in our ongoing reconciliation, and it might be some time before we reach this step.

## 9. Resacralization of Land and Place

I would like now to speak about the resacralization of place that we are experiencing, with a focus on my home town, Alice Springs, and the central desert monoliths of Uluru and Kata Tjuta. In the book of Genesis, we find the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau, competing for the blessing of their father Isaac. Jacob proves triumphant in this struggle, and Isaac says to Jacob:

May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful.... May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien. (Genesis 28:4)

This is a significant statement, especially from an Australian point of view. Entering into a binding covenant with the sacred enables Jacob to transcend his condition as an 'alien' in his own land. Relationship with the sacred yields tangible blessings, and central to these is the experience of being and feeling at home where one lives. In other words, in finding a connection with the sacred, which is what *religio* means, we no longer feel alienated or out of touch with the places in which we live.

The Genesis story develops this theme in a powerful way. After his father's blessing, secured by an act of treachery toward his brother, Jacob flees from the wrath of Esau and goes to the land of Haran. It was on his way to Haran that Jacob rested for the night and had his famous dream.

Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and he said: 'I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land'. (Gen 28: 11-15)

This splendid dream-vision cannot be replicated by Australians at will, but the deeper meaning of it can be grasped. We might say that

it is only when we have established a dynamic connection with the sacred that we enter into the vitality of our earthly inheritance and bodily reality. It is only when the 'vertical' connection with God is forged, symbolized here by the stairway to heaven, that our 'horizontal' connection with place is realized and our link with home and natural environment is established. We come home to ourselves and to our land when we come home to the sacred.

This is the deeper meaning of the two-way movement along Jacob's ladder. The ladder not only represents the grace of God coming down to earth, in the descending angels, but also symbolizes the reverse movement, the potential sanctity of earth and humanity returning to God, indicated by the ascending angels. Jacob's ladder involves two-way traffic, and this has to be understood in its full profundity and depth of meaning. In Australia, I would suggest, we need to build our own Jacob's Ladder, our stairway to heaven, so we might find a new orientation to eternity as well as a new orientation to the sanctity of place.

The wonderful feature of the Hebrew story is that after receiving the vision of the ladder, Jacob immediately notices the sanctity of his place:

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it'. Jacob was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven'. Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz. (Gen 28:16-19)

This is a stunning portrayal of the transformative aspect of the religious life, and it has great relevance to Australia. Jacob awakens from his sleep, in which he is shown the vertical connection to heaven, and realizes that the horizontal dimension around him is holy. The effort expended on strengthening the vertical link with heaven is rewarded by a transformative experience of the everyday world around us. By recognizing the divinity of the creator, we are vouchsafed a vision of the holiness of creation. We glimpse

the visionary prospect of a world made holy through a sanctifying presence. That presence was always there, but we did not know it before, and it had to be made known through an act of revelation.

#### 10. The South Land of The Holy Spirit

Australia is not a Biblical 'holy land', but it is holy for Aboriginal people, and others as well. Perhaps we should take a cue from the Spanish Catholic explorer, Captain Pedro de Quiros, who in 1606 named this as yet undiscovered land *Australia del Espiritu Santo*, the Great South Land of the Holy Spirit. This visionary Australia is still undiscovered. Captain de Quiros did not see it, and we still don't see it, but we are beginning to catch glimpses of it. Some of us are, like Jacob, waking up from our sleep or cultural stupor, as Ronald Conway put it, and realizing that the ground upon which are walking is holy. 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it!' This is what some Australians are saying about their perception of place and landscape – although not using this same language, of course.

Jacob pours oil over his stone to consecrate it and signify its holiness. We are doing similar things in Australia with our stone, with Uluru Kata Tjuta. Before our awakening to the sacredness of place, this stone was called Ayers Rock, and it was seen as an interesting lump of a monument, which we liked to climb over and 'conquer' by reaching the summit. But it is extraordinary how public feeling has shifted in recent years. The place has changed its name, as in the Jacob story, and we have come to respect its sacredness in a new way. Jacob changed the name of his place from Luz to Bethel, meaning 'the house of God', and we have changed the name of our stone from Ayers Rock to Uluru, meaning 'sacred Dreaming place'. Moreover, in 1985 we gave it back to its traditional caretakers, the Anangu people. This is a crucial act in the process of making sacred: to sacrifice ownership of a place, which was wrongly taken in the beginning, is to restore dignity to land and people. 'Sacrificium' literally means in Latin to 'make sacred'. Many of us no longer scurry

over the rock like tourists, but we respect it as a symbol of the sacredness of land.

In the past, white people were merely tourists to the Center, but I submit that some of us have become pilgrims, in that we recognize we are visiting a holy place, and adopt an appropriately reverential attitude. The Anangu people request that we do not climb the Rock or desecrate it, and that we are mindful of what we snap in our photographs and movies. These elements of respect and awe are our local equivalents to Jacob's anointing his rock with oil. We have acquired a new sense of the sacredness of the Rock, which is no longer a monolith in a dead heart, but a symbolic marker or 'icon' in a living center. In mythological terms, Uluru Kata Tjuta has become for Australians an *axis mundi*, a center-point from which we gain our bearings and orientation. Around that center, we lead our lives, and we are increasingly mindful of the sacredness of the center, even if we huddle along the coast.

Mircea Eliade argues that all societies, even secular ones, develop special sites or places that are invested with special interest, because humanity is *homo religiosus* and cannot bear a purely profane state, where there is no way to overcome existential uncertainty. Sacred spaces are consecrated, Eliade says, 'to put an end to the tension and anxiety caused by relativity and disorientation, in short to reveal an absolute point of support' (1959: 27-8). Importantly, he says that a people without a sense of the sacred is a people afflicted by drabness, dullness and boredom. The human spirit has not been uplifted, there is no verticality or grandeur in life, and everything seems flat, amorphous and indistinct. Life is dull because 'public space is homogenous and neutral; no break qualitatively differentiates the various parts of its mass' (1959: 22). To make sacred is to reveal a fixed point at the center of life:

In the homogenous and infinite expanse, in which no point of reference is possible and hence no orientation can be established, the hierophany [or manifestation of the sacred] reveals an absolute fixed point, a center. (1959: 21)

I think Australia has found its 'absolute fixed point, a center' in Uluru, a giant monolith that rises from the desert floor, with a circumference of eight kilometers. It is a sacralized center which has changed not only the deep outback, but the perception of life at the periphery or edge. The rock is like a central pole, an *axis mundi*, which has suddenly given verticality to the whole country. It is the central pole of our continental tent, as it were, or the axis of our national marquee. The whole country has been given a much-needed lift. We used to complain about how dull and flat the country was, and central Australia was just something you flew over on your way to Europe. But now all that has changed, and the agent of change is the process of resacralization, which is at the same time a desecularization. The soul of Australia has been liberated by an investment of spiritual energy in this special place. Once the *axis mundi* has been established, the country is granted the gift of verticality, or at least the possibility of seeing the vertical in the ordinary and the everyday.

It has taken us two hundred years to wake up, but we are waking up to the sacredness of the Rock, and through the Rock, to the sacredness of the continent in its entirety. We acknowledge that the place was already sacred before we arrived from European and other nations. In this sense, the two-way movement of our Jacob's Ladder has an additional significance. It must carry and hold the traditional Dreaming of the Aboriginal people and the new Dreaming of the new Australia. Angels are walking in both directions, from the ancient past and into the future. This is what Aboriginal people now call 'Two Way', namely, a spiritual dwelling in traditional life and an orientation toward the Judeo-Christian tradition. Non-indigenous Australians awaken to the sacredness of the land *and* to the prior and present sacredness of the Aboriginal people. There is traffic going both ways on our symbolic Jacob's Ladder.

## 11. Down To Earth Divinity

Renewals of the spirit come from the most unlikely places. This has been so throughout history and it is so today. Australia is an unlikely place for spiritual renewal, given our suspicion of religion and our down to earth attitudes. But it is precisely these attitudes that could give rise to something new and original in the religious landscape, namely, to *the sacrality of the secular and the mystery of the ordinary*. The development of Australian spirituality will show that God is not confined to places designated as 'holy', and God's existence does not require an act of belief in miracles and wonders. The miraculous is already inherent in creation as its mystical core. As Tillich put it in his radical theology, God may no longer be believable as a 'being' up in the sky, but a new world opens when we see God as Being itself. 'The God from whom we cannot flee is the Ground of our Being' (Tillich 1949: 54).

I see Australia playing an important role in this new perception of God. We are not enthusiasts for the supernormal, nor believers in the supernatural. One of our major contributions will be to show that God is immanent and present in creation. God is not only the Lord of Heaven and the Future Life, but our partner and intimate companion in this life. Our high culture, literature and music are concerned with the sacralization of the everyday, the enchantment of the ordinary. Whether we turn to the novels of Patrick White and David Malouf, the poetry of Les Murray and Judith Wright, the drawings of Michael Leunig, or the music of Peter Sculthorpe and Ross Edwards, we bear witness to sublime values and concerns found in ordinary places, people and things.

The poet Les Murray puts this well, when he writes of our spirituality:

What we have received  
is the ordinary mail of the otherworld, wholly common,  
not postmarked divine. (1986: 193)

This is a wonderful expression of Australian spiritual pragmatism, which can look like atheism to an eye not trained to discover sacred

resonances in the ordinary. For Australians, if God exists, God is to be uncovered in this world. We cannot know of heaven, hell or the next world. If there is anything sacred, let us discover it in the here and now. There is an impatience in the Australian character that derides any metaphysical position that takes our attention away from this world. If the sacred can be revealed in the depths of what we already experience, then so much the better, but sacredness apart from this world is seen as theoretical or academic, and of little national concern.

In this sense, A. G. Stephens was right: Australians are concerned with the here and now and are focused on the present hour, but this will not drive us to the materialism that Stephens advocated. For the present hour will include a spiritual dimension, since the spiritual will no longer be relegated to an otherworld, a life beyond the grave, or to heavens above. The spirit will be revealed as a dimension of the real, and we will be called to witness to the depths that are present in reality.

Here we may be influenced by the indigenous traditions, in which sacred presence is perceived as immanent and this-worldly. For Aboriginal people, everything is potentially sacred, and the vast expanses of rock, sand and desert are 'cathedrals of stone' in which the sacred is recognized and worshipped (Charlesworth 1998). Aboriginal spirituality is chiefly a tradition of transparency, in which the numinous shines through the forms of the world. In Australia, ancient and postmodern perceptions of the sacred are bound to coalesce and interact with each other. This is perhaps what Max Charlesworth had in mind when he wrote:

I have a feeling in my bones that there is a possibility of a creative religious explosion occurring early in the third millennium with the ancient land of Australia at the centre of it. (1992: 287)



## Chapter II

### *Conclusion: Tracking the Sacred*

The spirit doesn't die, of course; it turns into a monster.  
– Christopher Koch (1978: 236)

#### *1. Demystification in Reverse*

What happens to the Gods or archetypal forces in a secular society such as modern Australia? Do they 'die', go underground or become irrelevant? Are they, as rationalists like to imagine, relevant only for those who wish to believe in them? This problem has occupied me for some years, and it is a consistent theme in my writings across four decades. It has become clear to me that sacred forces do not disappear simply because the enlightened intellect has stopped believing in them. Society does not get rid of the Gods by shutting its eyes and pretending they are not there. Rather, society becomes a kind of demonic parody of sacred reality when it no longer recognizes the divine sources from which its life springs.

The Gods can be denied and rejected, but they can never be extinguished. They merely go into the unconscious, where they become sources of psychological and social disturbance. They are no longer recognized by theologians or churchmen, but only by doctors, alienists, psychotherapists and poets. They puff up and inflate human ambitions and desires, and attach themselves to the ego without its ever knowing. When the soul is lost to the unconscious,

#### *Conclusion: Tracking the Sacred*

without any cultural or religious assistance toward its transcendent goals, it secretly distorts and corrupts human activities, investing them with grandiose expectations that can never be met or realized at the human or sociopolitical level.

As a student at university I was taught to 'demystify' and 'see through' the symbolic worlds of religious and symbolic cultures. Under the influence of the great cultural materialists and destroyers of illusions, Marx and Freud, I was instructed to find infantile wishes behind concepts of God and deity, escapism behind the religious impulse, and Oedipal incest behind the desire for transcendental bliss. However, I have since come to see that we must work in reverse: today we need to 'see through' the messes and mishaps of secular society and look for the buried Gods or archetypes in them. Mircea Eliade puts the situation well when he writes that we should,

attempt a demystification in reverse: that is to say, we have to 'demystify' the apparently profane world ... in order to disclose [its] 'sacred' elements, although it is, of course, an ignored, camouflaged, or degraded 'sacred'. (1969: 126)

This is Jung's strategy, but it is not clear from Eliade's work whether he arrived at this position independently or under Jung's influence. The task of contemporary wisdom, as Jung sees it, is not to discredit the religious symbolisms of the past or explode the myths of a former time. Rather, to become wise today we need to locate, track down and 'recall to memory' the vestiges and unconscious remnants of the sacred that persist in our secular or profane time.

#### *2. The Degraded Sacred and Alcoholism in White and Black Society*

Drunk, he becomes more Australian.

– Christopher Koch (1978: 57)

We enter modern life with impossible dreams, expecting our partners, friends and relatives to be Godlike and infallible. We place media celebrities and political personalities upon altars, view-

ing them as a sort of pantheon of deities in a secular heaven. We expect this political program or that human relationship to grant us paradise, utopia, or a glimpse of divine grace, and not surprisingly we frequently lapse into a slough of despond and depression, cursing life for failing us again. We are strangely content to be unconsciously possessed by religious expectations and transcendental desires, but, perversely, we will not allow these expectations and desires a religious outlet or goal, but must always direct these desires toward the human and material level.

We seek all manner of substitutes for spiritual satisfaction. Drug addiction and the burgeoning drug epidemic is an unconscious and miscarried expression of the need to find ecstatic release from the prison-house of the ego. Despite our intellectual dedication to rational and egotistical goals, we unconsciously crave an experience of the nonegoic and the transcendent, which is artificially but destructively reproduced in drugs.

This is especially the case with Australia's favorite drug, alcohol. There is an alcoholism epidemic in this country, and the problem is increasingly affecting young people as well as those of mature age (Eckersley 2004). We see the problem focused in particular in Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people have been adversely affected by the traumatic disappearance of spirit in their lives, and I am referring to spirit as it has been enshrined in rituals, ceremonies, initiation rites and spiritual attitudes. Jung estimates that tribalized Aborigines spent over half their waking lives in a spiritual state of being, through symbolic action:

There is a peculiar value in the symbolic life. It is a fact that the primitive Australians sacrifice to it two-thirds of their available time – of their lifetime in which they are conscious. (1939: 649)

To shift from a symbolically saturated conscious reality, to the one in which most of us experience today, namely, a desecralized world in which little or nothing is sacred, was too great a shock for Aboriginal people. It is, actually, a shock for any human community, but more so for a people that had been steeped in sacred consciousness for millennia. European culture had been weaned off

the sacred in the course of centuries, at least since the age of reason and the rise of science. But for Aboriginal culture, which was ushered into modernity overnight and forced to live in a desecralized universe, the impact has been devastating. It is true that the impact of colonization has been lethal, but the usual political analyses of the Aboriginal crisis fails to take into account the existential impact of the loss of the sacred. Eliade puts it correctly when he writes:

The man of traditional societies ... can live only in a sacred world, because it is only in such a world that he participates in being, that he has a *real existence*. For him, profane space represents absolute nonbeing. If, by some evil chance, he strays into it, he feels emptied of his ontic substance, as if he were dissolving in chaos, and he finally dies. (1958: 64)

This religious dimension of the Aboriginal crisis is simply not understood by mainstream secular culture, and not even by some of the good-natured and well-intentioned people who try to attend to the problems of Aboriginal communities. In addition to the obvious external problems wrought by colonization and dispossession of land, the spiritual problem of the loss of sacred space and straying into a world devoid of ontic substance is the hidden dimension of the crisis. It is clear that alcohol furthers the process by which some Aboriginal people are dissolving in chaos, but at the same time alcohol gives the false hope or illusion that one might almost reach into the sacred dimension once more.

The effect that alcohol has upon human consciousness, and its intended aim of loosening the ties of the ego and opening us to other dimensions of the soul, has been seductively attractive to all Australians, whether Aboriginal or not. Australian social attitudes tend to be constricted, overly rational, at times cynical and often pessimistic. It is little wonder that alcohol has become such a huge attraction in this country, because alcohol has the effect of loosening our ties to rationality and opening us to dimensions of the psyche that say Yes, instead of No. It was William James who first tracked this thirst for alcohol as a religious problem:

The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionable due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour. Sobriety diminishes, discriminates, and says no; drunkenness expands, unites, and says yes. It is in fact the great exciter of the Yes function in man. It brings its votary from the chill periphery of things to the radiant core. It makes him for the moment one with truth. (1902: 387)

The fact is that we cannot stand our orderly, rational prison all the time. There are times when we must break out, and 'Friday night spirituality' (as I have called it) has become a kind of ceremonial release for many Australians who are caught in rationality most of the week. We are not just searching for alcohol and the poisoning that it inflicts on the body and nervous system. We are searching for altered mental states, and for 'potential forms of consciousness entirely different from our own' (James 1902: 388). But in a secular culture, we do not know how to transcend the normal state of consciousness, except through eating, drinking and various kinds of substance abuse. This is where the loss of religious awareness sorely takes its toll, because we stand dumb and mute before the innate human need to transcend our profane state and achieve the condition of *homo religiosus*.

Adopting the language of Greek mythology, Jungian writer Robert Johnson claims that our secular culture has a poor relation to Dionysus, the God who teaches us how to transcend the rational. By day and during the week, we carefully erect an Apollonic structure around ourselves that by night and during the weekend we feel compelled to tear down. But we are so far removed from Dionysus, his rituals, strategies, ceremonies and arts, that we do not know how to conduct this transcendence in a positive or transformative way. Instead, we turn to the lesser rituals of the drunken Bacchus, or to what Johnson calls 'low-grade Dionysus' (1989: 21), and attempt to drink or consume our way to a breakthrough. The loss of spiritual ecstasy in white and black cultures has been replaced by the spurious, artificial ecstasy that is provided by alcohol and drugs. The word 'ecstasy' comes from the Greek root *ek stasis*, to stand

outside the self. If we do not cultivate a nonrational or symbolic reality or find life 'outside' the ego, inferior ecstasy will invade the body and psyche, destroying both in a disorderly spectacle.

But to return to the problem of Aboriginal alcoholism, the destructiveness of alcoholism could symbolize, at a bodily and somatic level, the disorienting effect of 'low-grade Dionysus' on a people who have traditionally been in a positive relationship with their own version of the Dionysian. Dionysus was referred to in ancient times as 'the loosener', as one who loosens our ties to ego and rationality, and Aboriginal people lived in this condition in their socially sanctioned symbolic lives. But with the sudden collapse of their Dreaming, and with spirit, soul and meaning shattered by colonization, detribalization and loss of ancestral lands, the enticement to negative forms of transcendence is accentuated. The temptations of alcohol and binge drinking in this context can be placed alongside those of petrol-sniffing and glue-sniffing or 'chroming'. The human spirit must have transcendence, either positively in cultural and religious forms, or negatively in substance abuse and self-destruction. The negative 'spirit' of alcohol readily destroys the ego rather than 'transcends' it, and it can destroy the body and its physical organs, as well as society and its cultural organs.

Jung was indirectly involved in the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous, and he realized that to combat the negative power of alcohol, one would need to discover or rediscover a spiritual life. Jung wrote to William Wilson, the famous 'Bill W' who was co-founder of the New York-based Alcoholics Anonymous:

I am strongly convinced that the evil principle prevailing in this world leads the unrecognized spiritual need into perdition, if it is not counteracted either by a real religious insight or by the protective wall of human community. An ordinary man, not protected by an action of grace and isolated in society, cannot resist the power of evil.... You see, alcohol in Latin is *spiritus* and you use the same word for the highest religious experience as well as for the most depraving poison. The helpful formula therefore is: *spiritus contra spiritum*. (1961a: 624-5)

Jung means by this cryptic Latin phrase that only an experience of spirit can contradict and cancel the effects of an addiction to the poisonous 'spirit' of alcohol. Like cures like, or more precisely, like takes away the symptoms of like, and this is the philosophical basis of homeopathic medicine. One needs to employ a higher or more distilled form of the poison to combat the poison. In the case of Aboriginal alcoholism, only a reintegration of traditional spiritus can calm the social chaos wrought by the low-level ingestion of intoxicating fluids.

Alcohol is a perfect symbol of an 'alien' and non-indigenous spirit, since this intoxicant was unknown here until imported by Europeans. It is apparently the case that the Aboriginal metabolism cannot break down or 'digest' this substance in the way that other cultural groups can, and hence drunkenness or intolerance to the liquid occurs more readily. In its unintegrated or undigested state, *spirit* – like its bottled namesake – is a fatal agent of ruin and degradation. When living in Alice Springs I was impressed by the fact that those Aboriginals who had best learnt to overcome alcoholism were those who had made a personal conversion to a religious faith. Although some claim that religion is the 'opium of the masses', its capacity to provide a creative channel for the unruly and chaotic spirit cannot be underestimated.

### 3. Unconscious Factors in Sexuality, Consumerism and Incest

The addiction to drugs and alcohol can only be paralleled in our time by the addiction to sex. The so-called sex revolution is an unconscious expression of the archetypal desire to connect in ecstatic and releasing ways with an *other*. In our secular world the other has lost its spiritual aspect and has become an 'other' human being, lover, friend, husband or wife. Often, we look for an *other* man or woman in our lives, since it is the illicit affair that sometimes carries more psychical and archetypal resonance than the partner to whom we are committed. Connection with the other leads to forbidden and taboo sexual liaisons with the secretive other, to that

which is not part of our conscious world. We see how easily the unconscious desire for the sacred becomes expressed as promiscuous sexuality or as an erotic and personal parody of the union of self with the divine.

With divine imperatives brought to bear upon sexuality we find that it too sometimes collapses under the weight of expectations. People sometimes shift from promiscuity to frigidity or total abstinence because what they were seeking from sexuality could not be found. Or some give up on the opposite sex and turn to same-sex love as a move toward self-regeneration and rebirth. Often the dreams of such persons will indicate that their erotic feeling must be moved from the human to the divine, and dreams may put forward powerful archetypal symbols to help transform psychic energy from the one level to the other. Dreams strive to come to our psychological assistance, but very often they are not heard or properly understood, especially if interpreted according to the sexual and reductive theories of mainstream psychoanalysis, whence their great attempts to create symbols of transformation are tragically defeated by the materialist cast of mind that interprets their meaning.

If sex and drugs do not attract us, or backfire when attempted, there is always the orgy of consumerism to consider. Emotionally we are empty, so we try to fill the emptiness with goods, objects, clothes, food, services and, when these bore us, there are the luxury items and expensive services, as well as trips to exotic places where we try for a glimpse of what lies beyond routine reality and the mundane ego. The consumer society is powerfully activated by the degraded sacred, even if all of it is carefully manipulated and controlled by our cool-headed entrepreneurial mind. The innate archetypal impulse is for *more*. The buried soul in us, which has become a blind autonomous impulse, knows there is more to reality than what we already have or know, and so we are compelled from within to seek more and more at the material level. It is not that material things are bad or that sex or money are evil. This is the world-denying position of old-fashioned, pre-psychological and puritanical religion. It is rather that material things, money, drugs,

sex, relationships, are often invested with inappropriate spiritual longings and inhuman archetypal expectations.

We arrive at the paradox that we profane and denigrate the material world when we are unconsciously bound to it by the compulsive projection of the spiritual. We overburden the physical by asking it to perform magical tricks and to produce miraculous satisfactions. Matter is a manifestation of the sacred, but when we cut ourselves off from the divine source matter becomes demonic. In traditional religious terms, the figure of Satan, who is nothing other than a fallen angel, a gross parody and distortion of the sacred, has got into our lives and controls our behavior. Or again in traditional religious language, which we are unable to read symbolically anymore: by denying God we unwittingly court the Devil. When the sacred falls into the unconscious it becomes demonic, generating psychosomatic symptoms, irrational compulsions, obsessions and other mental disorders.

Where have the Gods got to in secular and enlightened times? Jung replies that 'the Gods have become diseases' (1929: 54). Having fallen from heaven, the Gods reappear in the unconscious with a vengeance. The transcendent powers thrash around in our psyches and bodies, bringing neuroses, illnesses and forcing us to bizarre literal enactments of symbolic processes. The reported escalation of incest and child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities, which triggered the Howard government's intervention into outback Australia, may well be contextualized in this light: as a grotesque literal enactment of the desire for spiritual rebirth (Tacey 1990). The June 2007 report into this crisis was called *Little Children Are Sacred*, and the epigraph of the report is a statement from Yolngu people: 'In our Law children are very sacred because they carry the two spring wells of water from our country within them' (Wild and Anderson 2007).

Tragically, it might be the case that precisely because little children are sacred that they are now the targets of sexual assault. The adult self seeks union with the sacred, but what does it do if no living symbols are to be found? If spiritual water can no longer be found in ritual, art and ceremony, in prayers, petitions or symbols, the thirst

for this water might lead some to seek it in previously unthinkable places. Incest has long been associated with the notion of spiritual rebirth, an association which is found not only in psychoanalysis, but also in holy scripture. It is the rabbi Nicodemus, who suggests to Jesus that incest may be the only way that a literal-minded person might seek spiritual rebirth. Jesus recognizes this fact, but suggests it is the demonic parody of true rebirth (John 3: 4-10). The urge for the sacred has become demonic, and no longer operates according to the rules of morality. Because that urge can no longer be satisfied in moral ways, and yet must be satisfied in some way, this makes child sexual abuse more attractive to a perverted desire that has lost its intelligence and its soul. As Jung put it to Bill W: spiritual hunger has fallen under the influence of 'the evil principle prevailing in this world'.

#### 4. The Modern Denial and The Search For Freedom

Our present mental condition, in which God is felt to be dead and the Gods are seen as mere fantasies, would once have been recognized as *hubris*. When humanity forgets or willfully denies the Gods, when it thinks it is itself God, able to live and be without the Gods, then it succumbs to hubris and perforce must deal with the punishment and vengeance of the Gods. Hubris was the most feared moral transgression in the ancient world, and much Greek tragedy arose from the need to give it public and aesthetic expression. The tragic hero is one who strives too hard, oversteps human boundaries, outreaches his own and human limits, and so instigates his own downfall as he brings upon himself the terrible punishment of the Gods. What was viewed once as divine vengeance and wrath can be seen today as archetypal possession and psychic upheaval – rather than literal Gods invading or attacking us from without, we can now see that nonhuman agents in the psyche are wreaking devastation and havoc.

Although the classics are full of warnings about this condition and ways to handle it, we do not benefit from this cultural wisdom

because we fail to appreciate how any of it relates to us today. For us, our condition is not called hubris but intellectual enlightenment. We see ourselves as freewheeling, unattached, unbounded, rather than as unconsciously possessed and enslaved by archetypal forces. We mistake the *mania* and *fury* of the Gods for our own high energy and soaring libido. We also have our own rational, secular terms and understandings for the madness that has befallen us: anxiety, stress, neurosis, the tension and pace of modern life. But when the manic forces of the Gods have run their course, they simply dump us into a pit of depression, where we are suddenly made aware of how little personal energy and human resources we actually possess. Even then, we say: oh, that's just life, the ups and downs.

Our greatest spiritual fault is not even guessing that an other might be involved in what we are pleased to call our manic-depressive cycles. We see that we suffer from real ailments, but these are felt to be the logical cost of living in a fast world. We still maintain the old positivist belief that our neurotic problems and manic cycles will eventually be overcome by science and medicine as we make our way toward a paradise of complete knowing. But our very paradigm of knowing is deficient, because it does not admit the wisdom that has to do with ultimate reality, with the correct relationship between the human and the sacred.

In Australian writing, a remarkable expression of what I am describing can be found in Patrick White's great novel *The Solid Mandala*:

After he retired, Dad would sometimes recall, in the spasmodic phrasing which came with the asthma, his escape by way of Intellectual Enlightenment, and the voyage to Australia, from what had threatened to become a permanence in black and brown, but in the telling, he would grow darker rather than enlightened, his breathing thicker, clogged with the recurring suspicion that he might be chained still. (1966: 145)

The Intellectual Enlightenment and the journey to Australia are significantly connected in this passage. Both are seen as escapes from the encumbrances of the past, ways of transcending the reli-

gious mentality and burdensome tradition. And yet 'in the telling' of this tale of escape and freedom the teller 'grows darker rather than enlightened, his breathing thicker, clogged with the recurring suspicion that he might be chained still'. The rationalist denial of the sacred simply gives rise to a darker, more morbid and morose, form of bondage, because it is an unconscious and unknowing bondage to archetypal forces. This unconscious bondage is detrimental to the ego's health and is life threatening, as is evident in this miraculous one-sentence description of the plight of George Brown. He is freed from the Old Country, yet dumbly suffering from spiritual malaise. Mircea Eliade could have been speaking about the George Browns of the world when he wrote: 'Modern nonreligious man forms himself by a series of denials and refusals, but he continues to be haunted by the realities that he has refused and denied' (1959: 204).

### 5. The Limitations of Humanism

The history of modernity and the last few hundred years is the history of the ego's struggle for absolute autonomy and freedom. The rise of humanism in the Renaissance, and later in the eighteenth century Enlightenment, is the rise of the ego's desire to be rid of the past and its superstitions. Humanism, science, and the intellect conspired to create a secular world in which man was the measure of all things, in which matter and the laws of the universe were rationally explicable, and in which humanity was master over creation. The dream of the Enlightenment was a dream of liberty and freedom, which began to express itself in political and cultural revolutions, in changes to social and moral values and in the new sciences and arts. Many great achievements were made, not least of which was the impassioned opposition to tyranny in church and state, in secular institutions and the workplace. Humanism has performed many social and political miracles, and we are all better off because of it.

But we are not any *better* because of it. Despite its political and social achievements, humanism has left us culturally impoverished and spiritually bankrupt. This argument has been forcefully argued

in John Carroll's *The Wreck of Western Culture* (2004). God is dead, moral and spiritual values have been declared entirely relative and arbitrarily constructed, the soul and spirit find no solace or nourishment, communal ties and traditional bonds are weakening and falling apart, narcissistic individualism is rampant and Western civilization finds itself sliding inexorably into degradation. The Gods have certainly wreaked havoc on us, and most likely will continue to do so until humanity forges a new pact with them. The dreadful irony is that humanism began as a development to win absolute freedom, liberty, and an earthly paradise. Instead, we have simply become enslaved to the ego, to the lower instincts, and to all the unconscious archetypal forces which course through us and take easy possession of us.

The great religions have long taught that the ego cannot be its own master and cannot achieve absolute freedom. If it attempts to reach beyond its limits, it degenerates and loses its integrity. As the popular saying has it, the ego makes a good servant but a lousy master. The ego's task in the psyche, like humanity's task in creation, is to serve a greater reality (Jung), to attend to the needs of an other (Eliade), to further the incarnation in this world of unmanifest Being (Heidegger). The ego can either choose a life of service or be made to serve in various unconscious, involuntary and destructive ways. The choice is between a relative freedom and no freedom at all. No other option is available to us. There is freedom only in the ego's conscious decision to choose what it must do.

This is the central paradox of many religions, as it is of Jungian psychology: only by entering into deliberate service can the individual become free. In my commitment to servitude is my happiness; in my acceptance of bondage to the divine is my liberty. The modern individual, paradoxically speaking, only achieves a degree of freedom when he renounces the illusion of complete independence, and accepts, along with ancient and premodern man, that he exists in relationship with an other who must be propitiated, served and recognized. I agree with Camille Paglia when she says that the contemporary emphasis on freedom is misconceived and delusive, and that 'freedom is the most overrated modern idea' (1990: 39). Absolute

freedom is the construction of a power-oriented ego which believes it can rule alone in the house of personality and in the outside world.

In archetypal terms, secular humanism is the product of the hubristic ego, whose course is determined in Western society by the patriarchal hero. The hero is an important and much-needed denizen of the psyche and the masculine principle he embodies is crucial in the scheme of things. But he and his masculinity tend to overwhelm other figures and presences in the soul, and the hero has a habit of becoming dictatorial and oppressive. His main project is the promotion of himself and the eradication of opposition. His idea of freedom is what we are all suffering from today, and what now threatens the stability and structure of Western civilization. 'Freedom' for the ego is license, the ability to do what it likes, the freedom to run rampant in the psyche and the world without any regard for the other. In many hero-myths, not only in Greece but in other cosmologies, the hero has to be stopped either by men, women or the Gods, lest he bring total devastation. In the Hero Cycles of the Winnebago Indians, the Twins become inflated by their powers, and when their power-lust causes them to kill one of the four animals that hold up the earth, they are soon arrested and slain. As Joseph Henderson writes, 'The hero's symbolic death becomes a sign that a new level of psychic maturity has been achieved' (1964: 112).

#### 6. *The Death and Rebirth of The Spirit*

The death of the spirit is a worldwide cultural phenomenon, which is hardly unique to Australia. In this book, I have been sketching the regional enactment of this archetypal drama. The geographical location of Australia at the farthest edge of the known world gave dramatic representation to the motifs of descent, decline and degeneration (Leer 1985). In Australia, the European spirit met an archaic and powerful nature which was more than its equal. Our first poet of real importance, Charles Harpur, wrote: 'Lo, 'tis the Land of the grave of thy father!' (1867: 11). I take the poet to be

meaning 'father' in the larger, transpersonal and archetypal sense. Australia became a site for the death of the hero, the father and the patriarchal spirit. Chris Wallace-Crabbe wrote, 'Though much has died here, little has been born' (1960: 261). Our great national figures and legends, Voss, Richard Mahony, Burke and Wills, Leichhardt; our iconographic national sites, Uluru, Hanging Rock, Gallipoli, the Outback, are all places or figures of loss, sacrifice and ruin.

With all this doom and gloom to report, one would imagine that we should retreat into depression, hurt and despair. But that is not at all the message I am trying to impart in this book. Beyond the death of the old one can discern much new life and cultural development. Our old style of heroic consciousness is finished but a new style of consciousness is in the process of being born. The new style will be closer to nature and the elemental world, closer to the soul and the feminine, to intuition and feeling, to the values of the earth and the body. In Australia, primordial nature has taken the old spirit into herself, not to crush or destroy it, but so that it can be reborn.

This process is what I have been tracking in various artists and writers, such as D. H. Lawrence (chapter 7), Les Murray, Judith Wright and Shaw Neilson (chapter 9). I have also been tracking this change in Australia's political and social life (chapters 5 and 8), and in its spiritual and religious life (chapters 4 and 10). In particular, I have been following these changes in the relations between non-indigenous and indigenous communities (chapters 4, 8, 9, 10). In all of these social and political developments, we may discern a culture which is trying to 'right' itself, to restore a sense of balance between conscious and unconscious, society and earth, ego and soul. In order to reach the new point of balance, the first step is to admit that the old one-sidedness has to be overcome.

### *7. The Rise of The Feminine*

Initially, this means that the cultural pendulum needs to swing in the opposite direction, and to emphasize the values which have been suppressed. All the elements that have been denied by the

patriarchal spirit, including the feminine principle, the soul, earth, nature and the body have to be given room for expression. To some extent the so-called New Age movement represents a pendulum swing in the opposite direction, especially with its concern for the earth mother, ecology, soul and body. However, the New Age often expresses an extreme one sidedness of the opposite kind, so that although it emphasizes the nonrational side of our experience, it does so without integrating it with our developed reason and intellect. I have explored the problems of the New Age in another work and have been critical of it in the past (Tacey 2001). But despite my reservations, and its high level of commercialism, it has to be acknowledged for championing the values of the earth mother and the feminine at the end of patriarchy. In this regard, sociologists Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead find much to be admired in the New Age movement (2005).

Far more influential than the New Age has been the rise of feminism, with its explicit agenda of opposing and defeating the spirit of patriarchy. I have always thought of feminism as one of the most important movements of our time, and it has achieved a great deal in its task of arresting the runaway heroic spirit and forcing it to attend to what has been neglected. Women have been freed from imprisoning social stereotypes and patriarchal images and roles, and this has been liberating for the Australian nation. Women play a more active role in society, politics, and all the professions, and they have found and asserted their power in the workplace and the home. To my mind, the fusion of feminism with ecology has been especially powerful in its belief that to move ahead as a nation we need to attend to the 'body of the earth' as the neglected reality of a postcolonial society.

However, I believe the feminist revolution has got stuck in a social and political mode, and it needs to focus on the psychological, emotional and spiritual implications of the feminine. Since our Australian culture is so secular and materialistic, it is to be expected that a revolution of the feminine should primarily take place in the outside social sphere. This front of the revolution has largely been fought and won, although it is remarkable how resistant certain pockets



of society have been to the impact of feminism. The new wave of feminism must surely be about the deconstruction of the patriarchal mind and spirit. In too many instances, feminism has capitulated to the patriarchal mind and not challenged its basic values and assumptions. Feminism in the universities, in government and psychological science has not challenged the core assumption of patriarchy: that reason is the basis of intelligence and the key component of mind. Nor has it challenged the myth of the separate, isolated individual that forms the basis of patriarchal modernity and capitalism.

There are many extra layers of the 'feminine' that need to be unpacked, explored and made available to the community through education and social awareness. It is true that feminism had to toughen up in order to fight patriarchal resistance and arrogance, but now that that battle is largely over, there is a 'soft' revolution that must follow. We need to be more feminine in the psychological sense, which means opening our lives to feeling, emotion and intuition. Being feminine in this sense means being receptive, quiet, reflective, and capable of hearing the voice of the other. The early feminist revolution generated a warrior consciousness that was as far removed from certain crucial feminine elements as patriarchy itself. But now the neglected soul and the feminine realm of eros and connectedness call for our attention, and I am not sure whether old-style feminism can do much about this.

I would like to think that it is capable of transmutation, to bring about the work that has to be done. In some ways, the New Age strives to liberate the spiritual and emotional aspects of the feminine. But its attempt to worship the Goddess is frequently a sad parody of the archetypal shifts that need to occur. The Goddess is not a static figure in the collective unconscious, waiting to be liberated, but 'she' is in part a construction of culture and history. It is impossible to liberate the Goddess unless we are aware of how much this figure is a product of historical forces that have helped to construct her. In my view, we cannot have 'spirituality' without political and social awareness, and in this area the New Age is sentimental and out of touch. The feminine principle has subtleties and complexities that popular movements seem unable to explore. We cannot stop at

parody and cliché, but need to move steadily forward in our attempt to transform consciousness.

#### 8. *The Activation of The Indigenous Archetypal Figure*

In the same way that feminism should not stop at politics and external life, but needs to explore the emotional and spiritual underpinnings of the feminine, so too the new concern with Aboriginality must not stop at external interests but needs to go more deeply into the interior life and discover the indigenous person within. I have been criticized for emphasizing this dimension of Australian experience, as some see it as a way of sidestepping the major political challenge of Aboriginal reconciliation. However I am of the persuasion that there is an internal dimension to reconciliation that the purely political approach is unable to appreciate (Tacey 2000). The meeting between two different peoples is not merely an external or social encounter, but is a psychological and emotional encounter.

This subtler dimension needs to be taken into account, even if it is unpopular at the moment due to the effects of what has been called 'political correctness'. I agree with Les Murray when he writes:

In Australian civilisation, I would contend, convergence between black and white is a fact, a subtle process, hard to discern often, and hard to produce evidence for. Just now, too, it lacks the force of fashion to drive it; the fashion is all for divisiveness now. (1977: 27)

Although political correctness is designed to support and protect the rights and values of indigenous minorities, I would argue that a fixed ideological position creates a cultural environment in which black and white reconciliation cannot take place. Current fashions urge us to keep racial groups separate and distinct, and interest in Aboriginal issues is regarded as predatory and consumerist, especially if we wish to explore the spiritual side of indigenous culture. This, of course, is a convenient taboo to keep in force, if it is upheld by a secular culture that considers the spiritual to be off limits in any and every cultural context. Non-indigenous Australians are urged by

prevailing attitudes to give time, money, effort and external service to disadvantaged minorities, but not to tamper with religious or spiritual values.

However, non-indigenous Australians will never understand the spiritual dimension of the land or the spiritual dimension of the indigenous people unless they too have spiritual experiences on this soil. We can muster all the good intentions and moral correctness that we can find, but unless we discover some deeper, transformative relationship with place our good intentions will be in vain and we will only be half-hearted about reconciliation and ecological matters. Both Aboriginal reconciliation and ecological awareness require conversions of the heart, not merely moral intentions of the mind. We need to encourage experiences that turn our lives around and make us think differently about our identity and our relation to indigenous people and land. Political and social debate about these issues is often confined to the realm of morality and conscience, but to achieve effective change at these levels we need spiritual change and a renewal of consciousness.

One way to conceptualize the necessary changes that have to occur is to speak of the need for non-indigenous Australians to get in touch with the indigenous person within. I have described my own encounter with this process in chapter 4. Although my experience was unique to me, I don't think the principles at work in my experience were unique. I think they are paradigmatic and transpersonal. In this land, we begin with the thesis of European consciousness and are faced with the antithesis of Aboriginal Dreaming. The synthesis of these factors is a most exciting prospect, and I can see signs of it in our developing culture, literature, music and social awareness. Aboriginal people are of necessity becoming Europeanized – they are forced to do this in order to survive. Without this development, they are in danger of being eradicated by the demonic juggernaut of progress. The Aboriginal leaders I have met fully understand the gravity and seriousness of their situation. They realize the 'old ways' are over, and although some dream of a return to the past, most recognize that a new dispensation is ahead. Transformation is an urgent imperative.

Non-indigenous Australians are being aboriginalized in their sleep, as Lawrence saw, and as Les Murray recognizes. This is a necessary step in the evolution of consciousness in this land. In our sleep we are gaining fragments of the Dreaming, and something deep and strange in this land is entering our souls. Jung reflected on how and why this process takes place, and chapters 1, 2 and 3 were concerned with his responses to this phenomenon. He did not get far with his reflections, and he certainly failed to place these intuitions on a sound, intellectual footing. But his pioneering reflections need to be taken into account by anyone who is interested in national differences and the process by which the colonizer is gradually 'colonized' by the culture that has been subdued. Aboriginal people have their own theory on this: the spirits of the land get into the souls of those who are born here, regardless of their national background or ethnic type. It is a remarkable idea, and it is not something that should be lightly dismissed by a rational attitude.

I can't say much about the Aboriginal explanation, apart from ponder it and reflect on it. Nevertheless, I can, following Jung, postulate the existence of an 'indigenous' archetypal figure in the soul of humanity, which becomes activated in certain physical and environmental conditions. Jung experienced this archetypal figure in his travels to North Africa, and that was the focus of chapter 3. The contemporary black African writer, Malidoma Some, has taken up Jung's invitation and has written on the idea of an indigenous 'archetype':

There is an indigenous person within each of us. The indigenous archetype within the modern soul is in serious need of acknowledgment. A different set of priorities dwells there, a set of priorities long forgotten in Western society. (1993: 34)

Intellectuals get nervous about such ideas, which seem altogether too fanciful and naïve. They also fear that such ideas are prescriptive, and set down in stone the typical responses of a so-called 'indigenous archetype'. However, Jung and Some are aware that there is no definite or predetermined shape to this activation. The indigenous figure can express itself in us in a variety of ways. In

my case it links me indirectly to Aboriginality, in the case of others it might link them to Celtic, Indian or Jewish sources. There is not just one way of activating indigeneity within the modern soul. The impact or influence of Aboriginality upon the non-indigenous psyche is subtle and complex. We need not fear that we are being processed in biologically determined ways. What we can say is that whatever latent layer of nonegoic life lies buried beneath the ego will be stirred to activity by the mythopoetic encounter with indigenous people.

In the formations of national cultures and regional types, we are dealing with nonrational factors, and need to be as open to the nonrational as possible. Perhaps there is not much difference between ancestral spirits and archetypal forces. Perhaps these are just ancient and modern ways of talking about the same thing. Nevertheless, I hold to the Jungian idea that archetypal forces may be linked with places and locations. To move to a particular land is to imbibe a psychic atmosphere that impacts on the soul. Nature is more than matter, she is also spirit. That is something on which sensitive artists, nature poets, Jungian psychologists and Aboriginal leaders seem to agree.

#### *9. At The Edge and On Edge*

A transformation of consciousness, inspired by nature, land, the archetypal feminine, and the experience of indigeneity is currently on the horizon of cultural awareness. The patriarchal heroic ego still reigns in the conscious sphere, in our political and social institutions, in the uppermost layers of experience. But down below, beneath the surface, a new era is being prepared, which is already anticipated by new kinds of spirituality, feminist theology and deep ecology. We are at the edge of a new experience of the sacred. The world is at this same edge, although it is currently 'on edge', fearing that the worst will happen. Since we are at the start of a new millennium, it is to be expected that we will become filled with millennial fears as well as hopes and dreams. But the development of consciousness signals a

movement away from the heroic masculine toward an embracing of the feminine, the earth and the indigenous.

Australia is uniquely placed not only to demonstrate this transformation from an old to a new consciousness, but to act as a leading example to the world. It is true that the new will not come to birth without sacrifices being made and without an epic displacement of old structures. Les Murray has glimpsed this reality: 'Sooner or later, I will have to give some blood for dancing here' (1977: 30). Although traditionally at the edge of the world, Australia may well become the center of attention as our transformational changes are realized now and in the future. What will arise from the general mix of factors here, the old European spirit, the ancestral Aboriginal spirit, the 'new' voices and figures from Asia and Africa, may well be awesome and spectacular.

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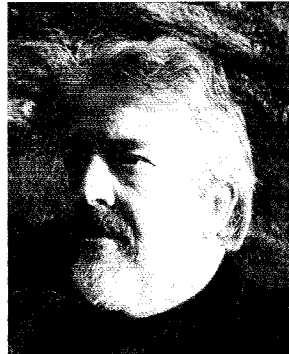
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# Edge of the Sacred

Does earth have spirit or soul? This is a question being asked ever more frequently, especially by those interested in the future of the natural world and the development of consciousness. The alchemists said 'the greater part of the soul is outside the body', and indigenous cultures have felt that soul or spirit resides in Nature and the physical environment. Such notions have been dismissed by modernity as illusions, but we are beginning to have second thoughts about the animation of the earth. Science and rationality have not taught us how to love or care for the earth, and in the modern era the environment has been disrespected.

The mythic bonds to Nature such as those found in Aboriginal Australian cultures appear to have real survival value because they bind us to the earth in a meaningful way. When these bonds are destroyed by excessive rationality or a collapse of cultural mythology, we are left alone, outside the community of Nature and in an alienated state. In this state we do real damage to the environment, because it is no longer part of our spiritual body or moral responsibility.

Jung was one of the first thinkers of our time to consider the psychic influence of the earth and the conditioning of the mind by place. Inspired by his writings and those of James Hillman, the field of ecopsychology has arisen as a powerful new area of inquiry. *Edge of the Sacred: Jung, Psyche, Earth* contributes to global ecopsychology from an Australian perspective.



Dr. **David Tacey** is Reader in literature and depth psychology at La Trobe University, Melbourne. He is the author of eight books, including *Jung and the New Age* (2001), *The Spirituality Revolution* (2003) and *How to Read Jung* (2006).

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